

## Sermon on Mother's Day 2006 on Luke 2, 19, 14.05.2006

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.*

**Text:**

*Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.*

Dear Congregation,

Today is Mother's Day and we all know that we hold this occasion dear in our congregation. There is a great deal of preparation every year to show our appreciation for all the hard work and the love we receive from our wives and mothers.

I do not need to emphasize that this is not supposed to give us as your husbands and sons the alibi to not care about you for the rest of the year. In a sense every day should include some appreciation of what we often, too often, take simply for granted.

I think in general we as men are not very good in complementing our female companions. Maybe we can again make the resolution to do better this year.

However, I do not want to talk about the lack of appreciation today. I want to talk about the pressure many women put themselves under to make the family and the household work, the marriage, the upbringing of children.

No doubt, this is hard work, but I often think that many of you have very high expectations of how you are supposed to do this job. I listened to a Christian Radio program this week and the speaker which was on, a lady, who had a career as writer and psychologist and was a mother herself, said, that also among Christians the ideal of motherhood has confronted women with such high expectation that many women feel guilty most of the time, because they think they have failed to do their best for their families.

I haven't realized that we as a society have made motherhood a job which is judged by the same standards we apply to the workplace. I have not realized that having children has changed from a necessity to secure your retirement, which it simply was 100 years ago, to a status symbol. 20 years ago you were supposed to have a job to show your independence as a woman and to proof that you could succeed in a career. Today many women have to work anyway to cover the constant increasing costs of living and on top of that have to proof that they at the same time are capable to raise children. Successful at the work-front and at the home-front. I asked myself if this applies to men as well and who sets these standards. Maybe we just think that we have to be perfect in any way, because we have been getting used to perfection in every aspect of our lives. There is only one tiny little problem: We are not perfect! Nobody is: No Mom, no Dad, no kid, no Pastor – I think you have experienced that already, - no one. And here comes the good news: We do not have to. We should try to give our best, like it says on the tombstone of one of the former chancellors of Germany: I have always made the effort. But we should balance that with what Jesus reminded us of: That we do not forget to love ourselves as well.

I think that our striving for perfection has also blinded us for the really important things in life.

I found the following text:

If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place, but have not love, I am a housekeeper--not a homemaker. If I have time for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements, but have not love, my children learn cleanliness - not godliness. Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laugh. Love smiles at

the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window. Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk. Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys. Love is present through the trials. Love reprimands, reprovcs, and is responsive. Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child, and then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood. Love is the key that opens salvation's message to a child's heart. Before I became a mother I took glory in my house of perfection. Now I glory in God's perfection of my child. - As a mother, there is much I must teach my child, but the greatest of all is love.

Some might have recognized the text which gave someone the idea to rephrase it: It is the Apostle Paul's lesson on love from the first letter to the Corinthians. And what this text very generally means is this: We will not be remembered by how perfect we have been, but by how much we have loved. I think this is great advice for all of us this morning.

Often, I think, moms have no idea how highly their own kids think of them.

A panel of experts was asked to complete some sentences about their moms.

What made them experts was the one thing they all had in common. They were all preschoolers. Even though these are the words of 5 year olds I think the qualities they recognized in their moms are they qualities needed in all moms.

Here are the sentences and the answers:

My mom is best at: "feeding the dog," "making my bed," "driving," "cleaning," "running," "riding a two-wheeler," "watering the garden."

If I had enough money, I'd buy her: "flowers," "a car," "a necklace," "a brand-new fan," "a kitten," "a diamond ring," "a big pack of bubble gum."

It makes me feel good inside when Mom says: "I love you," "good job," "dinnertime!" "You look handsome," "I'll buy you something."

My mom is as pretty as a -- "butterfly," "ballerina," "mouse," "princess," "my brothers," "goose," "gold ring," "a clean horse."

By the way, one of the most memorable comments from the children on Father's Day was: Daddy gets tired out from: "chasing mommy." – I could not hide that one from you.

See, a Spanish proverb says: An ounce of mother is worth a ton of priest. – No comment on that one.

So, I hope I could make all moms to feel a little better about themselves. But the question might remain, how do we deal with all the demands which seems to be growing and growing every year? Isn't it still an obligation to get your kids through school and lay the groundwork for their careers?

Do we really have to be the supermoms and superdads in order to avoid any hardships for our kids later in life?

Talking about this, a joke comes to mind: My mom can do animal imitations," little Charlie boasted to his playmate. "So," the playmate responded, "mine can too. She always watches me like a hawk."

You can not be around your kids 24/7. You can not prepare your kids for everything which they may face in life. You ca not watch them like a hawk, and protect the like a lion.

When I thought about a biblical connection to this topic of motherhood and I mentioned this to my family, our son came up with a brilliant idea: "Why don't you talk about Mary, the mother of Jesus?" – Maybe I should be listening more often to what my kids say. First I thought, ya, right, man we are Lutherans not Catholics. But then I looked into it and there are two amazing qualities this woman had:

She never stopped loving her child, but at the same time: She never tried to hold him back.

In the New Testament we find very little about Mary. There is certainly some talk about her in regards to the birth of Jesus. And then later on we here that she at one time, after Jesus had started to preach, follows him with Jesus' siblings and finds him and – in a way – is neglected by Jesus. And then she finally appears again under the cross.

How strange must it have been, to see your child growing up, becoming a man, and then one day, he packs a few belongings and leaves. You hear all these stories about him, you then manage to come close, but only to finally see your son die on the cross? – I do not want to become melodramatic this morning; I just want to come back to my question: What can we learn from her?

There is one little sentence which again caught my attention. It is part of the Christmas story, after all people, the shepherds and the wise men have come to see the new born, her son Jesus.

It reads in Luke 2:

*Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.*

What does that mean?

She keeps in her mind what is said about her son, from the first moment on. And I assume that this comment has a deeper meaning than just referring to something which very often applies to women: They have a brilliant memory. Too brilliant at times! This little comment is not about her memory it is about her reminding herself who this Jesus really is.

And there comes a thought which might help all moms and dads here this morning to realize something which hopefully lifts a burden of all those who constantly hit the wall while trying to be perfect:

Do not forget who your children are. They are certainly, different from Jesus, but still they are two things at the same time: They are your own blood, but nevertheless, they are still also God's children.

You can not watch them like a hawk, but God can. You can not please every wish and calm every fear, God can. You can not foresee every bump in the road and give them every advice possible to deal with it, but God can.

If you think of failures from the past or think of possible mistakes in the future, do not forget, your children always had and have two father, the one who struggled with your kids as much or even more than you did, and the one who is the Father of all, who gives, where we can't give, who is limitless in his care, where we naturally are limited.

I think if we do not want to become frustrated and if we do try to find ways to play our role as mothers and also as fathers, we need to learn those words, keep them in our hearts and bring them to our attention once in a while: The words written in 1. John, 3:1: "*See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.*"

The last thought comes from a real source of wisdom, the TV series 'Golden Girls', the old mom says: "It's not easy being a mother. If it were easy, fathers would do it."

Amen.

***And the Peace of God which passes all understanding, may keep our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.***