

God's Blessing of Motherhood and Children
I Samuel 1:20-28,
Advent Sunday III December 14, 2014

Beloved of the Lord.....Something very special and very sacred took place here this morning, namely a little child was baptized, God pouring out His Spirit upon him, "by the washing of water by the Word." The name Theodore is of Greek origin, and it means "Gift of God". And just as a little baby is a wonderful gift from God to mother and father, so the baptism of a child is likewise God's gift to parents and infants. Baptism "works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare." Baptism then is not our dedicating a child to God, rather baptism is God's gift of the Gospel to little children. Baptism is God's Means of Grace, God's own special way and means, whereby the Holy Spirit Himself comes to our child with grace, forgiveness of sins, salvation and even heaven. When the pastor says "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", that Word of God spoken is the vehicle whereby heaven's treasures are given, "for the promise is unto you and your children." Indeed something very special and sacred took place here this morning, a child who was born in sin, is now born again, born from above into God's Kingdom of Grace. Through Baptism God Himself has adopted Theodore into the Kingdom of God, and God has put His name upon this son. "Receive the sign of the holy cross, both upon the forehead and upon the breast, in token that thou hast been redeemed by Christ the crucified." Amen. How true then it is: Baptism doth now save us.

Today as we look at our lesson of Hannah and Samuel, let us appreciate God's great gift of motherhood and children.

I. Motherhood, and the blessing of children. From the Holy Scriptures we certainly know motherhood is a high calling from the Lord. For example, in the Old Testament when the bride Rebecca left her home to marry Isaac, the Bible says her family "blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them." Their prayer was that she would be the mother of many children. Likewise Psalm 127 says, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." As we are less than two weeks before Christmas, we remember especially the high calling of motherhood God gave the Virgin Mary, who is rightly called "the mother of God" because Jesus is God. First John 5:11 says, "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Sadly our world today despises motherhood. Just last week as we were shopping at Kohls in the girl's clothing section, there were two pajama tops for girls on the rack. Side by side one shirt said "I don't need a prince", and the other shirt said "Dream Big". Sadly this is the message being taught our little girls. Our world teaches girls that marriage is not necessary or desirable. You don't need to fall in love and find a prince who will love

you and take care of you. Be independent. Choose a career. Dream big. Make a lot of money. Break through the glass ceiling. Prove to those men a woman can do anything a man can do. Prove you are better. By the same token our world teaches young women to despise virginity and be promiscuous. There will be no consequence if you use birth control. Our world preaches career before men or marriage, and don't you dare have children because they will be a burden to you and they will cost a lot of money. You might lose your dream! Or if you have to have a child, just have one or two, because you don't want to be stuck in the home doing all those menial chores. Needless to say, all this is contrary to God's good will and desire for women. Paul writes to Timothy (5:14), "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." Titus 2:4-5 says young women are to be "sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." Let us then be clear: while the Bible does not forbid women from the workplace, and often it is financially necessary, God does not allow any man or woman to despise God's natural order of creation, the high calling of motherhood. Christian mothers should be highly honored, cherished, and revered. But those who despise motherhood and spend their life in a career trying to prove themselves as strong or stronger than men, such women will not be happy, content, or blessed, for they are fighting against God's good order and God cannot bless evil.

What I hope everyone learns today, or perhaps learns a bit better, is the high calling of motherhood God has intended for women by their very nature, their gender given from birth. It not shameful to be a woman, nor should a woman feel any compulsion to prove herself just as good as a man in the workforce. A woman who understands the high calling of motherhood is greater than any CEO in the workplace. She should cherish the special way God has made her, for she is a work of art, well-endowed to bear children, to give life, even to nurse and feed a child by her own breasts. No man can do that. Men and women are different because God made them different. And even if a woman dresses like a man and tries to be a husband, she can't change her nature. And those who rebel against God by hormones, operations, and gender confusion, will not be blessed by God but they will suffer miserably for their own sins. God cannot bless evil, but He would rather forgive and do good.

Regarding gender, the Bible says the woman is the weaker vessel, and this is generally true physically and mentally. Because men are stronger they ought to do the hard work and bring home the bacon. When times are tough the whole family should gather around the father who is the head of the house, and all must rely upon God. Likewise that place where a woman truly excels and finds happiness is motherhood, and men are entirely clumsy and unskilled in this arena. A woman who is willing and wants to bear children for God and husband, as many as God gives, she should be praised and admired by all men and women around her. And let it also be said no man in his right mind wants to marry a domineering wife. Proverbs 21:9 says, "It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." Likewise no woman in her right mind wants to marry a lazy husband who will not provide for her and

her children. Speaking of fathers and husbands the Bible says, “He that provideth not for his own is worse than an infidel and hath denied the faith.”

This is why Hannah in our lesson today is to be so greatly admired. She knew her high calling, yet for many years she was barren. This is indeed a cross to many Christian women, but it is a cross God will help to bear. If God prevents the blessing of children to the married woman, He has a good reason for it, but it doesn't mean she is rejected by God, for Jesus loves her just as much as a woman with ten children. God thus blesses people in different ways so we don't all get the same thing. But His mercy upon all sinners is equal through the blood of Christ. Those women who are thus barren must recognize God has given them a particular cross, but it is still a cross given with love. It should then be borne patiently. You can still be fruitful in God's kingdom, but this fruitfulness happens in a different way. “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” This also is God's calling, a test, yet a blessing in disguise. Only those who believe and trust in God's grace however can fulfil this special call.

As for Hannah, Hannah prayed for years and earnestly besought the blessing of a child from God in prayer. Hannah also made a vow, a sacred promise to God: if the Lord gave her a son, she would give her son to the Lord, namely to serve in God's house. Shortly thereafter God blessed Hannah with conception. This gift of God grew within. She then “bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.”

II. What are the responsibilities or duties of Christian parents? What then are the duties of Christian parents? First here understand that being a mother or father is a sacred office, a special calling from God. We are not to just feed and clothe our children, or teach them to brush their teeth, etc., but we are to teach them God's Word, Law and Gospel, so Satan does not snatch them away from the love of Jesus. Ephesians 6:4 says, “Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” This means you raise them by proper discipline, and train them with God's Word.

Don't be like some foolish parents who think it cruel to spank a child when necessary. That is not love but arrogance. Every child is wild and rebellious by nature, thus in need of discipline. Proverbs 13:24 says, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” Proverbs 22:15 says, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” Parents should also pray for their children, diligently and often, just like Hannah. When she brought Samuel to the temple, she said to Eli, “Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him.” Pray to God that your baptized child will learn to love and cherish God's Word, and always be happy in the love of Jesus. Pray especially that God will preserve their little faith and help it to grow, for a child is much like a little plant which needs to be watered regularly, and that water is the Word of God

which feeds and gives life. Pray also that God will help you not to hurt or injure the faith of your own child. Jesus said, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

But above all this, what is most important for our children is to teach them and train them up with God's Word. Parents should not just teach their children God's law, God's commandments, but they must also teach their children the Gospel, namely Jesus. Jesus said, "suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." Jesus gave His life for them too, and they need Jesus just as much as Mommy and Daddy. They too need forgiveness for their sins. Likewise by God's Word we must teach our children how to repent, how to say "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you" and "Jesus loves you and has forgiven you too." Throughout their life we want to raise and train them in such a way, that Christ always shines as this world's true Savior and Redeemer, and Jesus is a Friend of sinners, and we are certain friends in need. Indeed we want our children to know that the love of Jesus for them is so great, that He humbled Himself and came down from heaven to live and even begin as a little child, so He would be True Man for our sake. And all this He did, only to suffer and die for our own sins upon the cross. It is His holy blood which saves us, and not ourselves. Oh that all parents would firmly teach their children the Gospel, for only the love of Christ can save them and us from our sins. Thanks be to God then this day we have Holy Baptism for our children, for all the gifts of heaven come down from heaven by that washing of water in the Word. Rejoice then today dear Christian father and mother, in the blessed gift of grace God gives your child, because as the Bible says, "ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Likewise as Hannah gave her child in faith to God, leaving Samuel there in the temple, so raise your child in God's temple, God's house, by teaching and feeding them the Words of God, Jesus, the Bread of Life. Finally beloved, remembering the special name Theodore, which means "gift of God", let us rejoice in God's special gift to us this Christmas, the gift of Jesus, that Babe born in Bethlehem, who redeems us from all sin. This Jesus tells us to rejoice because our names are "written in heaven." May God therefore keep all of us from the sin of unbelief, and may we by our baptism and faith keep the sign of the cross "both upon the forehead and upon the breast, in token that thou hast been redeemed by Christ the crucified." Amen.