

VOC May, 2015

## Joy-Filled Motherhood

*“ ‘ I prayed for this child, and the LORD has granted me what I asked of Him. So now I give him to the LORD. For his whole life he will be given over to the LORD’. And he worshipped the LORD there.” ( 1 Samuel 1: 27, 28).*

Hello Dear Listeners;

My calendar indicates that today it is Mother’s Day. It is a day honoring motherhood that’s observed in various ways world-wide. In North America Mother’s Day was first observed through the efforts of a certain Anna Jarvis in 1908 and it became an official U.S. holiday in 1914.

Anna Jarvis never married and never became a mother. In fact, later in life she would denounce the holiday’s commercialization and so she spent considerable time trying to remove it from the calendar.

Though Mother’s Day has been celebrated in a fashion as far back as the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans the more recent history of Mothers Day dates back to 1600s in England. Here a Mothering Sunday was celebrated to honor mothers. After a prayer service in church to honor Jesus’ mother Mary, children brought gifts and flowers to pay tribute to their own mothers. Later children also brought with them gifts and a special fruit cake or fruit-filled pastry.

Yet for all these honourable gestures, family tensions, marriage quarrels and home disruptions seem to be making headlines more frequently than acts of kindness for deserving mothers today.

Is it because there is a great deal of selfishness and a lack of honor for parents and others in authority today? Could it be that the disruptions in family life are more frequent because the norms of the bible that regulate human behavior are tossed aside by many today?

Jealousy and unkindness have been around for a long time. In the bible there is the story of Elkanah, the head of a family in Israel, who had two wives, named Hannah and Peninnah. You can read about it in 1 Samuel 1 and 2. Elkanah favored Hannah, whom he loved, with double portions of gifts and favors. That made Peninnah jealous though Hannah deserved sympathy as the Lord had closed her womb.

Peninnah found ways to irritate Hannah year after year. Even when the family went to the tabernacle to worship the Lord Peninnah provoked Hannah to the point that she wept and would not eat.

There must have been many days when Hannah felt hopeless in the face of what amounted to persecution even within her own family. Yet we do not read that she fought the abuse which came her way in like manner. On the contrary, she saw the LORD as her daily help. Instead of bickering and family infighting she put her trust in the Lord.

The bible tells us that sometime later when a religious sacrifice was held she left the festive occasion and was found in the temple pouring her heart out before the Lord. There she made a solemn vow to the Lord promising that if God would remember her and grant her a son shed would give him to the service of the LORD all the days of her life.

The Lord heard and answered her and gave her a son whom she named Samuel who served the Lord for years. In fact the Lord later used him to

effect a reformation, a renewal of life and conduct. For Christian living had fallen to a very low point in Israel.

Hannah's offering of her child to God was exemplary. In today's society there are not a few mothers and fathers who are bent on self-fulfilment, and who dream of their children to make names for themselves, as success stories in society.

Motherhood, Christian motherhood in which parents train their children to honor the Lord and live for His praise is at a premium. Home-life can be an unhappy and unfruitful experience and there is no lack of violence in not a few homes. That's why Children's Aid Societies are kept very busy.

On this day let the people of the nations stand up and honor all mothers. Especially those who are Christ-centered homemakers, mothers who together with their husbands labor to establish an attitude of joy, patience and forgiveness in their homes. So that, the LORD willing, when their children are out of the house, they might look back and say: "*I wish I could live my childhood over again.*"

Although we live in an egalitarian society where the roles of mothers and fathers are often forced into some kind of sterile equality yet it cannot be denied that mothers are the key to happy homes. Without minimizing the importance of faithful husbands yet God is pleased to give women a powerful Christian influence on their children.

We may think of the apostle Paul's words to his young Christian co-worker Timothy. in 2 Timothy 1:5

*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”.*

These words attest to the important influence mothers have on homes, families, children. Thirty years ago there was a Gallup Poll that reached this conclusion:

*The survey shows that the strongest influence on the average teen’s religious and moral upbringing comes, by a very wide margin, from the mother <sup>1</sup>*

Meanwhile significant role changes and even role reversal has taken place in our western society. Yet what a blessing it is when today, parents - and especially mothers - realize that the most important thing for them is not a career, nor the attainment of earth and possessions, but a God-pleasing family! The bible says that a woman who fears the Lord will be praised. ( Proverbs 31:30).

The Lord Jesus Christ while on the cross where He died for our sins spoke lovingly of His mother. He committed the care of His own mother into the caring hands of “*the beloved disciple*” John, with these words, “ *Here is your mother.*” ( John 19: 27a). Jesus loved His mother to the very end. He knows that to be a faithful, loving mother in this post-modern, hyperactive world is not easy. He knows how the pressures of daily life and of children who need loving, yet disciplined training can diminish your strength and sap your energy.

But then even as He prepared to go home to His Father in heaven He told His disciples he would remain with them to the close of the age. He would

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<sup>1</sup> quoted by Rev. W. Schulz in his “ Strength For Mothers” in The Lutheran Hour May 12, 1985

send His Spirit, the Counselor 'par excellence' down. That Holy Spirit would guide them in all the truth.

He's there, yes Christ Jesus is there also for you mothers and for families that serve the Lord. That fifth commandment of God which say "*Honor your father and your mother*" is still binding today.

So, children, fathers, treasure your mother, your wife today. Embrace your wife, your mom today and tell her you love her and how thankful you are that the LORD gives her to you.

Mothers, follow the Lord's command and rejoice in Him always<sup>2</sup>. Give thanks for this great gift of Christian motherhood. You and your husband have a special place and special roles in preparing your children for Christian service. God knows it is not an easy assignment as our society becomes more and more secular. Sad that in public life God's Word, and so, Christ's name are honored less and less.

Yet the bible says that if Jesus Christ, God's crucified and resurrected Son sets you free, then you are free indeed! <sup>3</sup> Free to take up your task cheerfully, patiently, with Christian persistence nurturing you children.

Hannah knew her God to be her source of grace and favor. A God of help who knew her every need. Well then, dear listeners, build *your* home, *your* family, *your* marriage on this Rock, this God of grace. He is there for you, morning, noon and night. Believe in Him and trust in Him. He will complete for you what He has undertaken for you in His Son. By grace, through faith He's delivered you not only from the powers of darkness, sin and death but he enables you to live a life of devotion to Him.

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<sup>2</sup> Philippians 4:4

<sup>3</sup> John 8:36

To you mothers we congratulate you and we pray that the Lord of life will give you much joy. May your husbands be there for your wives. They truly are God's gift to all of us. Cherish them then, always!

Amen and thank you for listening.