

November 8, 2015
Sermon for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
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Faith@Home sermon series
Deuteronomy 6:1-9

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Deuteronomy 6:1–9 (ESV)

¹ “Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the rules—that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, ² that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son’s son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. ³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. ⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

To begin, let's consider two families in 1700 in colonial America.

The first family is the Edwards family and the father, Jonathan, was a pastor. His most famous sermon was called "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Among his descendants are 14 college presidents, more than 100 college professors, more than 100 lawyers, 30 judges, 60 doctors and more than 100 pastors.

The second family is the Robert Jukes family. They seldom attended church, had numerous excuses and were Christian in name only. Among their known descendants, 310 were professional beggars, 440 died from alcoholism, 130 were convicted criminals and only 20 learned a trade, 10 of those while they were in prison! I'm not saying that they were all bad, but unfortunately our society keeps more records of bad people than of good.

Although we do not agree with Jonathan Edwards' theology, the point that I am getting to here is that the family has the opportunity to make a deeper and longer-lasting spiritual impression than any other organization in the world; and that includes the Church.

That's why we are launching an emphasis called **Faith@Home**.

Today's message is called "The Home as a Seminary."

The English word seminary is taken from the Latin *seminarium*, translated as "seed-bed." Seminaries are where the seeds of God's truth and grace are generously, faithfully and abundantly sown.

And that summarizes what Moses tells Israel in the book of Deuteronomy. The home is a seminary. Moses leaves Israel with three lengthy sermons. This is highlighted by the ongoing use of the Hebrew word for today. The word appears over sixty times in Deuteronomy and accents Moses' strategy of encouraging Israelites to decide today that their home is a seminary.

Why is that? I'll give you the "G-rated" version; otherwise, the details would make you sick.

The Faculty = Parents, Not the Parish

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut 6:6-7).

This is the toughest, most extreme job in the world! Sometimes we, as parents, need to be "Faster than a speeding bullet. More powerful than a locomotive. Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound." People who see us need to exclaim, "Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's not superman but it's mom or dad.

There are not really any schools where we can get training and there's no general agreement on what we should do; most of the time we as parents make it up on the fly.

We get no holidays, no vacations, no union benefits and no cost of living raises.

We work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for at least 18 years for each child we have. Besides that, most of the time, we have to contend with an administration that has two leaders; and mom and dad don't always agree on every decision.

This led one family expert to write, "I regard this [parenting] as the hardest, most complicated, anxiety-ridden, sweat-and-blood-producing job in the world."

Will anyone say "Amen" to that?

Luther writes, "Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel."

Parents are not simply responsible for seeing to it that the children are spiritually trained as much as we are charged with doing it ourselves. And that makes us a little queasy, doesn't it?

You see, as parents we tend to parent our children in the areas of our personal competence. Right?

I mean if the father is a macho sports star then it's not uncommon for little boys and girls to get footballs and baseballs and soccer balls when they're two days old. And when the little one turns begins to walk, good old dad says, "Come on, pal, get with it. It's time to play some ball!"

We tend to parent enthusiastically in the areas of our own competence; be it music, cooking, fishing, woodworking or whatever; but here is where the problem lies; many parents don't feel competent in spiritual things and so we delegate our responsibility to others.

However the faculty members are still the parents, not the parish. Whether they feel up to the task or not.

The Curriculum = A Relationship, Not a Religion

“And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live” (Deuteronomy 30:6).

I’m sometimes scared that children will grow up and get confused about this. Christianity is more than a way of life and a moral code. And please, let’s not reduce it to just showing up at church when we feel like it.

It is a living relationship with the living God. *“Love the Lord your God, listen to his voice and hold fast to him, for he is your life”* (Deuteronomy 30:20).

Let me put it this way. In 1986 Bob Brentley was playing third base for the San Francisco Giants. In the fourth inning of a game against the Atlanta Braves, Brentley made an error on a routine ground ball. Four batters later he kicked away another grounder. Then, while he was scrambling after the ball, he threw wildly past home plate. A few minutes later he blew yet another routine play to become the first player in major league baseball history to make four errors in one inning.

But do you know what happened to Bob Brentley in the bottom of the ninth inning of that same game?

He hit a home run into the left field seats to win the game.

Children make mistakes; they sin; they err in their judgment; then schools and friends and teams and coaches remind them of their failures.

Children need to know that they can get up and get back into the game and they will only be able to do that with a relationship with Jesus.

The Method = Our Lives, Not Our Lips

“When I went up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water” (Deuteronomy 9:9).

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers. Listen to him” (Deuteronomy 18:15; cf. Acts 3:22-24).

Some of the most powerful sentences that spiritual leaders can say to a spiritual learner are only two words long. “Follow me.”

“Walk with me,
talk with me,
watch me,
listen to me.”

Parents, grandparents and guardians—this method has never been improved upon. Follow me.

Christianity is caught, not taught.

When I was growing up Ron Howard was sort of my role model; he was Opie on The Andy Griffith Show and Richie Cunningham on Happy Days.

Eddie Haskell on Leave it to Beaver was the closest thing to an antihero that I knew.

Needless to say, times have changed. Now media bombards our children and grandchildren with people that do and say and even sing the unimaginable.

It is coming into your homes 24/7. An hour on Sunday morning can't combat that. Confirmation class or midweek school can't compete.

THE CHURCH CAN'T DO IT FOR YOU; BUT WE WILL DO IT WITH YOU.

You have not only the opportunity to be the most influential person in your child's life. Only you can teach them in words and actions.

Yes you have a job and you have to work. But money, gifts and things cannot teach a child what is right.

The home is a seminary. We you are the faculty, God's Word gives you a curriculum and a method and more importantly, His love and grace. It is all a gift of God by His Holy Spirit.

It's never too late so let's get started!

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria