

Sermon for May 13, 2018 – Mother’s Day

2 Timothy 1:5 & 3:14-17 (EHV)

Theme: **Thank God for Christian Mothers.**

- 1) They show their children the way of salvation
- 2) Their children honor them by staying in Scripture.

⁵ I remember your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am convinced that it also lives in you. . . ¹⁴ As for you, continue in the things you have learned and about which you have become convinced. You know from whom you learned them ¹⁵ and that from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work.

What is the most important thing your mother taught you? Was it to eat your vegetables without complaining? Was it to make your bed every morning? Was it how to handle conflict or deal with sorrow? Was it to take care of both yourself and others?

Caring Christian mothers pass on a lot of important life lessons to their children, but do you know what the most important one of them all is? It’s to trust in Jesus for salvation. And why is that so important? Because, even though other things a mother teaches you may help and bless your earthly life, faith in Jesus will benefit you eternally.

With the biblical examples of Lois and Eunice as our guide, let us learn to **thank God for Christian mothers.** Why? Because: *1) they show their children the way of salvation, 2) Their children honor them by staying in the Scriptures.*

Part One: *They show their children the way of salvation*

Our sermon text is taken from a letter the apostle Paul wrote to encourage a young pastor named Timothy, who would soon be facing all sorts of pressures, temptation and persecution because of his faith in Christ. Paul writes:

⁵ I remember your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am convinced that it also lives in you.

What impressed Paul in regards to Timothy? His sincere faith in the Lord. In other words, Timothy was not like so many false preachers who say one thing and do another. No, Timothy truly believed what he taught, and it showed!

Paul praises the unhypocritical sincerity of Timothy's faith – remembering the people God used in Timothy's life to pass it on to him. Who were they? His mother Eunice and grandmother Lois.

Now, let's get one thing clear from the get-go: the LORD primarily tasks fathers, and not mothers, with the duty of bringing up their children in the way of the LORD. Understand this, fathers, for the LORD will certainly hold you accountable on the Last Day if you claim to be Christian and do nothing to encourage your children's faith in Jesus.

But if men are tasked with the responsibility of bringing their children up in the way of the Lord, why isn't Timothy's father mentioned in our text? Because, he seemed to have been a gentile unbeliever who didn't care to know the LORD himself. But his wife Eunice did. She understood the importance of believing in the LORD. She had a strong faith in the promised Messiah – a faith that was passed on to her by her own mother Lois. And Eunice wanted Timothy to share in that same faith, which gave her so much hope. Why? Because she loved her son - so much so that the thought of him not believing in the LORD terrified her. She didn't want her son to suffer God's eternal wrath in hell for his sins – especially when God promised to forgive them all for Christ's sake. Eunice wanted her son to live in eternal peace with the LORD in heaven. And so, enlisting the aid of her own mother, Eunice set out to teach Timothy the truth about God's holiness, his sinfulness and the promised Messiah, through whom he would receive forgiveness, life and salvation.

How old was Timothy when Eunice set out to teach him about the LORD and what tool did she use? Paul tells us, when he writes: ¹⁴ *As for you, continue in the things you have learned and about which you have become convinced. You know from whom you learned them* ¹⁵ *and that from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

Eunice did not wait for Timothy to be in school or even possess the ability to talk before she started teaching him about the LORD. No, she started teaching him from infancy – from the day he came forth from the womb. I can just imagine Eunice holding baby Timothy in her arms, as she sang psalms and spiritual songs to him. I can just imagine baby Timothy watching his mother and grandmother pray together – and mimicking them. I can just picture Eunice and Lois telling Timothy Bible stories like the creation account, the fall into sin and promise of a Savior. They taught Timothy in the simplest of ways – using the wonderful stories God had written for us in the Bible to direct Timothy's attention to the Lord's promises. And as they did this, the Holy Spirit miraculously awakened faith in Timothy's infant heart through the Gospel those women taught.

Thank God for Christian mothers. They love us so much that they make sharing the Gospel with us their top priority. And how do they share the Gospel with us? By living it themselves!

Yes, a lot can be learned from the example of Eunice – Timothy’s mother. First of all, be faithful to Christ yourself. If you are a Christian parent, don’t just send your children to Sunday School - hoping they get some religion, while you stay at home. Children are not dumb. They will reason: if Church isn’t important for my parents, why should it be important for me. If you don’t care about your faith then, chances are, neither will your child care about his.

But, if you yourself stand in awe of the love God had for us in Christ, if you yourself go to the cross in repentance over your sins – trusting in the LORD’s promise to forgive you, if you yourself are so filled with thankful love over everything the LORD has done to save you that you want to learn more about him . . . then know this: regardless of how old or young your child is, he or she will take note of the sincerity of your God-given faith and ask themselves: “Why is my parent’s faith in Jesus so important to them? What hope is it giving them? Maybe I should find out more to see whether or not it should be important for me too.”

The next thing you can learn from the example of Eunice is that your child is never too young to learn God’s Word. Point your children to Jesus from the day they are born. Tell them simple Bible stories. Sing simple Bible songs with them like: “Jesus loves me this I know.” Pray with them. I know: you might wonder how a little infant, who seems to have no comprehension of spoken language, could ever understand and believe the Bible stories we tell them. I will admit: I have no idea how this works; but I also know that the Holy Spirit promises to work wherever his Word is taught and Sacraments administered. Because this is the case, I believe what the Scriptures say: that it is even possible for infants to believe and know the simple, saving truth of sacred Scripture.

Thank God for Christian parents, who love their children so much, that they share their faith with them. “But,” some of us might be thinking, “what if I have not been such a parent? What if I never took special care to teach my children God’s word, bring them to Church or be an example for them while they were young? What if I am only now taking my faith in the LORD seriously? Have I damaged my children’s chance to believe in the LORD beyond all hope?”

If such questions plague your conscience, I have no better advice for you than this: Go to Christ in prayer – confessing all your worries and sins to him with a penitent heart and trusting that he will forgive you for his mercy’s sake. And then arise from your repentance in the peace of knowing that your Savior has died for your sins. He has washed them all away. You are holy and new in His sight. Because this is the case, there is nothing stopping you from witnessing your faith to your children now.

But what if my children are all grown up and out of the house? Isn’t it too late for me to share my faith with them? Certainly not. Don’t forget that Lois, Timothy’s grandmother, was also involved in his spiritual upbringing. Grandparents play a huge secondary role in the development of their offspring. You can still, through word and example, witness your faith to your children and grandchildren. And God will bless your witness. Even though adult children may not acknowledge it, the words and actions of their parents still do influence them. Because

the Holy Spirit promises to work wherever his word is witnessed, you can still be the Christian mother or father God wants you to be – prayerfully pointing your children to Christ in the hope that they too will repent of their sin, believe in Jesus and be saved.

Part Two: Their children honor them by staying in Scripture.

So far my sermon has been addressing Christian parents and how they can witness their faith to their children. But what about you, children: what duty do you have toward your parents? To honor them, as the 4th commandment states: “Honor your father and mother that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy a long life on the earth”.

One of the greatest honors caring parents receive, is when they see their children applying all the important life lessons they – as parents – wanted to instill on them. Parents are happy when this happens – not merely because their children are listening to them, but because their children are on the right path. Their teaching wasn’t in vain.

If this is true in regard to earthly teachings, then it is even more true regarding spiritual things. Remaining in the teaching of Scriptures is the greatest honor a child can give his Christian parents. Why? Because it reassures them that their teaching was not in vain. As I mentioned before: the eternal salvation of your soul is your Christian mother’s or father’s greatest concern for you. Seeing you continue in the Scriptures reassures them that you belong to the LORD, that you too will be with them in heaven when your last hour comes – enjoying the wonderful salvation God the Father has prepared for us in Christ Jesus.

This is why the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy:

¹⁴ As for you, continue in the things you have learned and about which you have become convinced.

In other words, don’t let all this teaching be in vain. Don’t consider it mere child’s play, that has no real effect on your life now.

You know from whom you learned them – that is to say, you, Timothy, know the sincerity and example of your mother and grandmother. You saw how they lived their faith, and the hope the Gospel gave them. This is the hope they wanted you to have above all else. This is why from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Now, let’s get one thing clear from the get-go: the reason Paul wanted Timothy to dig into Scripture was not merely to honor his mother. That is never a reason to believe in Jesus. No, Paul wanted Timothy to continue digging into the Bible because studying it convinced him that everything his mother taught him about the LORD was true. The apostle Paul, together with Timothy’s mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois, hoped and prayed that Timothy would remain

the fine, god-pleasing young man the LORD allowed him to become – always remaining faithful to the tool the Holy Spirit used to shape him into the man he had become. That tool is the Bible.

¹⁶ All Scripture is God breathed - that is to say, the whole Bible is verbally inspired by God himself. It is his holy powerful word, which is always useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work.

There is a mistake people make with the Bible: some think that, once they learned that Jesus died and rose again for their sins, there is nothing more they need to learn from the Scriptures. But here's the thing: whereas the teaching of salvation through faith in Jesus is certainly the heart and core of the Bible, understand that God didn't just give this teaching so that we can forget everything else he taught in the Scripture. No, he gave this teaching to transform us, to be the foundation upon which our lives are built. Every teaching in the Bible is somehow connected and anchored in the Gospel of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. Every teaching of the Bible equips us for life as God's dearly redeemed children so that we can glorify his name by doing all the good things he wants us to do.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: let us ever remember to thank God for Christian mothers. Why? Because they show their children the way of salvation by bringing them to Christ. Let us then honor their work by remaining in Christ – continuing in the things we have learn from them regarding the LORD. Why? Merely because it will please them? No, rather because we have become convinced from Scripture itself that what they taught us is true. Amen.