The Fifth Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day
Rolling Meadows -- 1979

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IN NOMINE JESU

I JOHN 3: 18-24

I wonder how many people will celebrate this Mother's Day -- or as I like to call it "Family Day" -- only half-hearted ly. Not all children really "honor their father and their mother." They may feign it, or fake it, or just go through the motions. Not all parents are still in love with each other. They may still be living under the same roof -- often only for the sake of their children -- but the sparkle and the romance has long since gone out of their marriage.

People try to relate to God that way too -- only superficially, half-heartedly. And GOD CAN'T STAND IT! One time He complained bitterly: "THIS PEOPLE DRAWS NIGH UNTO ME WITH THEIR MOUTH AND HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME." And the Resurrected Lord says that the Church at Laodicea made Him sick to His stomach because of their half-hearted commitment and loyalty -- so sick that they made Him vomit: "I KNOW YOUR WORKS: YOU ARE NEITHER COLD NOR HOT. WOULD THAT YOU WERE COLD OR HOT! SO, BECAUSE YOU ARE LUKEWARM, AND NEITHER COLD NOT HOT, I WILL SPEW YOU OUT OF MY MOUTH." A relationship is too important and too vital a thing for anybody to try to fake it, or play games, or pretend. So it is that St. John says in our text: "LET US NOT LOVE IN WORD OR SPEECH BUT IN DEED AND IN TRUTH."

With that in mind, I want to devote the remainer of this sermon to CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE. I am convinced that where parents have it together, children will for the most part fal into line. One thing is for sure -- they cannot be brow-beaten into loving, honoring, and respecting their parents. That is something that has to be earned -- not demanded! So let's look at this thing called Marriage -- always keeping in the back of our mind the injunction of the apostle: "LET US NOT LOVE IN WORD OR SPEECH BUT IN DEED AND IN TRUTH."

What is it that brings a man and a woman together in the first place? The old addage that "opposites attract" is certainly true. Two people marry each other in order to compensate for their own innate weaknesses. An active person chooses to marry one who is more passive. An extravert marries an introvert. An impulsive person marries a calm, collected companion. A talkative person marries one who is quiet (two can't talk at the same time). A perfectionist marries one who is almost careless.

On and on the list can go. One who is punctual, and must be on time everywhere, marries a partner described by one husband when he said, "I've just got to believe in a second resurrection. My wife would never make the first one."..... Then here is a day person who marries a night person -- or a tightfisted miser who marries a spendthrift -- or a neatnick who marries a slob. ..... Affectionate women marry aloof men and vice versa

socially active

-- gregarious and impulsive persons marry reticent and inhibited partners -- the rationalizer marries the sentimentalist -- and the practical person marries a dreamer. ..... We are fascinated by the person who can do what we cannot do. We are attracted to the person who demonstrates qualities we desire but do not have.

But now look at what happens. ~~What fixxx~~ The very thing that attracted two people to marry each other invariably becomes the very thing that drives them apart. The husband says, "I guess what I liked about her was her free, friendly spirit. She wasn't always busy with details, and she could enjoy herself with a group. I was always rather shy." But now he complains that she never gets things done -- she is always distracted, visiting neighbors, helping some group, forgetting her family, and doesn't clean her own house! ..... And what does she say? She loved his concern for detail -- that he was calm. She like particularly how he paid attention to his clothes -- and how clean he kept the car. He was careful and courteous. But now she finds him difficult to live with because he is constantly bothered by the appearance of the house -- the beds are not made by noon -- and she lets his tools lie around. What does she say?-----"He is more concerned about things than about people."

it is that

So a fellow likes a carefully manicured and attractively dressed girl. After they are married, he complains that it takes her half a day to get dressed for a dinner appointment.

Unless we are aware of these differences -- the things we need from each other -- they will drive us apart rather than develop us. ..... But look at what else happens. Just because we differ so widely in ideas and behavior patterns, our tendancy is to try to MAKE OUR MATES OVER! We want to play God in re-creating our partners. ..... And what happens? You guessed it. When someone is aiming to make us over, we all respond in the same way. WE BECOME DEFIANT! WE REACT AND SET UP RESISTANCE! WE CLOSE UP AND DON'T TALK! ..... "She's not going to tell me what to do" or vice versa.

I like the story of the husband who had a nagging wife. They were out with some friends and the subject of conversation came around to the possibility of RE-INCARNATION. This guy's only comment was, "With my luck I'll come back as a dog -- and my wife will come back as a flea.

Mrs. Billy Graham, speaking at a luncheon attended by some 1,000 wives, made a classic statement. She said to these women, "Your job, as a wife, is not to make your husband good. That's God's job. Your job is to make him happy!" She could have also added, "Your job, as a husband, is not to make your wife over. That's God's work. Your job is to love your wife as she is." Or, "Parents, don't try to make your children over into your own image -- or demand of them more than they are capable of doing -- but accept them and love them as they are." Or, "Children, have compassion on your parents. They really are not as perfect or all-knowing as they pretend to be."

Do you begin to grasp what the apostle is talking about? "LET US NOT LOVE IN WORD OR SPEECH BUT IN DEED AND IN TRUTH." ..... Just look at how GOD LOVED US. As different and separated from Him as we were, His love never counted the cost. It just gave, and gave, and gave until it ended up on the Cross. Think of it! "WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS -- that is, as separate as the night is from the day -- WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US." ..... It is all here for you and for me at the COMMUNION TABLE -- HIS LOVE -- HIMSELF -- FOR US -- "MY BODY, GIVEN FOR YOU; MY BLOOD, SHED FOR YOU" -------- that we may "NOT LOVE IN WORD OR SPEECH BUT IN DEED AND IN TRUTH." Amen.