

Sermon for Sunday, May 10, 1981, by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
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"GOD'S GREATEST INVENTION"

St. Luke 1:5-13

Text: "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments
and ordinance of the Lord blameless."

St. Luke 1:6

This morning I want to talk about God's greatest invention. If you haven't already guessed what that invention is, I would like to suggest to you that the greatest thing God ever invented was a mother. Erma Bombeck once wrote a little article entitled "When God Created Mothers." I'd like to share it with you this morning. She writes, "When the Good Lord was creating Mothers, He was into His sixth day of 'overtime' when the angel appeared and said, 'You're doing a lot of fiddling around on this one.' And the Lord said, 'Have you read the spec on this order? She has to be completely washable, but not plastic. Have 180 movable parts, all replaceable. Run on black coffee and leftovers. Have a lap that disappears when she stands up. A kiss that can cure anything from a broken leg to a disappointed love affair. And six pairs of hands.'"

The angel shook his head slowly and said, 'six pairs of hands? No way.' 'It's not the six pairs of hands that are causing me the problem,' said the Lord. 'It's the three pairs of eyes that Mothers have to have!' 'That's on the standard model?' asked the angel. The Lord nodded. 'One pair that sees through closed doors when she asks "what are you kids doing in there?" when she already knows. Another here in the back of her head that sees what she shouldn't but what she has to know, and of course the ones here in front that can look at a child when he goofs up and say "I understand and I love you" without so much as uttering a word.' 'Lord,' said the angel touching His sleeve gently, 'Come to bed. Tomorrow...'

'I can't,' said the Lord. 'I'm so close to creating something so close to myself. Already I have one who heals herself when she is sick, can feed a family of six on one pound of hamburger, and can get a nine-year-old to stand under a shower.' The angel circled the model of a Mother very slowly. 'It's too soft,' he sighted. 'But tough!', said the Lord excitedly. 'You cannot imagine what this Mother can do or endure.' 'Can it think?' 'Not only think, but it can reason and compromise,' said the Creator. Finally, the angel bent over and ran his finger across the cheek. 'There's a leak,' he pronounced. 'I told you you were trying to put too much into this model; 'It's not a leak,' said the Lord. 'It's a tear.' 'What's it for?' 'It's for joy, sadness, disappointment, pain, loneliness and pride.' 'You are a genius,' said the angel. The Lord looked somber. 'I didn't put it there.'"

Well, a mother is a wonderful invention. She is programmed to get up in the middle of the night to soothe the cries from the crib, she places a cool hand on a little fevered brow. She bandages skinned knees and stubbed toes; she kisses away pain and hugs a broken heart back to health. She sews, scrubs, cooks irons, patches, mops, runs the school route, makes the scout meetings and the ball games. She does the most and asks the least and no matter how unthinkingly she is treated, she is always there to do her best. Finally the day comes when on Mother's Day you must pin on a white rose next to your heart and life is never the same without her. The most important person in your development has

slipped away and somehow we never quite get over missing her. Yet, the best things in our lives--our character, our love, our ability to forgive, and so many noble qualities we often owe to our mothers.

Unfortunately, God's greatest invention doesn't always work as the Creator intended. Not all mothers are who and what they should be. For example, it is said that the Emperor Nero's mother was a murderess. And that Lord Byron who had an incestuous relationship with his half-sister had a mother who was a proud and violent woman. I suppose it is sometimes like the automobile manufacturer who got a telephone call. "Was it your company that advertised on TV that you put a car together in seven minutes?" asked the caller. Very proudly he replied, "Yes, that was our company." "Well," said the man, "I think I got that car!" Well, sometimes mothers--and dads, too--are not all the manufacturer meant for them to be.

For that reason, this morning I want to talk about a very special family in the Bible. It is the mother and father of John the Baptist. The Bible tells us that these two people were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. They were simple, ordinary people who were trying to be God's people. As a result of that, let me point out to you something that is very important. In the first sentence of our Scripture this morning three names are mentioned. First, there is Herod. Second there are Zechariah and Elizabeth. Herod was king of Judea. History has a lot to say about Herod, and none of it is very good. He had ten wives, many of whom he murdered; he has numerous sons, some of whom he killed; and after his death, his sons struggled among themselves for power.

But the fact is, as important as Herod was, the future of that nation did not lie with him or his descendants. No, the future lay with people like Zechariah and Elizabeth. And that is certainly true for our nation today. Ultimately, the future does not lie with presidents and senators and congressmen. Instead, it lies with godly homes. The strength of our nation is the ordinary men and women who try to be righteous before God and to walk in his commandments. Sometimes as we look at the present world situation or even our national picture, we get discouraged. We wonder what is the world coming to--what will be the consequence of corrupt leaders or greedy leaders; what will be the consequence of rising crime and all the other problems that grip our society. Yet, in the broad perspective, in terms of the long haul of history, the future will be determined by the kinds of homes the world has. If you want a strong nation, you must produce a strong and godly home. And in the long run, that will count for more than all else.

This leads me to second observation I would like to make. It is out of godly homes that most of our best and greatest leadership comes. I saw an article the other day about former presidents. The author wrote, "From John Adams to Ronald Reagan, all the men who have been president of the United States have held one trait in common--devotion to their mothers." The author went on to state, "In fact, it seems to be a rule that the more outstanding the chief executive, the deeper his bond with his mother." (Eliz. G. Benton, Survey) As Abraham Lincoln once said, "All that I am or hope ever to be, I got from my mother, God bless her."

When we stop to think about it, the great leaders of the New Testament came from godly homes. Of course, there was John the Baptist whose parents were righteous before God and walked in his commandments. And the Bible tells us that Jesus

himself came from a Godly home. For example, when the Angel appeared to Mary, he said to her, "...for you have found favor with God." And when the Bible comes to speak of Joseph, it says of him that he was a just man. (Matthew 1:19) Undoubtedly Paul himself was raised in a godly home. He was raised in the strict laws of the Pharisees and when he speaks of his life before encountering Jesus he says he was, "circumcised on the eighth day...a Hebrew born of Hebrews ... as to righteousness under the law blameless." (Phil. 3:5,6) Or, again, look at young Timothy. According to St. Paul Timothy was a third generation person from a godly home. He wrote to Timothy, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you." (II Timothy 1:5)

So, our spiritual leaders for tomorrow are the children of godly homes today. Who knows but that some little child is being shaped and moulded in your home or a fellow-member's home to become a great leader for tomorrow.

But that leads me to a third thing I want to say. Not all of our children will be great leaders but God needs forerunners. That is, God needs men and women who love the Lord who play important roles that may not get the most glory. John the Baptist pointed beyond himself. He was to say, "I am not he." He was to say, "...he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am worthy to carry..." (St. Matthew 3:11) You see, not every person can be a Moses or Elijah. Not all of us can be a Paul or a Peter. We can't all be preachers or Elders or Deacons. But God needs people who do the less spectacular things--people who do the teaching in Sunday School, people who visit in the hospital, people who call on visitors. You may not be a great spiritual leader this morning, but God needs forerunners--people who are not up front, people who are not getting the acclaim, but people who are quietly going about serving the Lord. Back in 1858 there was a man named Kimball. He was just a Sunday School teacher. Maybe he wasn't even a very good teacher, but he loved the Lord and he was faithful. He was a foreunner. Mr. Kimball lead a Boston shoe clerk to Jesus. That clerk was named Dwight L. Moody. He became a great evangelist. On a preaching mission in New England in 1879 he led the pastor of a small church to Jesus named F. B. Meyer. Mr. Meyer was asked to preach on a college campus and with his new-found love of Jesus, a student named J. Wilbur Chapman was led to the Lord. Mr. Chapman became a dedicated Christian and worked with the YMCA. He employed a former baseball player to help him named Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday later held a series of services in the Charlotte, N.C. area. A group of local business men were so impressed because of what happened they decided to have another preaching series and brought in an envangelist named Mordecai F. Hamm. During that series of services a young man heard about Jesus and gave his life to Christ. His name was Billy Graham. Who can even begin to guess what stories will follow the lives of persons led to the Lord by Billy Graham. But the point is this: it all began because a simple, humble man was content to be a forerunner and to do his best where God called him. How about you? Are you a spiritual leader? If not, what kind of a forerunner are you? Are you faithfully serving the Lord where he has called you to serve?

A fourth thing I want to call to your attention is that people of God have an awe, a reverence, a fear of the Lord. When the angel appeared to Zachariah the Bible says fear fell upon him. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary the Bible says she was troubled and the angel had to say to her, "Do not be afraid..." (St. Luke 1:30). When the angels appeared to the Shepherds at the birth of Jesus, the Bible says "...and they were filled with fear..."(St. Luke 2:9) If there is anything our homes need today it is an awe, a reverence, a fear of the Lord. Husbands and wives need to consider how they treat one another and

fear the Lord. Parents need to consider how they treat their children and fear the Lord. Families need to consider the quality of their lives and fear the Lord. Above all, our American homes need to rediscover a reverential awe before God who will hold us accountable for who and what we are.

I wish I had time to say more about that, but let me hasten on to add one final observation. That observation is this: God has a plan for the life of every child. When the angel told Zachariah about the child to be born to him and Elizabeth, he told him about God's plan for that child. When Joseph and Mary took the infant Jesus to the temple, Simeon took the child in his arms and told of God's plan for Jesus. He told how Jesus would be a revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to the people of Israel. Yes, God had a plan for Jesus. That is true for you. It is true for me. It is true for your children. Yes, God has a plan for each of us and he has a plan for your children and your grandchildren. Will each of us find that plan for his or her life?

That is an important question, is it not? Have you found God's plan for your life--are you still searching for god's will for your life even though you may have grown old. Will your children and your children's children find God's plan for their lives?

Well, it is Mother's Day. A godly mother is God's greatest invention. A godly home is God's greatest institution. Is your home the kind of godly home that God wants it to be? Do you have fear of the Lord and are you finding His will for your life? You see, you can have the right aim in life but you will never hit anything until you pull the trigger.