

"Why Have A Family?" (This sermon preached on Mother's Day)

"Somewhere between the youthful energy of the teenager and the golden twilight years of a woman's life there lives a marvelous and loving person known as a mother."

"A mother is a curious mixture of patience, tolerance, kindness, understanding, discipline, industry, purity, and love.

"A mother can be at the same time both lovelorn counselor to a heartsick daughter and the head football coach to an athletic son. A mother can sew the tiniest stitch in the material for that dainty party dress, and she is equally experienced in threading through the heaviest noon-day traffic with a large station wagon."

"A mother is the only creature on earth who can cry when she's happy, laugh when she's heartbroken, and work when she's sick. A mother is as gentle as a lamb and as strong as a giant. Only a mother can appear so weak and helpless, and yet at the same time, can put the fruit jar lid on so tightly that even dad can't get it off."

A mother is a picture of helplessness when dad's around, and a marvel of resourcefulness when she's all alone. A mother has the angelic voice of a member of the celestial choir when she's singing a lullaby to that baby held tightly in her arms, and yet that same voice can dwarf the sounds of an amplifier when she calls the boys in for supper. A mother has the fascinating ability to be almost everywhere at once and she, alone, can somehow squeeze an enormous amount of living into an average day."

"A mother is old fashioned to her teenager; she's just mom to the third-grader; she's mama to her little two-year old. There's no greater thrill in life than to point to that wonderful woman and proclaim to the whole world – that's my mother."

We want to say some things this morning that go much beyond honoring mothers, though we will do that...we're honoring God, who created for us that special creation – woman – and who placed into woman these wonderful qualities!

We live at a time when many young couples are considering the obstacles they face in marriage and the difficulties the world presents and are choosing not to have children. It causes us to ponder the question today: why have a family?

Certainly, it's not to satisfy our own selfish ambitions. They take time and there are problems...many couples believe they're "too busy" for children and the New Testament shows us this attitude in Mark 10:13-16: *"People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. {14} When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. {15} I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." {16} And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."*

- The disciples felt Jesus was too busy for the children
- Jesus showed that He was not...and was indignant toward this attitude
- And He tells each of us today that we should "be like children" in order to enter the kingdom of God

"Fatherhood"

"So you've decided to have a child. You've decided to give up quiet evenings with good books and lazy weekends with good music, intimate meals during which you finish whole sentences, sweet private times when you've savored the thought that just the two of you and your love are all you will ever need.

"You've decided to turn your soft into trampolines, and to abandon the joys of leisurely contemplating reproductions of great art for the joys of frantically coping with reproductions of yourselves.

"Why? Poets have said the reason to have children is to give yourself immortality; and I must admit I did ask God to give me a son because I wanted to carry on the family name. Well, God did just that and I now confess that there have been times when I've told my son not to reveal who he is. You make up a name, I've said...just don't tell anybody who you are.

"Immortality? Now that I have five children, my only hope is that they are out of the house before I die." (*Bill Cosby*)

Why have children?

Because God has planted in me the intense need to love and care for someone else.

One writer: "The fullest human life is one that takes a chance on being committed to another human being."

Children provide us with a constant opportunity for personal growth toward self-fulfillment. They furnish a unique and inescapable demand for giving of ourselves! What it means to be a family is most beautifully expressed when two people accept all the risks of having children, knowing that they will always "be on call."

We are all blessed to be around children; they teach us so much:

- honesty - wonder of discovery
- open - quick to forgive
- forget completely

Having children gives the Mom and Dad a complete understanding of just how much God loves us! *Psalms 103:13: "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;"*

When our children make really big, bad mistakes—our response to their repentant heart teaches us that God responds to our sins in the same way.

Children also teach us how to treat another young Christian:

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8: "...but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. {8} We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us."

1 Thessalonians 2:11-12: "For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, {12} encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."

And fathers learn so much as we watch our wives care for the children:

"In the realm of self-giving, a mother's love makes the wealth of even the most devoted father look pale. Lovingly, she accepts the pain of child bearing. Selflessly, she exerts the energy and invests the time it takes to care for her home and family. Untiringly, she sits at the bedside of her sick child. Willingly, she gives us comforts and luxury to help provide for her child's education. And with every gift of herself she is enriched – mothers have much for which to be proud."

By experiencing the love their parents give them, our children learn how to love. This is important because loving is contrary to many of the basic drives of our flesh ...without loving, our children are left with a primary need unmet.

"The family is the one place on earth where you can be accepted when you seem to have made a wreck of your life, the one sanctuary where you are valued when you are old, the one refuge where you have worth when you can no longer produce."

Seen on a church sign:

If evolution is true, how come mothers still have only two hands? -- Donna Waldeyer, Paoli, Pennsylvania, Christian Reader, "Lite Fare."

Four basic ingredients for building positive relationships (these are true in a spiritual family, too!)

1. Mutual respect

Problems between human beings of any age are usually the result of a lack of respect. Parents often complain that their children don't respect them, but don't realize that respect must be earned.

Nagging, yelling, hitting, talking down, begging, and doing things for children they can do for themselves all show lack of respect.

Think for a moment: as your child grows older, do you require them to knock before entering your bedroom but feel free to barge into theirs? It's a sign of a lack of respect.

2. Taking time for fun

We live in a hectic modern pace, and this is often overlooked. An hour of positive relationship is worth several hours of conflict. Take time for fun! Spend time with each child, often!

3. Encouragement

We must believe in our children if they are to believe in themselves. To feel adequate, children need frequent encouragement – it's our way to tell and show them "how they are doing" in a world that is often very critical and at a time when they are very self-conscious.

4. Communicating love

How often do you tell your children, by words and actions, that you love them...unconditionally? To feel secure, each child must have at least one significant person to love and to be loved by.

Some comments – expect a lot from them

- 1. In the home** – teach them to do what they're capable of doing.
- 2. At school** – they must respect authority and appreciate an education
- 3. In worship** – be sure they're holding the songbook and at least making the effort in areas where they can participate...if they bring materials to read or work with during a sermon geared to the adult...be sure it's a Bible story or Bible-based workbooks
- 4. Evangelism- visitation** – have them make a visit with you when they're young and it's fun and before they learn to be afraid

A perspective from a two-year old:

"I heard you say you don't understand two year olds, so let me explain. When I'm in the high chair and I say 'up' it really means 'down.' Or sometimes it means 'I don't want milk, I want juice' unless you give me juice in the first place...then I want milk.

"When I say 'out' and you open the door for me, the reason I throw a fit is because I want to stay in, unless I can go outside naked.

"I really don't like to go for walks if I can't ride in the stroller, unless you put me in the stroller. Then, I want to walk, or else be carried...or maybe scream a little.

"Oh, and one more thing: when you ask 'do you have to go to potty' and I say 'no' it really means 'yes.'...but I like to wait to tell you about it in the car or in the grocery store." Sincerely, you beloved two year old.

We should daily work ourselves out of a job and live each moment with our child with the goal of giving them back to God!

Psalms 127: "Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. {2} In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat-- for he grants sleep to those he loves. {3} Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. {4} Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. {5} Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their enemies in the gate."

Psalms 128: "Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in his ways. {2} You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours. {3} Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. {4} Thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD. {5} May the LORD bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem, {6} and may you live to see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel."