



May 13, 2007

## Our Greatest Need

The last two weeks I have focused on scriptures that were the prescribed readings for those days in the church year. This week I've changed and I'm not following the church year. Why? Because the church year doesn't have a mother's day and today is mother's day and I love my mom. So, this sermon is about moms. I'd like to read a story that I read this past week it was titled *Parable for Mothers*. It goes like this:

The young mother set her foot on the path of life, "Is the way long", she asked? And her guide said, "Yes, and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning."

But the young mother was happy and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children and gathered flowers for them along the way and the sun shone on them and life was good and the young mother cried, "Nothing will be lovelier than this."

Then night came, and the storm and the path was dark and the children shook with fear and cold, and the mother drew them close and covered them with her mantle and the children said, "Mother we are not afraid for you are near and no harm can come." And the mother said, "This is better than the brightest of day, for I have taught my children courage."

And the morning came and there was a hill ahead and the children climbed and grew weary and the mother was weary, but at all times she said to the children, "A little patience and we are there." So the children climbed and when they had reached the top, they

said, "We could not have done it without you Mother." And the mother, when she lay down that night, looked up at the stars and said, "This day is better than the last, for my children have learned fortitude in the face of difficulty. Yesterday I gave them courage. Today I have given them strength."

And the next day came strange clouds, which darkened the Earth-clouds of war and hate and evil, and the children grouped and stumbled, and the mother said, "Look up! Lift up your eyes to the Light!" And the children looked up and saw above the clouds an Everlasting Glory, and it guided them beyond the darkness. And that night the mother said, "This is the best day of all, for I have shown my children God."

And the days went on, and the months and the years, and the mother grew old, and she was small and bent. But her children were strong and tall and walked with courage. And when the way was hard, they helped their mother; and when the way was rough they lifted her, for she was as light as a feather; and at last they came to a hill, and beyond the hill they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide.

And the mother said, "I have reached the end of my journey. And now I know that the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, and their children after them."

I love that last line it is most biblical. " Know that the end is better than the beginning for my children can walk alone and their children after them." Biblical? You ask; you bet. Think of our New Testament reading this morning. When Paul wrote this letter he was in prison for defying Caesar's order to stop preaching the Gospel. Since Paul couldn't care for the church that he had founded in Ephesus he sent Timothy a young man whom he had mentored. Ephesus was the capital city of 230 independent communities in the Roman province of Asia. It was also the center of idol worship of Artemis the goddess of love and fertility. The pagan worship of her originally involved child sacrifice, which Rome had outlawed. But as a result it evolved in to worship through holy prostitution it was a battle ground for Christianity yet because of its position both geographically and politically it was like the hub of a wheel. The

gospel could spread out just as the spokes of a wheel spread out to all 230 communities. Now logic would tell us that this church in Ephesus would be a parish that would require the best of pastors a seasoned professional, someone who knows the art of spiritual warfare not some young whipper-snapper, which is exactly who Paul sends. He sends Timothy, a young inexperienced man. Why? The answer is right there in our Gospel 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul says, "I have been reminded of your sincere faith." Sincere faith; this is the number 1 quality or pre-requisite for service. From sincere faith flows the love and the servant hood we talked about last week. From sincere faith flows all the gifts of the spirit. But how could such a young man have such a faith? Well, again Paul includes it he says, "I have been reminded of your sincere faith which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also." This sincere faith came from mom, Eunice, who got it from grandma, Lois.

Moms and grandmas you are vitally important in the kingdom of God. This world pushed transitory values and tries to enslave our children to them values such as money, position, power and fame. Just consider the TV shows of today, American Idol, its all about fame, The Apprentice, its all about position, Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire, money, Survivor, power. Moms need to have their priorities straight so that they can pass on that which is not transitory but that which is eternal, a sincere faith. When asked what the greatest need in France was, Napoleon Bonaparte responded, "mothers". Pretty simple answer isn't it? Mothers prepare their children and grandchildren to walk alone.

A beautiful example of a mother is Susannah Wesley, mother of Charles and John Wesley, two sons who touched two continents for Christ. She had three priorities in raising her boys. The first priority was teaching them about their savior and she had six rules for teaching her children the priority of the Savior.

The first was, subdue self-will in a child. Its not all about the child, its not all about me, children tend to be very self centered. She felt subdue that so that the child sees it's all about God. Second, teach them to pray as soon as they can speak, but the first words from that babies lips be words to their heavenly Father. Number

three, giving him nothing he cries for and only what is good for him when he asks politely. Don't give into keeping up with the Jones'. Give him what he needs but make sure that he has manners. Number four, punish no fault confessed but let no sinful act go unnoticed. When your child admits wrong give forgiveness, but never excuse sin by saying boys will be boys or girls will be girls. Number five, reward good behavior, pretty well says it all. Look for the good in your child when there is good then reward because that is what will build self-esteem. And six strictly observe all promises you have made to your child. What is so familiar about these rules? Well, this is exactly the way the Lord treats us. Knowing the love of a mother up-close and personal the children will learn to love the love of the Father in heaven.

The second priority is scripture. Susannah would say, "Teach them young." She used Timothy's mother and grandmother as her guide after all, Paul writes in this same letter two chapters later 2 Timothy 3:15, "And how from infancy you have known the Holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." How long has Timothy known this? Since infancy; scripture must be a priority in mom's life if it is to be a priority in the life of the child. But out of the scripture flows the third priority.

Service; and I'll go right back to 2 Timothy 3:15-17. "And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." All of Timothy's, Charles', John's instructions in the Word in God's way had to do with preparing them for service to the Lord and this is the call to all of us mother, grandmother, father, grandfather parents to be.

I'd like to quote something that I read in devotion this past week. "Many good men and faithful servants of God have the same testimony. The great Baptist preacher G. Campbell-Morgan had four sons they all became preachers. At a family reunion a friend asked one of those sons, "which Morgan is the greatest preacher?" With his

eyes beaming with the light the son looked over to his father and said, "Why its mother."

In our Savior's name, Amen