

May 13, 2018

Mother's Day 2018

*What Should You Expect?*

Ephesians 5:21-25, 6:1-4

**Opening words:** You know the story. I have told you about the birth of the modern American Mother's Day in the past. It all began with the death of Anna Reese Jarvis in 1908. Her daughter, Anna M. Jarvis, didn't want her mother to be forgotten, so she campaigned for the creation of an official Mother's Day. She dreamed of having a day when all mothers would be honored. She began by petitioning the superintendent of the St. Andrew's Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia. Her mother had spent over twenty years teaching Sunday School there. Her request was granted and the first Mother's Day celebration was held on May 10, 1908. Four hundred and seven people attended. Anna Jarvis arranged for white carnations — her mother's favorite flower — to adorn the patrons. Two carnations were given to every mother in attendance. The idea grew fast. By 1909, forty-six different states were observing Mother's Day. In 1912, West Virginia became the first state to officially observe Mother's Day. In 1914, Woodrow Wilson signed into law the national observance of Mother's Day. There is not a single person in this room who didn't have a mother. You would not be in this world without her. How often have you thought of her today?

On this Mother's Day, I want to take some time and talk about family. We find ourselves in the fifth and sixth chapter of Ephesians. Paul wrote this epistle to the Christian congregation in Ephesus about the year 60. The city of Ephesus was an important harbor city in Asia Minor (now Turkey). The Christian congregation in that city was unique. It appears the church was not facing any great challenges. There are no signs of heresy or immorality. It is the church every preacher wants to serve. Paul writes to them for one reason, to encourage them in the faith. We should always be striving for perfection. Paul knew what we often forget. The Gospel should be influencing every aspect of our lives, including our home life. It is for this reason these words speak to us. Our scripture reading for today is Ephesians 5:21-25, 6:1-4. Let me call this message *What Should You Expect?*

**Ephesians 5:21-25, 6:1-4** <sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— <sup>3</sup> "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

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Former First Lady Barbara Bush (1925-2018) once said, *"For us, family means putting your arms around each other and being there."* I could not agree more. If you find some truth in that quote, say, **"Amen!"** Before I go any farther, let me make three great proclamations. This is the first one:

**The perfect American family does not exist!** Yours is not the first family to have flaws. Your family will not be the last to have flaws. Every family has flaws. It isn't just true of our generation. It is one of the great lessons in history. Let me give you one example.

History tells us John Adams (1735-1826) was the second President of the United States (1797-1801). He was an intelligent, hard-working man, who had a wonderful marriage. He trusted Abigail's bright mind and wisdom. She was his most trusted adviser. Professionally, the couple was successful. Personally, they struggled. Their eldest child, Abigail, married a spendthrift. She died young and left her children to her parent's care. Their son, Charles, married the sister of the spendthrift. He wasted family funds and died of health issues related to alcoholism. He left his widow to the care of his parents. Their son, Thomas Boylston, was an alcoholic, again bequeathing his children to the care of the family.

Though John Quincy (1767-1848), the sixth president of the United States (1825-1829), turned out well, he and his wife, Louisa, hardly went unscathed. They had four children, three of which were sons. Their first son was an alcoholic and committed suicide at the age of 31. Their next son was expelled from college, failed in business and died of an alcohol-related illness. Only their youngest son, Charles Francis (1807-86), reacted against the family pattern by his exemplary sobriety, his prudence in business and fervent dedication to his wife and children. He spent years writing the biography and editing the words of his grandfather John Adams. But he concluded, *"The history of my family is not a pleasant one to remember. It is one of great triumphs in the world but of deep groans within, one of extraordinary brilliancy and deep corroding mortification."* The great patriot John Adams and his son, John Quincy, would tell you no family is perfect. That is proclamation number one. This is proclamation number two:

**The American family is changing!** If you don't believe me, then consider this fact. In 1960, 73% of American homes consisted of a married man, woman and their children. Today, 46% of American families consist of a married man, woman and their children. Those figures come from Pew Research. The perfect family of husband, wife, and children only exists in advertisements. The American family is much more diverse. You know it is true. Let me ask you this series of questions: How many single parents do you know? How many step parents do you know? How many grandparents do you know that are raising their grandchildren? How many people do you know who are in

the process of getting a divorce? How many people do you know who have been married more than three times? How many couples do you know who live together because marriage would mean a loss of income? It is painfully obvious. The American family is changing. That is proclamation number two. This is proclamation number three:

**The American family is in danger!** You know the statistics. The divorce rate in America is approximately 50%. Your chance of a successful second marriage is only 25%. Your chance of a successful third marriage is 12.5%. Your chance of a successful fourth marriage is 6.25%. However, this is the good/bad news: Recent studies reveal the divorce rate is slowing. That is not a good thing, because it is due to the fact that many find marriage unnecessary. Did you know 24% of American children are being born to an unwed mother? The traditional family isn't just changing; the traditional family is dissolving. Sociologists have been telling us for years the family is the basic building block of society. If the family fails, then society itself will fail. The American family is in danger. That is proclamation number three. If you find these three proclamations to be disturbing, say, "**Amen!**" With these three honest proclamations in mind, let me ask you the question of the day. What should you expect from your family? The answer comes from our scripture reading for today. Do you remember the opening words?

The author of these words is the Apostle Paul. He is writing to the Christian congregation in Ephesus. This letter is unique because the Christian congregation in Ephesus was unique. The question of salvation is not on the table. Paul recognized their spiritual maturity. He knew they believed in the resurrected Jesus. More important, he knew they recognized the power of the resurrected Jesus. He is encouraging them to let the resurrected Jesus influence every dark corner of their lives. In this section, Paul is encouraging them to let the resurrected Jesus influence their family life. Listen to what he wrote again. Ephesians 5:22 says, "*Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord.*" Ephesians 5:25 says, "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*" Ephesians 6:1 says, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.*" Woven throughout those three verses are three things you should expect from your family. If you are ready to look at three things you should expect from your family, say, "**Amen!**"

### **Respect**

First, you should expect to be respected by your family. What is respect? Webster defines respect as: a feeling or attitude of admiration toward someone or something. How much would your relationships change if everyone respected you? If everyone respected you, then they would listen to you and discover you have something to offer. If you were respected, then you wouldn't be treated so harshly. If you respected yourself, then you would embrace your full potential. What would you do differently if you really respected yourself? What would you stop doing if you respected yourself? Can I make a little confession?

I am always uncomfortable preaching on marriage and family. The reason is simple. I do not consider myself an expert on marriage or parenting. I simply do my best. I guess, I have done something right. I have had some success. On May 27, Kathryn and I will be celebrating our thirtieth wedding anniversary. The years have gone fast, and we have grown close. The best days of my life are still when we are with each other. Together, we have raised two children. We don't just love them; we are proud of them. I value their opinions and I hunger for their respect. I do not have a great deal of rules in my family, but there is one thing I demand. Everyone must be treated with dignity and respect. I don't believe that is asking too much. Albert Einstein (1879-1955) once said, "*I treat everyone the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university.*" In other words, Einstein respected everyone. Maybe that is why we still like Einstein? One of the things you should expect from your family is respect! And, all of God's people said, "**Amen!**" You should expect respect, and you should expect honesty.

### **Honesty**

One of the iconic names in American broadcasting is Dick Clark (1929-2012). He hosted American Bandstand for thirty years, 1957-1987. He introduced many Americans to rock & roll. Many musicians got their big break thanks to Dick Clark and American Bandstand. I remember him hosting a game show called *Pyramid*, and *New Year's Rockin' Eve*. It was on a New Year's Eve, I saw him for the last time. I found it to be a sad scene. In December of 2004, Clark suffered a stroke, which affected his speech and his appearance. As I sat there watching Dick Clark trying to speak, someone in my group said, "Someone who loves Dick Clark needs to tell him the truth. It's over!" I didn't say it, but I was thinking the same thing.

Second, one of the things you should expect from your family is honesty. As a family member, you have the license to be honest. Family members want what is best for one another. When was the last time you were honest with a family member? When was the last time a family member was honest with you? A family member will tell you, you need a breath mint. A family member will tell you, your clothes are mismatched. A family member will tell you to wear a shirt when you mow the lawn. People are eating! A family member will be the one who tells you, it is time to stop driving. A family member will tell you, it is no longer safe to live alone. A family member will tell you, you are not that great, or you are not that bad. Those words are hard to hear, but they are equally hard to say. Those words are one of the million ways to say, "I love you." One of the things you should expect from your family is honesty! And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**" You should expect respect and honesty. You should also expect acceptance.

### **Acceptance**

Later this month, my niece Sarah and her three children are flying to Ohio from Colorado for a visit. Sarah is my sister Janet's daughter who passed. Janet moved to Colorado in 1973 and we have made periodic trips to Colorado to see our distant family.

Kathryn and I went to Colorado in 2012 for a visit. We did some sightseeing on that trip, but the best part of that trip was being with my sister. I didn't know then how sacred those days were. This is the truth:

I just didn't have enough time with Janet. She left for college when I was eleven years old. She moved to Colorado when I was fifteen years old. We lived fourteen hundred miles apart, so we didn't see each other regularly. The best part of that trip was getting up early and just talking over a cup of coffee. There was no agenda. We just talked. We talked about our parents. We talked about the old neighborhood in Warren. (Yes, she thought people from Warren were a little smarter and a little better looking too.) We talked about her first boyfriend, Bob Plum. We talked about my best friend, Jimmy Thompson. We talked about her children and grandchildren. We talked about my children and our sister, Susan. Do you know why I valued those talks with her? It wasn't the coffee; it was the acceptance. Families are great because we share a common past. One of the things you should expect from your family is acceptance! And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**" I love this story:

In 1978, Thomas Hansen of Boulder, Colorado, sued his parents for \$350,000 on grounds of "malpractice of parenting." He claims his parents botched his upbringing so badly that he would need years of costly psychiatric treatment. Would anyone here like to sue your family? Is anyone here afraid a family member is going to sue you? Thomas Hansen didn't receive what he expected from his family. What do you expect from your family?

What should you expect from your family? You should expect **respect**. You are a child of God. You should expect **honesty**. It is a form of love. You should expect **acceptance**. Do you remember what Barbara Bush said? She said, "*For us, family means putting your arms around each other and being there.*" And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"