

Mothers Day
Matthew 20:20-21

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One of the comics that I used to read was Calvin and Hobbes. I remember one where Calvin is standing by his mother's bed on Mother's Day morning.

He's shaking his mother saying, *"Hey, Mom! Wake up. I made you a Mother's Day card."*

His mother was very pleased and read it out loud. It said, *"I was going to buy a card with hearts of pink and red. But then I thought I'd rather spend the money on me instead. It's awfully hard to buy things when one's allowance is so small. So, I guess you're plenty lucky I got you anything at all. Happy Mother's Day to you. There, I said it. Now I'm done. So how about getting out of bed and cooking breakfast for your son."*

Today is Mothers Day. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson, by an act of Congress, proclaimed that the second Sunday in May would be set aside as Mother's Day. A day to celebrate our mothers.

He declared it, *"A day for the public expression of our love and reverence for the mothers of our country."*

It's been said that *"No nation is ever greater than its mothers, for they are the makers of the next generation."* This is why I'm using a passage out of Matthew 20 for today's message.

Matthew 20:20-21, *"Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."*

Mrs. Zebedee was aware of Jesus' teachings about His kingdom. She was also aware of the fact that her sons, James and John, were very close to Him.

In fact, she knew that her sons made up two thirds of Jesus' inner circle. Peter was the third.

Knowing how close Jesus was to her sons she wondered what would happen to them when Jesus established His kingdom.

Perhaps she was there when Jesus told the story about the landowner who went out to find laborers for his field. This story is found at the beginning of Matthew 20.

The men who were hired first were paid the same amount as those who were hired last. Perhaps this caused her to wonder, *"Will my sons really have positions of authority in Jesus' new kingdom?"*

So, when the opportunity presented itself, she came to Jesus, bowed before Him and made her request that her sons sit in places of authority and honor.

Now, it would be easy to criticize Mrs. Zebedee for being so bold, but we also know, from the story, that Jesus tells her that her request was impossible.

He told her that it was the Father who determined who would be seated there. However, her request shows us three important truths that we need to remember on this Mothers Day.

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The first truth is that good and godly mothers want to see their children saved. They want to see them receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

For most parents, this is the most important thing we want for our kids. Yes, we want them to be happy in life, get good grades in school and get married to someone who loves them.

But I'd rather have them go without any of these and be saved than have everything in the world except a relationship with Jesus.

Godly mothers want their kids to receive Jesus because they know that it's the most important decision that they'll ever make.

Godly mothers understand what Jesus meant when He said, in Matthew 6:33, *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

The single most important thing we'll ever do as parents is introduce our children to Jesus.

Yet we must also remember that there are no guarantees in life. You can have the most godly parents in the world, but that's not a guarantee that your children will choose to follow Jesus.

Sometimes they simply don't make the choices we wish that they'd make. Everyone needs to decide for themselves whether they'll follow or not. Remember, God has no grandchildren.

I heard the story of a mother who had a 3-year-old son and a 1-year-old daughter. The two children were sitting on the couch watching TV.

The mother had to run to the kitchen for a minute, so she told her son to watch his sister while she was gone.

As soon as she was out of the room, she heard a thud and then crying. She came running back and saw her daughter lying on the floor in tears.

She asked her son what had happened. He said, *“You told me to watch her, so I watched her. I watched her crawl over to the edge of the couch and then I watched her fall onto the floor and start crying. I did exactly what you told me to do!”*

Being a parent isn't easy. It comes with a lot of joy, but also times of deep sorrow. Sometimes your children can make you so proud, and sometimes you just want to shoot them.

Maybe you can relate to the story of the mother with 3 children who was asked, *“If you had to live your life all over again, would you still want children?”* *“Yes,”* she replied, *“just not the same ones.”*

Godly mothers want to see their children receive Jesus as their Savior. If you're a mother today and you still have children that haven't received Jesus as their Lord and Savior yet, keep praying.

No matter what the situation, keep asking God to touch their hearts and draw them to Himself. Keep that hope fresh and alive within you.

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Secondly, not only did Mrs. Zebedee ask for her children to be a part of Jesus' kingdom, but she wanted them to be actively involved in the work of His kingdom.

It's not enough that we just want our kids to be saved. Churches are full of people content to just fill a pew on Sunday mornings.

There are plenty of people willing to just sit back and receive a blessing, but seldom do they get involved in doing any of the real work of the church.

So where does the spirit of service and excellence begin? It begins in the home with parents setting the example. Praying that their sons and daughters might be involved in the work of the kingdom.

It's parents serving as Sunday School teachers, Youth Group leaders and Ushers. It's kids seeing how much the church means to their parents by seeing them practically and joyfully serving and not simply paying lip service to their faith on Sunday mornings.

Children will invariably talk, eat, walk, think, respond, and act like their parents. So, give them a goal to work toward.

When you give them a pattern that they can clearly see, you give them something that gold and silver cannot buy.

Don't be like the story of a family one Sunday after a Child Dedication service. As the family was driving home from church after the dedication of their baby, the older brother cried all the way home in the back seat.

His mother asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, *"That pastor said he wanted us to be brought up in a Christian home, but I want to stay with you guys!"*

Godly parents set an example of faith and service for their children. They model what the Christian life is supposed to look like. They want them to not just be part of the kingdom but participate in the kingdom.

2 Timothy 1:5, *"I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also."*

We see the power of a godly example lived out in the life of Timothy. It was the life of his mother and grandmother that led him to receive

Jesus and eventually come to an important place of service alongside Paul.

This is the power of a godly example.

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The third truth is that Mrs. Zebedee wanted her children to be powerfully used in the Kingdom. She had big dreams for her kids.

Not just that they would be in the kingdom and serving in the kingdom, she wanted them to reach their full potential.

It's like another Calvin and Hobbes comic. Calvin walks by his mother and says, *"Hi, it's me, your big accomplishment in life!"*

In the next panel you see his mother sitting on the couch saying, *"Now I'm depressed."*

In any kingdom, there are no higher positions than those who sit on the right and left of the King himself. That's what she wanted for her children.

Not just that they would be believers and serving but that they would have positions of importance.

She didn't just ask for her children to be doorkeepers, she wanted them to make a difference.

Now, before we're too harsh with Mrs. Zebedee for being brash and presumptuous, let's at least admire her for her boldness.

Too often people have settled for mediocrity in the church. They simply seek a comfortable position that they can manage.

Good parents want to see their children strive for excellence. They don't want them to settle for anything that's beneath their gifting and talents.

An African proverb says, *"In the eyes of its mother every beetle is a gazelle."* That's a beautiful picture, don't you think? Every beetle a gazelle.

You have this awkward looking dung beetle, and to its mother it's a graceful gazelle jumping through the tall grass. Godly mothers don't just want the bare minimum for their children; they want what's best.

You see this in the life of Hannah. She couldn't have children. She prayed long and hard, and God finally gave her a son. She named him Samuel, which means *'God has heard.'*

In gratitude for the gift of that child, Hannah dedicated him to the Lord. This was more than just your usual dedication. She took him to the temple so he could be raised serving the Lord.

1 Samuel 1:27-28, *"I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there."*

Mothers, have you given your children to God? Have you dedicated them to Him, recognizing that they're His and not yours? Are you desiring that they grow and become everything that God has for them?

Being a mother is an important role, but it can also be discouraging. You get stuck in the day-to-day routine of changing diapers, washing clothes and making lunches that you forget what an important role you have.

It reminds me of the father who was trying to explain the concept of marriage to his 4-year-old daughter.

He got out their wedding album, thinking visual images would help, and explained the entire wedding service to her.

When he was finished, he asked if she had any questions. She pointed to a picture of the wedding party and asked, *"Daddy, is that when mommy came to work for us?"*

It can feel like that at times. You're just the hired help, but remember how important your job is, you're shaping a life.

Being a mother is important. She shapes lives and prays for her children's salvation and their ability to serve Him successfully. What a calling!

When Tony Campolo was on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, there were gatherings from time to time to which faculty members brought their spouses.

Predictably, some woman lawyer or sociologist would confront his wife with the question, *"And what is it that you do, my dear?"*

His wife, who was the mother of two boys and one of the most brilliantly articulate individuals he knew, had a great response.

She would answer by saying, *"I am socializing two homo sapiens in the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition in order that they might be instruments for the transformation of the social order into the teleologically prescribed utopia inherent in the eschaton."*

She followed that with, *"And what is it that you do?"* The other person's *"I'm a lawyer"* just wasn't that overpowering.

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Conclusion

Motherhood can be difficult and, at times, discouraging. This Mother's Day I want to say thank you to all the physical and spiritual mothers out there.

Those who have sacrificed, served, prayed and loved. Thank you for modeling the love of Jesus to us.

Mothers, this is your day. May God bless you and I pray that if there is someone here who has never experienced the love of God, that's so close to the love of a mother, that this will be your time of decision.

I pray that you'll recognize that there is one who has already gone through the valley of the shadow for you and made it possible for you to live forever.

In doing so, He extends His loving invitation in much the same way that a mother opens the door and calls for her children. Jesus is calling for you.