

Make Yours A Holy Family.

Text: Eph 6:1-4

Suggested Hymns:
609, 610, 621, 261, 588

- 1) The Holy Family
- 2) By Fulfilling As Children Your Duties Toward Your Parents
- 3) By Fulfilling as Parents Your Duties Toward Your Children

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ephesians 6:1-4, ¹ *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.* ² *“Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise:* ³ *“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”* ⁴ *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are looking at the family. Let us look at the family of Jesus. We read of it every year in one of the Gospel Readings.¹ Let us remind ourselves of it today.

It is for our benefit that this beautiful picture of the Holy Family is considered by us today. May it stimulate us to action. May it urge us to strive to become more and more like the Child and the parents in this holy family. That will be the case if we take to heart and put into practice the admonition of the Lord contained in our text! Our theme is, *Make Yours a Holy Family*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Holy Family

We read about the Holy Family in Luke 2:41-52, ⁴¹ *His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.* ⁴² *And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast.*

⁴³ *When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day’s journey, and*

sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him.

⁴⁶ Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.

⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." ⁴⁹ And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. ⁵¹ Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

This Gospel Reading paints for us a beautiful picture. It is the picture of a family. Family pictures are always interesting. That is why we hang them on the walls of our homes or place them into a picture album. We take pleasure in showing them to our friends and acquaintances. But now look at the family which the Evangelist portrays to us. We refer to it as the Holy Family. And rightly so.

The Holy Parents

Consider the parents. Joseph and Mary were indeed sinners; But they had become righteous through faith in the God-sent Saviour. And they also lived righteous and godly lives. They especially bestowed upon the Child, which God had entrusted to them, the best of care. And well they might. Here was the most precious Child ever to be born into the world, God's own Son, who had assumed our human nature in order to seek and to save that which was lost.

This Child they not only fed, clothed, sheltered, and protected, but also instructed Him in the Word of God to the best of their ability. And the Boy Jesus at His first visit in the Temple at Jerusalem displayed such a knowledge of God's Word that all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. They had never heard the like.

The Holy Child

Let us observe also the Child in this family. He was a perfect child, whom the parents never had to correct or scold or punish. If they did reprove Him, He had not deserved it; it was their mistake. For here was a child who, unlike any other son or daughter, was born without sin, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit, and who also lived a holy, sinless life. What a pleasure it must have been to be the parents of such a child!

2. Make Yours A Holy Family.

By Fulfilling As Children Your Duties Toward Your Parents

The Duties of Children Toward Their Parents

The first part of our text is addressed to Christian children. It deals with the duties which they have toward their parents. It tells them what is necessary on their part so that the family to which they belong may be a holy family.

What is it that the Lord requires of them? Two things, that is all. But they include a thousand and one other things. Doing these two things will keep you children busy every day, from the time you get up in the morning until you go to bed at night. The Lord demands of you that you obey and that you honour your parents.

Children Must Obey Their Parents

Our text says, *Children, obey your parents.* We obey someone when we do what he or she tells us to do. In the Old Testament we learn of Joseph who obeyed his father Jacob when he told him to go and to see how his brothers were getting along, who at the time were far from home with the cattle. Joseph went. Gladly he did the will of his father.

But not all children do that. Nor do they do that at all times. There are many homes in which the children refuse obedience to their parents and thus not only provoke them to just anger, but also destroy the happiness of the home, and yes, cause their parents to weep bitter tears and perhaps even to die before their time of a broken heart.

Think of the heartache which disobedient Absalom caused his father, David, when he began a rebellion against him. Consider the bitter grief and heart-rending sorrow of the father when he was told that his wayward son had been killed in battle.

With a lamenting voice he cried out: ***“O my son Absalom — my son, my son Absalom — if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!”***² Woe to those sons and daughters who follow in the footsteps of wicked Absalom! So surely as there is a righteous God in heaven, so surely will they sooner or later receive their punishment.

The Bible not only classes disobedience over against parents among the most heinous of sins,³ but it also says in Proverbs 30:17, ***‘The eye that mocks his father, And scorns obedience to his mother, The ravens of the valley will pick it out, And the young eagles will eat it.***

Reasons Why Children Should Obey Their Parents

And why are children to obey their parents? The Apostle says in our text: ***“For this is right.”*** Children, you owe that to your parents. Consider what they do for you. Through them God has given you life. They toil and labour for you, take care of you, and seek to make you comfortable and happy.

When you are ill, how anxiously they watch at your bedside and nurse you. No sacrifice on their part is too great if it is for your well-being. Is it, then, not right, fitting, and proper, that you render willing obedience to those dear parents of yours?

But the text mentions an even stronger reason which must induce you to obey your parents. We read: ***“Children, obey your parents in the Lord.”*** Because you know the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in Him as your Saviour, therefore you are to obey your parents. You see, it is this Lord who gives you the command to obey your parents. Could you refuse the Lord obedience?

Didn't Jesus become a child for your sake? Didn't He render perfect obedience to His parents as your Substitute? Are we not told that ***“[Jesus] went down with [His parents] and came to Nazareth and was subject to them”***?⁴ Jesus atoned for your sins of disobedience against your parents, but also gave you an example that you may follow in His footsteps.

Children Must Honour Their Parents

The second thing that the Lord requires of you children is that you honour your parents, as the text says: ***“Honor your father and mother.”*** To honour is

more than obey. We honour those who are over us. Thus God has placed the parents over the children. They are to rule them as His representatives.

By honouring their parents, children therefore honour God. Isn't that something great? Let us therefore not fail to esteem them highly. When Solomon's mother came to see him after he had become king of Israel, he had her placed on his right hand. That was the place of honour. Let us, too, show our parents due honour.

An Inducement to Heed This Admonition

And even as the Lord will punish disobedient children, thus He will richly bless those who obey and honour their parents. The Apostle says in our text that the Fourth Commandment is *“the first commandment with promise.”*

It is a commandment with a special promise, the promise *“that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”* Just think of it. Here God promises you a long and a happy life if you obey and honour your father and mother. Wouldn't you be a fool if you did not keep this commandment?

Yes, think of the Fourth Commandment with its command and promise every day and ask God for strength to keep it to the best of your ability, prompted to do so not only because of the promise, but out of love to your parents and to your Saviour.

Of George Washington we are told that when he was a young man he was about to go to sea as a midshipman. He had made the necessary preparations. His trunk had already been carried down to the boat, and his whole heart was set on going, but coming to his mother to bid her farewell, he saw her in tears.

Quickly he turned to a servant and said: *“Go, tell them to fetch my trunk back. I will not go away to break my mother's heart.”* His mother was deeply moved and said to her son: *“George, God has promised to bless children that honour their parents, and He will also bless you.”*

Follow the example of George Washington, but better still, follow the example of Jesus, your Saviour, who rendered perfect obedience to His parents. Remember and follow the admonition of our text, and thus do your part in seeking to make yours a holy family.

But in a family there are, besides the children, also the parents. For them our text also has a word of admonition. Let us, in the next part of the sermon, hear what parents are to do to make theirs a holy family, what duties they have toward their children.

3. Make Yours a Holy Family.

By Fulfilling as Parents Your Duties Toward Your Children

Admonition to Fathers and Mothers

Addressing Christian parents, the Apostle says in our text: “*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*”

You notice that this admonition is addressed to the fathers. The father is the head of the household. If he isn't, he ought to be.

And as such he is, above all, responsible for the Christian training of his children. God placed this responsibility upon him, and God will also hold him accountable.

But the Apostle, of course, does not want to exclude the mother from this important task; for she is the helpmeet of her husband also in the proper rearing and training of the children, whose mother she is.

The Parents' Most Important Duty

Now in speaking of the duties of parents toward their children the Apostle in our text mentions only their most important duty. He says nothing about their obligation to feed, clothe, shelter, and protect their children.

That Christian parents do these things, the Apostle considers so self-evident that he says in 1 Timothy 5:8, ⁸ *But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* Hence even the blind heathen know that they are to do things for their children.

But Christian parents have a more important duty toward their children. They are to bring them up in the fear of the Lord. They should teach them what Jesus means to them, that He died for their sins, that by faith in Him they are God's children, and that out of love to please Him they should be obedient

children. They must instruct, train, lead on in the way of righteousness by precept and example.

And listen! Nothing is more important in the life of a child than Christian home-training. It is a serious and solemn duty, a most important task which you who are parents have. There is no more important business in the world than the proper rearing of children.

A Mistake to Avoid

And in performing this task, parents must be on their guard against a serious mistake which is often made. The Apostle refers to it when he says: “*do not provoke your children to wrath.*” That is done by unjust treatment of the children by the parents.

If parents are constantly nagging a child; if they today allow a thing but tomorrow punish the child for the same thing; if they punish a child when the child is innocent; if they prefer one child above another, and the like, they provoke their children to anger.

The children feel that they are being treated unjustly by their parents, lose all confidence in, and love for, the parents; and the proper training becomes impossible under such conditions.

Proper Child Training in the Home

To train children properly, we must rather, as our text states, “*bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*” Both are to be “*of the Lord.*” To bring up children properly so that they might grow up as good, God-fearing children they must be instructed. They must be taught the Word of God.

From their earliest childhood, children must be diligently instructed in the Word of the Lord, the Law and, above all, the Gospel. They must constantly hold the Word of God before their children and apply it to their life and conduct. If a child does what is right, commend it, tell it that such conduct is pleasing to God.

If the child does what is wrong, reprove the child, tell him or her why such behaviour is displeasing to God, which of His commandments it has transgressed.

Remind the child of the fact that Jesus died for its sins, and that it is therefore its duty to serve Him in holiness and righteousness. Remind the child

that in Baptism it has been received as God's child and ought to conduct itself as such.

And if it becomes necessary to punish a child — and that will be the case at times — see that such punishment, too, is *“of the Lord,”* and that it is administered in love. Thus the Lord punishes, as he tells us in Revelation 3:19, *¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.* As Luther says: “The apple must always be with the rod.”

Combined with Proper Training by the Church

Let us remember, too, that parents cannot shift this responsibility of theirs on others, for instance, on the church or school.

True, the Christian congregation, too, has a responsibility toward the children who belong to it. But the church can accomplish little if the parents neglect the proper Christian training of their children in the home.

Moreover, the more interest parents display at home in the proper rearing of their children, the more they will also be ready and willing to do for them in this respect as members of the congregation. They will want the congregation to give their children the best formal Christian education that it is capable of giving. They will gladly and willingly support a Christian school, in which the children daily sit at the feet of the Saviour to learn His saving Word.

Let all parents strive to make theirs a holy family by always seeking better to fulfil their sacred duty toward their children by really bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!

Let us, then, remember the beautiful family picture that we have considered today, the picture of the Holy Family, and let us all, parents and children, do what we can so that our families may become more and more holy families. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ The first Sunday after Epiphany

² 2 Sam. 18:33

³ 2 Tim. 3:2

⁴ Luke 2:51