

May 12, 2019

Mother's Day 2019
Three Simple Rules
John 2:1-11

Opening words: In May of 2018, the Pew Research Group released their latest findings on motherhood. Consider these facts with me.

1. **Women are more likely to become mothers now than they were a decade ago.** Women are more likely now to have more than one child than they were a decade ago.
2. **Women are spending more time on childcare than they were a decade ago.** In 1965, they spent 10 hours a week on childcare. Today, that number is 14.
3. **About one-quarter of all U.S. mothers are doing it on their own.** 68% of U.S. moms are married, 24% of U.S. moms are single.
4. **Foreign-born mothers account for a rising share of U.S. births.** The annual births of U.S.-born moms are on the decline.
5. **53% believe mothers do a better job with newborns than fathers.** 1% believe fathers do a better job with newborns than mothers. 45% believe mothers and fathers are equally gifted at caring for newborns.
6. **77% of mothers believe they face more pressure than their mothers.**
7. **82% of all new U.S. mothers are millennials, born between 1981 and 1996.**

The topic for today is motherhood. However, the relationship we are looking at today is not between a young mother and a newborn. The relationship we are looking at today is between a veteran mother and her adult son. This is the question you must answer today: how comfortable are you parenting your adult children? Our Gospel lesson for today is John 2:1-11. Let me call this message *Three Simple Rules*.

John 2:1-11 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." ⁴ "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. ⁸ Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, ⁹ and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants

who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside ¹⁰ and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

¹¹ What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Robert Browning (1812-1889) was an English poet and playwright. He was the most famous of the Victorian poets. He once wrote, "*Love begins and ends with mothers.*" I am not so sure about that quote, but it is something to consider. If you believe a mother's love is important, say, "**Amen!**"

Her name was Susanna Wesley (1669-1742), the mother of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley (1703-1791). She knew a thing or two about motherhood. She set the standard high for the generations of mothers to come. She was born in 1669, the youngest of twenty-five children. At the age of nineteen, she married Samuel Wesley (1663-1735). They had nineteen children. However, nine died during infancy. She was no stranger to personal problems. There was never enough money and their family home burned twice. Yet, despite all of this, she is remembered as an outstanding mother. Each one of her children, both boys and girls, were home-schooled. Their education began on the day after their fifth birthday. Each one of them was required to know the complete alphabet after the first day. Once their education was complete, each one of her children knew both Greek and Latin, along with the classics. All this was done within the framework of sixteen house rules. They still speak to our world today. These are her sixteen rules for parenting:

1. Eating between meals is not allowed.
2. Children are to be in bed by 8 p.m.
3. Children are required to take medicine without complaining.
4. Subdue self-will in a child to save the child's soul.
5. Teach a child to pray as soon as he can speak.
6. Require all to be still during Family Worship.
7. Give them nothing that they cry for, and only that when asked for politely.
8. To prevent lying, punish no fault which is first confessed and repented of.
9. Never allow a sinful act to go unpunished.
10. Never punish a child twice for a single offense.
11. Reward good behavior.
12. Any attempt to please, even if poorly performed, should be commended.
13. Preserve property rights, even in smallest matters.
14. Strictly observe all promises.
15. Require no daughter to work before she can read well.
16. Teach children to fear the rod.

That list is available upon request. I like those rules. They demonstrate that Susanna Wesley knew something about raising children. However, this is the Good News for today: This message does not have sixteen points. This message only has three. They are found in our Gospel reading for today. If you are ready to look at this morning's Gospel lesson, say, "**Amen!**"

We find ourselves in the second chapter of John. This story is only found in the gospel of John. The scene is a wedding reception. Couples didn't honeymoon in those days. No one traveled to Mexico or the Caribbean. However, they did hold receptions that lasted approximately a week. Jesus was invited because he was a respected rabbi. Over the generations, certain general rules of hospitality have remained intact. Running out of food or drink has always been a serious matter. In verse three, we discover that the wine had run out. Everyone looks for the guilty party, but Mary looks to Jesus. She knew Jesus had the power to save the day. She believed in Jesus, when Jesus didn't believe in himself. In verse four, we find Jesus making an excuse for his inactivity, "*My time has not yet come.*" Mary does not listen. Instead, she instructs servants to bring him water. By the end of the scene, the party has resumed. Everyone had enough wine. Verse ten tells us it was the good wine. What does that mean? It means the wine Jesus produced had a kick. What grabs our attention today is not the quality of the wine, it is the relationship between Mary and Jesus.

Time is important in this story. The nativity was decades earlier. Jesus is no longer a newborn and Mary is no longer a young mother. In this story, Jesus is thirty years old and Mary is a veteran mother. Mary illustrates for us how relationships must change. You can't treat your thirty-year-old child like a newborn. That will destroy any relationship. Mary illustrates for us three simple rules parents must follow when dealing with their adult children. If you are ready to look at Mary's three simple rules, say, "**Amen!**"

Rule #1: Know your children

This is rule #1: Know your children. There is no doubt about it: Mary knew Jesus. She was at the wedding reception with Jesus and this was not unusual. Mary spent most days with Jesus. Mary knew Jesus was different from the very beginning. She must have remembered many things. She must have recalled that visit from the angel years earlier, who told her that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Son of God. She must have remembered Jesus' birth. She remembered the visitors, the shepherds and the Magi. She must have remembered how Jesus wandered off at the age of twelve and was found in the temple. Mary remembered it all because she was part of Jesus' life for thirty years. She knew Jesus better than Jesus knew himself. How well do you know your children?

When my daughter, Anna, was young, she went to a babysitter several hours each week. Her babysitter's name was Carol Bartlett. I have talked about Mrs. Bartlett in the past. She was a family friend, who watched children in her home. One of the children

she watched was a little boy by the name of Bobby. He spent most of every day with Mrs. Bartlett. When his parents went away for the weekend, he stayed with Mrs. Bartlett. Bobby was always at Mrs. Bartlett's. One day, I arrived to pick up Anna as Bobby's mother came to pick up him. The adults were all talking, when Bobby suddenly fell and began to cry. With his mother standing there, Bobby got up and ran to Mrs. Bartlett to be comforted, not his own mother. I will never forget the uncomfortable look on Mrs. Bartlett's face. All the adults in the room knew the truth. Bobby was spending too much time with Mrs. Bartlett and not enough time with his mother. How much real time do you spend with your children? How well do you know your children? Perhaps, this is a better question: How well do your children know you? Can you name three of your children's friends? Rule #1 says, know your children. If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"** I have told you the following story many times.

Rule #2: Encourage your children

History tells us that Abraham Lincoln carried an old newspaper article with him regularly. Those who were closest to him say he read it daily. He couldn't believe the words. The article said Lincoln was a great leader. The article was correct. He is remembered as being a great leader, one of our greatest presidents. However, Lincoln didn't see himself that way. He was crippled with self-doubt. Lincoln illustrates for us a simple point. It doesn't really matter what others think of you. The only thing that matters is how you feel about yourself. How do you feel about yourself?

This is rule #2: Encourage your children. I love this story because it shows the human side of Jesus. Jesus had an insecure side. Look at the story. The Master is at a wedding reception when the wine ran out. Jesus had the power to solve the problem, but he didn't try because he was too insecure. It is his mother who gives him the nudge to try. Verse 3 says, *"When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'"* In other words, Mary is telling Jesus to do something. She is encouraging him to do something. Has anyone here ever needed an encouraging word? The world reminds us regularly of what we can't do. We need people in our lives to remind us of what we can do. It is not just true of the young. It is true of the not-so-young. We are often blind to our own abilities. It is impossible to receive too much encouragement. Rule #2 says, encourage your children. If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

Rule #3: Trust your children to God

This is rule #3: Trust your children to God. Mary knew Jesus and she encouraged Jesus. However, the third rule must have been the hardest one for her to apply. She knew God had something special planned for him. She remembered how she and Joseph took Jesus to the temple when he was only eight days old. On that day, they met an old man by the name of Simeon. He knew Jesus was destined for greatness. Do you remember his words? Mary did. Simeon said, *"This child is destined for the raising and the falling of many in Israel"* (Luke 2:34). Mary didn't know what that really meant, but she must have asked the question a million times. Why does her son have to lead to the raising and the falling? Why not just the raising?

When she encourages Jesus to change the water into wine, she encourages Jesus to get on with his life. She was encouraging Jesus to fulfill his divine destiny. Jesus' future was out of Mary's control. She had done the best she could do. Now, she had to trust God with him. We only have our children at home for a short time. Most of their lives they are on their own. How far do you trust God with your children? This is rule #3, trust your children to God. And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"

Several years ago, I watched Ken Burn's documentary on World War II, *The War*. My father served during that war, so I felt some attachment. I found the interviews of the survivors interesting. That generation is dying quickly. In one episode, they interviewed a native-American soldier who was in the infantry. I will never forget it. I think about it every Mother's Day. Years after the conflict, he cried about the day he took a German life with his own hands. Death did not come suddenly. The soldier died slowly. Before he passed, he called out. According to the man interviewed, he didn't call out for a medic. He didn't call out for his friends. He called out for his mother, twice. The man was a soldier, but the man was a son.

Don't tell me being a mother isn't important. It is important to love your children when they are young, but it is equally important to love them today. Regardless of age, they will always be your children and you will always be their mother. Do you remember the quote from Robert Browning? The great poet once said, "*Love begins and ends with mothers.*" And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"