

BEACHBURG PASTORAL CHARGE

Mother's Day Worship Service May 9th, 2021

Call to Worship

Of course, we all know that today is Mother's Day so I begin today by lighting the Christ candle in memory of our mothers who are no longer physically with us. My mom passed away 9 years ago this month so this candle illuminates the fond memories I have of her.

On the side of this candle is the word "gather" so let us now come together here in a virtual community, family and friends in the faith, sisters and brothers and siblings, one of another, to bring the living of our lives as an offering of thanksgiving to God who formed us in the womb, and shaped us, and nourishes us day by day.

We come as God's people. We come as we are.

May this time be a time of giving thanks.

Come, and let us worship God in prayer

Gathering Prayer

In you O God, every family on earth belongs. Illuminate us with the light of your love. Grant comfort to those who are hurt and lonely, healing to those that are sick, and wisdom to those fearful in times of change.

We thank you for the gifts of love we have received from mother, father, spouse, child and companion. As we have been loved by you and others, so may we love, through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Please enjoy our opening song "*Call Her Blessed*" by Stacey Noll Ripley
<https://youtu.be/ZykIXFOHaAw>

Scripture - Matthew 5:38-48; Love for Enemies

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'^[h] ³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor[□] and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 7:24-27 - The Wise and Foolish Builders

²⁴ “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Meditation

Foundations

Being a mom, or a dad for that matter is hard. Don't you find it strange that one of the most demanding “jobs” in life does not require a diploma or even a certificate to qualify. Of course, we probably learnt how to parent from our mom and dad and, if we were fortunate, we had good teachers.

When I was growing up, I was fortunate to have had a good mom because back when I was a young adult there were no parenting classes. Fortunately, I do remember my own daughters coming home with a baby doll from high school which hopefully taught them the responsibilities that are involved in raising a child.

The best way to raise a child – now there is a topic that we could have quite a discussion on. In fact, the discussion could become quite heated especially in that there are so many different opinions on how to do it. So maybe, as they say, we shouldn't “go there.”

Maybe, instead, we should reflect on our own emotional reactions when it comes to raising children or grandchildren for that matter.

For over a hundred years now, this Sunday has been called “Mother's Day.” In the church, more recently, it's been called “Christian Family Sunday.” In my time in ministry, I've discovered something: *that just below the surface, family-related issues are a sensitive subject. They can be a minefield waiting to explode.*

Why is that? Because almost everyone has experienced some sort of pain and distress in their own family or in their own marriage (past or present). Very few of us would not own up to some family-related sadness somewhere and that sadness often links to a feeling of guilt.

And this morning, as together we celebrate mothers and rejoice in families, we also need to say some things that I hope are helpful.

I do have a few suggestions. Let's reflect on them together.

[1] *We should recognize that no one has (or has ever had) a perfect family. You haven't had a perfect family. I haven't, either. No one has. That's not to say there are not good families out there, and lots of them—just no perfect ones.*

The sooner we recognize that, the sooner we can stop pretending. We can stop pretending that ours is the perfect family—all the while suspecting that other people have perfect families, while we don't. Freedom comes from recognizing that there are no perfect families. There never have been, and there never will be.

[2] Most of us can look back and recognize things that we would change if only we could. There are things we would change about what we once did—or what we failed to do. There are things we feel guilty about. There are changes we would bring about—if only we could—in what others once did to us: things that cause us shame, or abiding pain, or hurt and resentment. Notice: it's not just other people who sometimes feel this way. Those are experiences of us all.

[3] The reality is not only can those things never be changed—they likely could not be changed even if we lived our lives over again. You see, family members who did things to hurt us were likely stressed and hurting people themselves. Sometimes—maybe often—they really couldn't help what they did. Likely the same is true for us: if we now went back and relived the things we once did—even with all that we know now—the stresses and pressures would still be the same, and our mistakes might be the same as well. Not always, and not necessarily—but we'd still be far from perfect. We'd still make mistakes. Other people would still make mistakes.

Many of the things that happened could not easily have been avoided, because of the people we are, and the way the world is.

Many of us—maybe all of us—are people who have been hurt by others in our own families. Many of us—maybe all of us—are also people who have hurt other family members by what we have said and done. So what can we now do?

First: Let's make peace with ourselves about the hurtful family-related things from the past. Let's not hold onto them forever. Let's decide that it no longer matters whether things could have been different. Let's decide that those things are in the past, and they no longer have any place in our family lives here in the present. Let's forgive ourselves—if we were at fault—and go on from here. Now, some things may still need to be worked through or talked out. If so, find someone who can help you, and do that. But let's begin by deciding to leave hurtful things from the past behind.

Second: Let's make peace with family members we may be separated from. Yes—things did happen in the past, but we only poison our own hearts and spirits when we hold onto old resentments. Let's forgive those family members, if that's what is needed. Let's ask them to forgive us, if that's what is needed. It sounds too difficult, you say? The One who forgave his enemies from the cross will help you. He promised that he would.

Third: Let's make peace with God over family-related things we need to be forgiven for. Maybe we are the people who need to be forgiven. Maybe some of the things that happened were our fault. And in the end, only God can forgive us. Only God can forgive. And he will. There is nothing for which we cannot be forgiven. Maybe there is something in our past that feels too big and too awful—something that feels unforgivable. But it isn't. God has promised. That's the good news of the Gospel. Ask him to forgive. Accept his forgiveness. Believe that he has done it. Believe the amazing truth that you are forgiven.

Fourth: Ask the question, "Lord, what should I be doing for my family now, today, in this present moment?" God has set us free from the past. What matters now is the present and the future. That should be our focus from this point on.

So—what do we do? Where do we look for wisdom? Can anyone tell us what is wise?

The world is filled with people who are convinced that they are wise. And every generation has its own wisdom on the subject of families. Let's look at practice of spanking children. A hundred years ago, almost all wise people assumed that spanking children (when they appeared to need it) was a good thing. Even when I was growing up there was a big black leather belt that hung by the back kitchen door.

Now I don't ever remember being on the wrong side of it, but believe me it certainly was a deterrent when you were getting a little too big for your britches.

Then a few people began to question the practice. After a time, the wise people of our own day recommended against it. Finally, countries like Sweden passed laws against it. In Canada, at least one person who spanked his child has been charged with a criminal offence. So what is the truth?

Does truth change with every generation? Was spanking the right thing to do a hundred years ago but wrong today? If a hundred years from now spanking is acceptable once again— as they say “history is doomed to repeat itself”—will it mean that the wise people of today were mistaken? How can you tell the difference between *truth* on the one hand, and *political correctness*, on the other?

So what is right and wrong in all of this? Or, perhaps we should be asking: what is right and wrong in *every* family situation? How can we ever know? Can we ever get beyond the political correctness of the moment to actually discover the truth?

Perhaps, sometimes, we can. Perhaps there is a way to find the truth—although not always in the detail we would like. The Bible links us to God's truth. Jesus, our focus of the Bible, once claimed that he himself *is* the Truth. And if there is a Truth, it must surely

be something that stands forever.

So, you ask, what did Jesus have to say about raising children? We don't know. If he ever said anything about it—and perhaps he did—his words on the subject were not recorded. What does the rest of Scripture say about it? Well, apart from a verse or two in the Old Testament, very little. It looks like a question we have to figure out on our own. But Scripture—including the words of Jesus—gives us some principles to help us.

For example, as you know, Jesus commands us to love one another, to love our neighbour, and to love our enemy. He never does command us, apparently, to love our families. Likely, in the light of everything else he tells us, he just assumes that. He does give us one family-based example: people who give all their money to the Temple and who use that as an excuse not to care for their aging parents, says Jesus at one point, are hypocrites [Mark 7:11].

Clearly Jesus would not want us to love our own families less than our neighbours or our enemies or our brothers and sisters in the church. Clearly Jesus calls us to love them more. And if we do that, some of the specific details may become less important.

Even if I was spanked, I'm not sure it matters all that much because I somehow knew that my mother and father truly loved me. I think that children who grow up with the strong conviction that they are loved usually become healthy and happy adults,

whether they were spanked or not. Children who grow up doubting that they are truly loved seldom become healthy and happy adults, whether they were spanked or not.

Jesus does not give us all the specific answers we would sometimes like. He does give us what we need to work out answers on our own.

For example, Jesus gives us the principle of *faithfulness*. Wise people of our day seldom mention it, but Jesus makes it essential: *faithfulness to your husband or wife, and, by extension, faithfulness to your children.*

Then Jesus speaks of *going beyond the call of duty*. In Jesus' day a Roman soldier could order you to carry his equipment for one mile. Jesus said his followers should carry it a second mile. Surely he would also expect us to go the second mile for our own families.

That not only means not getting even with family members who hurt us. It not only means treating them fairly. *It means treating them more than fairly. It means giving them better than they deserve.*

So what happens if we take seriously what Jesus tells us? Then Jesus gives us a promise. The promise is part of a little story—a story of two men who each built a house [Matt. 7:24-27]. One built his house on the rock, said Jesus, while the other built on the sand.

The houses looked a lot alike. both men were proud of what they had built. And for a while, you couldn't tell the difference between them.

But then a storm came up—as storms always do. When it was over, only one house was left standing.

“Anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on a rock,” says Jesus [Matt. 7:24].

Do you want your house to stand? Do you want your family to stand firm through the storms that come? Do you want it to become all that it can be? There is a way for that to happen. Jesus has told us what to do. Our job is to do it. Thanks be to God!

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

We thank You Gracious God for the love that you have shown us and today we pray for the woman of this world who have mirrored that love to those around them.

May each one of us uphold and support them, recognize that Mothering is not for the faint of heart and we have real warriors in our midst.

Today we pray and ask for your blessing:

For those who gave birth this year to their first child - we celebrate with you.

For those who lost a child this year – we mourn with you

For those who are in the trenches with little ones every day and wear the badge of food stains – we appreciate you

For those who experienced loss through miscarriage, failed adoptions, or running away—we mourn with you

For those who walk the hard path of infertility, fraught with pokes, prods, tears, and disappointment – we walk with you. Forgive us when we say foolish things. We don't mean to make this harder than it is.

For those who are foster moms, mentor moms, and spiritual moms – we need you

For those who have warm and close relationships with your children – we

celebrate with you

For those who have disappointment, heart ache, and distance with your children – we sit with you

For those who lost their mothers this year or in past years – we grieve with you

For those who experienced abuse at the hands of your own mother – we acknowledge your experience and pain.

For those who lived through on-line tests, medical tests, and the overall testing of motherhood – we are better for having you in our midst

For those who long to be in a loving relationship and mother your own children – we mourn that life has not turned out the way you longed for it to be

For those who step-parent – we walk with you on these complex paths

For those who envisioned lavishing love on grandchildren -yet that dream is not to be, we grieve with you

For those who placed children up for adoption — we commend you for your selflessness and remember how you hold that child in your heart

And for those who are pregnant with new life, both expected and surprising –we anticipate with you

This Mother's Day May as we remember, may you walk with others just as Christ Our Lord walks with each one of us. Spreading the love of God confident in the words that Jesus taught us to say praying:

I leave you with A song to honor all our blessed mothers, and everyone who loves and cares for a child. "You Are More Than Enough!" Written by Shawna Edwards and sung by members of the One Voice Children's Choir.

https://youtu.be/OtQJj_00ybs

I will be off for the next two Sundays so please stay healthy and safe until we meet again.