

Sermon for May 13, 2018
Mother's Day
"Jesus: A Mother's Example"

John 17:6-19

"Jesus loves me this is know for the Bible tells me so." Evidence of the love of God is everywhere in the Bible. It is especially evident in the Gospels. That's because Jesus is the living embodiment of God's love. It is a love that not only sacrifices to save us, but also gives us an example to follow as we try to live our lives pleasing to God. That is why we call Jesus our example and redeemer.

This example of love is shown to us in the passage I read from John's Gospel. This is part of a prayer that Jesus prayed for his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. Most people think of Jesus praying "Let this cup pass from me. Not my will, but yours be done." But that is only part of Jesus' prayer in the Garden. A large portion of that prayer is about Jesus' disciples.

Jesus realized that he would soon be separated from his disciples. So he prayed that the Father would care for the disciples. He admitted that they were ultimately a gift from God and that they belong to God. He also knew that he had taught them as best he could. So he released them to the Father's care.

Of course Jesus is an example for all of us to follow, but I believe that today's lesson has a special application on Mother's Day. Jesus said of his disciples, "They were yours and you gave them to me." Any mother would agree with the statement that their child is a gift from God. But how seriously do we take that statement. Do we consciously think of our children and grandchildren as gifts from God? Do we think of them as belonging to God or belonging to us?

Most of the time I have been aware that my two girls are gifts from God. But then there have been times they don't seem like gifts. You know the times when they refuse to cooperate and tried my nerves. I am sure the disciples got on Jesus' nerves at times. Especially in the garden when they couldn't stay awake just a little while to pray with Jesus.

But our children are gifts from God. They are living blessing from our Eternal Father. Ultimately they are not our own, but belong to God. We are but caretakers of God's blessings; foster parents of God's children. If we can only remember that they are gifts from God, then we can give thanks to God even when they clog up the toilet and take off their shoes for the fifth time while you are trying to dress them for school or make life choice that hurt themselves and others.

Jesus realized that the disciples were gifts from God and he speaks about how he has cared for them. Jesus says, "The words that you gave me, I have given to them." Throughout his time with the disciples Jesus taught them at every opportunity. A look at the parables and sayings of Jesus is proof of this. Usually he used common everyday things to teach the disciples. He was probably pointing to these things as he used them as object lessons.

As parents, both biologically and in the church family, we have a responsibility to teach our children the words that God has given us. We are called to teach our children that God is their maker, that Jesus showed us the depth of God's love by dying for our sins, and that the Holy Spirit wants to live in our lives. One of the ongoing trends in church attendance is that some people tend to drop out of church during their young adult years until they have

children. They sometimes then begin attending church again because they realize a need for their children to learn of God and have a relationship with their heavenly Father.

But merely bringing our children to church is just the beginning. Parents need to know the Gospel too. We can't teach what we don't know. So parents need to go to Sunday School if they want their children to get something out of it. Children also need to see the Gospel at work in our lives. I remember one day seeing the Gospel at work in my Mother's life. I remember returning to the store because the clerk gave my mother a ten instead of a one. I also remember the volunteer work for the Red Cross and the time she spent just listening to me. Our children need to hear us speaking of Jesus, but they also need to see Jesus at work in our lives. If they hear the words but don't see the actions they will decide that Jesus really means nothing because we are just paying lip service to him. Jesus said, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they may also be sanctified in truth." In the same way we need to sanctify ourselves as an example for our children.

Finally Jesus gives us an example by simply praying for his disciples. How often do you pray for your children or for children and young people in the church? Most people only pray for their children in a moment of crisis. But we should pray for them daily. We can't be with our children 24 hours a day. During those times we need to surrender them over to God's care because we are powerless.

It may be difficult to think of Jesus as powerless, but he was when he surrendered to God's will to die on the cross. It was by his choice, but he couldn't be on the cross and comforting his disciples at the same time. For three days he would be separated from them by his own death. So for that time he surrendered them to the Father.

There comes a point in every parent's life when it is time for the child to move on. That is the goal of motherhood, and fatherhood too. To raise the child so that they can take care of themselves. Whether it is sending them to first grade or college or into careers or marriage, we have to let go. At those times we have to follow Jesus' example and surrender them, to the Fathers' care. After all they are God's to begin with.

Jesus our example and redeemer gave us an example in his life that applies to us all. I know that many of you mothers know the things I have said today. You already know that your children are gifts from God and you give thanks for them every day. You know that you need to pass on all that you know about Jesus and that your life should reflect the things you say. You also know that you need to surrender your children to God in prayer daily.

But sometimes we need to be reminded. Often it is hard to try to live these ideals in the real world. Jesus knows this because he too faced the same difficulties that we do. Yet in Jesus we have a living example of the Word of God in the flesh. An example of how to live out the love we have for our children.

I guess what it all boils down to is the love of God. Mothers love their children just as God loves us as children. As humans we often have trouble expressing that love. But in Jesus, God has given us a living example of love. In the end we all, mothers included, need to follow Jesus' example. And perhaps we should remind ourselves that Jesus is interceding with God the Father for us too.