Mother's Day
Rolling Meadows - 1966

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IN NOMINE JESU

Colossians 3: 18-21 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

It is not my purpose today to either deify or degrade demonize motherhood. In spite of all the sentimental blurb that traditionally we hear on this day about mothers, they are still human beings like all of the rest of us - constantly in need, like all of the rest of us, of the grace and the forgiveness of God that comes to them, like it comes to all of the rest of us, in Christ Jesus, our Lord. They are not perfect, but they are bought with a price - Jesus' blood - & so are precious. Mothers do not exist in isolation. They are a part - and I might add, a very vital part - of the basic, God-given family structure. And it is about this that I wish to speak to you today - The Christian family.

Families are having a tough time throughout the world, and family life is in a bad way. In many places what actually exists is only a household rather than a family - a place where parents and children hang their hats but feel little or no personal responsibility or duty toward each other and seldom show any personal concern for one another. Pressures in the modern world are strong enough to squeeze the heart out of family life and to shape the family itself into distorted forms which leave it all but unrecognizable. After conducting their usual surveys on marriage and family life, educated guess-men freely predict that within a generation or two the family as a basic unit of society will be a thing of the past. If this should happen, one might add, society itself will be smashed.

History amply demonstrates that society, with all its economic and political institutions, can crack up. The family, however, always seems to come back - a fact puzzling only to those who fail to recognize that the God who created man has seen fit to arrange the world in families- His sovereign Will cannot long be denied and will never be thwarted. You can conduct all the surveys you please on marriage and family life, listing the causes of divorce in the order of their importance and bemoaning the fact that children are not being properly trained. In the last analysis, however, surveys are not going to get at the heart of the touble Until people realize what marriage is all about and what family life is for, the

process of disruption and destruction will only go from bad to worse. That is wha is happening all over the world. Marriage is becoming a plaything, to be broken at will, whenever it pleases one or both partners. Family life has become the sub ject of innumerable surveys which describe the mounting problem, but seldom, if ever, furnish any solutions. For the most part these surveys ignore the divine dimension of family life. Marriage was instituted by God not merely that two people might have companionship with each other, but that they might be husband and wife. In the ordinary course of human events, husbands and wives bring children into the world, not to be batted back and forth by spouses who spend most of their time quarreling with each other, or living apart, or figuring out ways to get a divorce. Children are meant to be raised in a family, acquiring from father and mother the training in attitude and action they will need to make a satisfying lif of their own.

The whole idea of the family may be old, but it is not old-fashioned. The fact is, St. Paul's advice to the Colossians sounds so new to a lot of people today that it seems almost revolutionary: Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Phillips translates: Wives, adapt yourselves to your husbands that your marriage may be a Christian unity. Husbands, be sure you give your wives much love and sympathy; don't let bitterness or resentment spoil your marriage. As for you children, your duty is to obey your parents, for at your age this is one of the best things you can do to show your love for the Lord. Fathers, don't overcorrect your children, or they will grow up feeling inferior and frustrated.

There you have the whole thing in a nutshell. Notice that St. Paul always talks about family life as being in the Lord. Bytthe Lord he means Jesus Christ, put to death on a Cross and raised again from the dead to be the living Lord of all men with universal dominion over all things. Since Christ lives, says the apostle, let Him live in your family. Let every day be a celebration of His

resurrection. Faith in Christ - a real, living Christ-connected life - produces those plain words and unglamorous acts, right in the family circle, that make a woman a real wife and mother, and a man a real husband and father. Faith in Christ turns boys and girls into obedient sons and daughters.

Don't imagine that all of this is too dogmatic or quite impossible for your own little family. Of course, the worst family in the neighborhood is in the house next door or somewhere else down the street. You would not want to be like them. But you are just as certain that you could not be like those other neighbors who seem to have a model home, always having an eye out for each other, and constantly living in an atmosphere of tranquility without any problems at all. Let me let you in on a little secret. There are no families that have no problems. The difference lies in how families meet their problems. Marital bitterness, disobedience of children, and overly harsh discipline on the part of parents are pretty good indications that a family has not learned how to meet its problems. In the Lord - that's the way to meet problems and to make the most of opportunities. In the Lord is the way a wife builds up her husband to be the kind of man not only she but God wants him to be. In the Lord is the way a man gives his love and devotion to a woman that helps make her the kind of wife not only he but God wants her to be. In the Lord is the way children show obedience to their parents, even when they don't quite understand the restrictions father and mother have laid upon them, so becoming the kind of boys and girls not only their parents but God wants them to be. In the Lord fathers exercise mature and kindly discipline in the home, always careful not to be too hard on their children, lest they become discouraged and sullen and morose, feeling inferior and frustrated. In the Lord fathers are careful not to break the spirits of their children - and in the process they become the kind of fathers God wants them to be.

Family life in the Lord is not quite as simple as it sounds. Willing subordination and its counterpart of tender, self-giving love, joyful obedience to parents, and the kind of parental subervision that encourages rather than frustrates, are not easy to come by. Families come home from church only to hand out harsh words and engage in actions which produce strife and rebellion. The res-

surection, somehow, is left behind in the sanctuary, and the old grind begins agai This is not the way. The resurrection of Christ has to be taken out into the worl - right where you live. This means letting Christ be Lord in your heart and in your home. His lordship makes all the difference in the world. Christ died for you, to put to death all that stubbornness and sarcasm which produce so much troub in the homes of our world, In Him there is forgiveness, leaving no room for that unforgiving spirit which carries a grudge and causes so much bitterness in the homes of our world. In Christ there is life, full and free, quite unlike that liv ing death which has turned so many homes into mausoleums.

The Lord heals the hurts of people who look to Him for help. If there is sin in your life, He forgives. He really does. It doesn't make any difference what you have done; He heals the hurt of it all. If you have done violence to your marriage, or have been neglectful to your family, you will probably feel more hurt than ever the more you come to know your Lord. The hurt is not healed by mere recognition of what you have done wrong. That only makes the hurt worse. Healing comes from the forgiving love and the life-giving power of the Lord who paid the price for all you have done wrong. He was raised from the dead to be Lord in your heart and in your home.

Have a home in the Lord, filled to the brim with love. Let it be the kind of love between husband and wife that made Jacob work seven years for the han of Rachel. To this man, the Scriptures tell us, those 7 years seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had for her. Love one another in the Lord. Children, love your parents in the Lord, giving them every respect and obedience. One day, when you have children of your own, you will begin to appreciate what that tight little relationship really meant, not just for them but for you. Obey your parents in the Lord - this is your time. Tomorrow or the next day may very well be too late. How often I have heard young people say to me, If I had only obeyed my parents, I would not have made such a mess of my life. For the sake of Christ, crucified for you and risen from the dead, obey your parents. Men, for the sake of Christ, who as a Man for us all - let us be real fathers in our households.

The family depends upon you as the church depends upon Christ. St. Augustine once said: Your family is a little church. In the Lord make it so. Be a manly husband to your wife, and a fatherly father to your children.

Let the love of Christ rule in your family, and be truly loving, one to another. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, remembering that as members of one body you are called to live in harmony. Let this not just be Mother's Day, but let it truly be a family day - in the Lord. Never forget to be thankful for what God has done for you in Christ - in Christ who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.