

Sermon for Sunday, June 21, 1981 by Dr. Andrew A. Jumper, Pastor
Central Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO 63105

"WHO'S MINDING THE STORE"

Philippians 2:1-11

Text: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus..."
Philippians 2:5

The phrase, "Who's minding the store", has been an expression I have heard as long as I can remember. It is simply a question about who is in charge of something--who is in authority. President Reagan made national headlines with the expression during his recent hospitalization. You will remember that after he was permitted to have visitors, a number of his top aides came to visit him. He looked at all of them and then asked, "Who's minding the store?"

Today is father's day when we pay special recognition to our dads. The question I want to ask is this: who's minding the store at your house? To be a father biologically is no great achievement. There are literally millions of men in America today who are illegitimate fathers whose children are on welfare. In many cases those children do not even know who their fathers are. But it is one thing for a man to become a father and quite another thing for a man to be a father. It is about the latter subject that I wish to speak this morning--about being a father. You see, every report coming out today that is studying the home indicates a growing number of homes that are breaking down. We are hearing more and more about children who are becoming delinquent, about divorce, about the break-down in the American home. One of the reasons this is happening is because our homes are not built on God's plan for the family. God does have a plan for the family. If a family does not follow God's plan for the family that home is not going to work very well. And in God's plan for the family, the father--the man--plays a very specific role. Naturally, if the father is not following God's plan, that man's family is out of God's perfect will for his family.

So, one of the first things I want to do this morning is to ask you fathers, who's minding the store at your house--is your home being run on God's plan? Is your home based on God's strategy for the family? Are you fulfilling the role God has laid out for you in your home? You see, if you are not being the person God has called you to be, you are getting your family out of God's plan and out of God's will. And that is going to have serious repercussions for those whom you love the most.

One part of God's plan for the family has to do with the order of the home or the pattern of authority. The fact is, a home is an organization. And every organization must have some order to it--it must have some patterns of authority for it to function effectively. So the home, if it is to function properly, must have order and authority. The question is, who has the authority in the home? Is it the husband--is it the wife? Actually, I know some homes where the children rule the roost! And how does a couple decide who will have final authority? I realize that in this day of emphasis on equality and equal rights the whole question of the authority structure of the home is being questioned. But how do you decide who has the final say? Do you cut cards? Do you draw straws? Have a fist fight? Take turns? Just how is the decision made in your home as to who has final authority? Well, the Bible speaks very decisively to that issue. The Bible says that the Husband and Father is to be responsible for that authority. (Genesis 2:18, I Cor. 11:3, and Eph. 5:23)

In many of the counseling cases I deal with, the home is having trouble because God's authority structure is being violated. In some instances, the wife has become the dominant figure and exercises the authority. In other cases, the husband has simply abandoned his duty and has refused to exercise the authority God has placed on him. But in every case where God's plan is not being followed, trouble always results. Let me ask you, what authority structure do you have in your home? Whose plan are you following? And then let me ask you this: if you are not following God's plan, will your plan work as well as his?

So the first thing I want to say is that God has an authority structure for the home. The husband/father is to be the head of the house. Now, the truth is, a lot of men would like to stop there. They would like to say, "well, the Bible says I am the head of the house and everybody has to do what I say." Well, men, let me tell you something: unfortunately for you, not only does the Bible tell you what your role is, it also goes on to tell you how that role is to be exercised.

Let me explain. The Bible not only says you are to have the final authority in the home, it goes on to say how that authority is to be exercised. Well, if that is the case, how do you exercise your authority? Here is what the Bible says. It says, "husbands, love your wives (and your children), as Christ loves the church and gave himself up for her..."(Eph. 5:25) Now that means you rule your family in the same way and in the same spirit that Jesus does. You are the servant-leader and just like Jesus, you are to minister rather than be ministered to. You are the leader who--just like Jesus--gives himself up for the family. Now, what family can object to the authority of a father who is always laying down his life for his family?

This leads me to our scripture for this morning. In Philippians we read these words: "have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus..." So, not only do we ask the question, "Who's minding the store" in the sense of who is in authority, but we must go on to ask, "who's minding the store." That is, what is the mind of the person in charge of the store? Well, the answer is that for the Christian, he is going to have the mind of Christ. The mind of Jesus--the attitude, the spirit--of Jesus will be the kind of mind that has authority over the home.

Let me ask you fathers: do you have the mind of Christ? Well, what does it mean to have the mind of Christ? What is in the mind of Jesus? Later on in Philippians St. Paul tells us. He writes, "whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise think about these things." (Philippians 4:8) Aren't those the kinds of things Jesus would think about? Is that the kind of mind you have?

It is an amazing thing, but the kinds of thoughts we have, create what I call a "force field." Our thoughts project an actual force that can be felt by others, sensed by others, interpreted by others. Isn't that true in your life? We communicate with each other in all sorts of non-verbal ways. What we are thinking communicates itself. I'm not always sure how this happens, but I know it does. Our thoughts find expression in our facial expressions, or the look of our eyes, or other body language and we communicate our feelings to one another. So each of us creates a sort of force field by what is going on in our minds that communicates itself to others. And this is especially true in the family where

relationships are close and intense. For example, I can come home and take one look at my wife and pretty well know her emotional state. By the tone of voice, by the body language, by the look on her face, or perhaps even by some mental signals she is communicating with me. Probably every one here has the same experience with those closest to you. I'm not exactly sure how this happens, but I know it does.

Well, let me ask you: what kind of force field are you communicating? What are the things you are thinking about? Isn't it a matter of fact that we tend to focus on and dwell on the negatives about each other? For example, what are the characteristics of your mate that you dwell on or think about the most? Isn't it a fact that we tend to dwell on the negatives--to focus on the unpleasant things and to remember most the things that hurt us? Take the children. When you think of your children (or when children think of parents) what do you think about? Is it their poor grades, their refusal to brush their teeth, their poor table manners, the length of their hair, or the trouble they are? Or how do you think about your mate? Isn't it true that we tend to focus on the negatives? He or she doesn't close the toilet lid, the tooth paste cap isn't put back on or it is squeezed in the middle. He leaves his socks on the floor and she is always nagging.

But aren't those negative thoughts all backwards? To have the mind of Christ means to focus on the positives. The Bible speaks of what is pure and lovely and gracious and things worthy of praise. And then it says, "think about these things." We all need encouragement. We all need reinforcement in our best qualities. And if those about us are creating a negative force field, that is going to influence us. Let me share with you something I read the other day. It goes this way: "A child's life is a blank page. You, that child's parent, write upon it. What will the first words be? 'Shut up! get out of my sight! Look at the mess you've made! Go outside and play. Don't touch that. Now see what you've done! Can't you ever do anything right?' Those words teach fear and failure. They teach unwantedness. They say, 'I don't love you.' Let your words teach gentleness and beauty. Let them supply high moral principles, courage to meet life's disappointments, pride in a job well done, faith in a mighty God, love: 'beautiful, son, you did a fine job. Come look at this lovely sunset. Do you know how this works? Don't worry; we'll clean it up. What's a little dirt? Pants wash. I'm so proud of you.' When your child is grown, you will look at him and see the words you wrote on that blank page. Be proud of them" Well, that is so true, isn't it? Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus--think on these things--things such as what is lovely or gracious or excellent or anything worthy of praise.

A friend of mine tells the story of his little boy who sucked his thumb. My friend did everything he knew to break the child of the habit. He took him to a child psychiatrist, he scolded him he put vile tasting medicine on the thumb, he even tried wrapping the thumb with big bandages. But nothing worked and he became more and more frustrated. One night as he was praying about his son and his problem, it dawned on him why he was so bothered by the thumb-sucking. It was because it embarrassed him. It was because people would think he was a poor father if his son was so insecure that he needed to suck his thumb. He has been projecting a negative force field by bad thinking. From that moment on he determined to love his son with all of his heart even if he did suck his thumb. He thought up a new name for him and in his thoughts he called his son "Mr. Wonderful." Within two weeks the child quit sucking his thumb and has never done it since. Why? What happened? Well, it is simple enough. When the boy's

father began to love him with the mind of Christ--when his father began to love him for who and what he was--when his father began to project a positive force field, that love was communicated to his son.

Well, it is Father's Day--are you men the kind of fathers you ought to be? Is your home based on God's plan for the home and is your family in the will of God? Are you exercising your headship of the home with the mind of Christ. Yes, who is minding the store at your house? With what mind is the store being minded at your house? Is it the mind of Christ?