

THE SECRET OF THE LORD FOR MOTHERS

Mother's Day Message -- Psalm 128:1-6 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Parenting is not always the easiest task that life ever brings, but it may well be one of the most precious ways for moms and dads to learn the secrets of the Lord. David declared in Psalm 25:14, "The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him. And He will make them know His covenant." What is this longing about? I read a devotional to my wife this morning that describes this longing as well as I could describe it. The title is "Two Mothers." The devotional appeared in "Days Of Praise," put out by Institute For Creation Research. The writer of the devotional is John D. Morris, Ph.D. Listen! *"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."* (Luke 1:46-47) Two Jewish ladies, each carrying children recently conceived, met to discuss their circumstances. Perhaps billions of mothers, before and since, have had similar encounters, but since this meeting between Mary and Elizabeth was so special and precious, perhaps we can all profit by its study. The first thing we notice is that their conversation turned immediately to God, to praise of Him for His goodness and grace. No doubt each one experienced all the common difficulties and discomforts of these months, but chose instead to dwell on their blessings and the greatness of God. Mary especially, in the discourse introduced by our text, burst forth in a torrent of praise, singing of the virtues of her Savior and reveling in His grace (vv. 46-55). He had chosen her despite her unworthiness. Her present misunderstood circumstances were not in view at all, just her precious communion with her Lord and His gracious dealings with mankind. In all these things, she "rejoiced." Note that there is no hint of doubt in her song, neither is there a shrinking back from His holiness. In these verses are no fewer than 15 quotations from the Old Testament. Mary knew God's Word well, and sang it back to Him. Furthermore, she sings in humility, not calling herself "mother of God," as some do today, but sings of "God my Saviour." These two mothers provide a model for each of us, especially those blessed with childbearing. May each encounter focus on Him, not just on temporal events. May our fellowship be centered in Him and in His word, not just with friends or family. May prayer and praise burst forth from our lips, not just idle conversation. May we know all the joy and confidence of Mary, and join in her song. JDM

As I preach this message, mothers, please know how God delights in your mothering. Your mothering is part of His eternally settled in heaven plan for families. Before us in this psalm is God's plan for contentedness and peace

in the home, His sweet spot of heaven on earth in a Godly home. I see in the psalm four longings of the heart given to those who know the Lord. What are they? Do you have these four longings in your life?

A GODLY HOME LONGS AFTER THE LORD. (I) This longing is expressed in this Song of ascents in verse 1,2 as the psalter cries out, “How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, Who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, You will be happy and it will be well with you.” Moms and Dads, do we long after the Lord? Verse one here has two verbs, fear and walk. The Hebrew word for fear is **yare.** Yare means to reverence, to stand in awe, and to render submission. The angel of the Lord told Abraham, in Genesis 22: 12, I know that you yare God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from Me.” The first picture of fearing the Lord here then is God’s longing from us, and it needs to be our longing for him in our homes—to reverence Him, to stand in awe of Him, and to render submission to Him. The second verb is **halak.** Halak does not refer to walking upright on our feet, but it is a verb denoting our behavior—calling us to righteous behavior. The verb halak literally means to walk responsibly before God. It is God’s longing that we walk responsibly before Him. Put together, fear and walk speak of a deep passionate, spiritual longing after the Lord. The picture here is of a home that is pulled by God, pulled by His love and grace until the very longing of the home is always after the Lord.

At the top of the list of blessings for such a godly home that longs after the Lord, is the first blessing, verse 2—the willingness to work for a living as husband and wife to provide for your family. I read here, “When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you.” In essence, the psalmist is declaring a godly attitude and conduct longing after the Lord, will lead us as husbands and wives to the first blessing of daily bread, regularly and abundantly provided by the mercy of God. And the second blessing referred to in verse 2 is the means of our daily bread, which is the blessing of being able to work and longing to work. Families that long for God also long to work. To know that your own hands have toiled for the bread on your table adds to the satisfaction of enjoying each meal. Beloved, on this Mother’s Day, do we as dads and moms long after God and thus reap the blessing of daily bread being provided by the joy of hard work that God has also provided?

Dads, we work to put bacon on the table. Moms, you fry the bacon. You make the meals. Your hard work in the home is often underrated. Parenting

is difficult both for both of us, as moms and dads, but mothering may be the toughest job in the world. A psychologist was talking to a despairing mother. He said to her, "Let's see, you say you spend 50 percent of your energy working in the home, 50 percent of your energy on your children, and 50 percent of your energy on your husband. I think I see your problem." Moms, we salute you today. Making it as an active godly mother is by only by longing after the Lord and longing to work as a wife and mother. Secondly,

A GODLY HOME LONGS FOR THE WIFE TO BE THE MOTHER OF CHILDREN. (II)

Verse 3 declares, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine, within your house." In our American culture, children are often postponed, in hopes that by waiting, the family will be better prepared for rearing children and providing for a way for them to make it through college. Yet, sadly, many homes become comfortable without having children and in so doing, these couples cease to long for God's desire, a godly offspring, (Malachi 2: 15) with the wife becoming the mother of children. Some women are providentially barren, and are not divinely given the gift of becoming a mother. Yet, when couples choose not to have children for selfish reasons, this divine longing for children that God gives, is forsaken and destroyed in conformity to this world that downplays the gift of having children. God's rich blessing of children can so easily be missed. There are only a certain number of fruitful years for this blessing of children to be bestowed. Few riches on earth are as rich as the richness of having our own children. Looking back on life, I find no greater riches than God giving me my precious wife, Jinny, and then allowing us to become the parents of our seven children. I longed for children as Jinny did. As we prayed and interceded, longing for more children in our late thirties and early forties, God answered the prayer of our hearts. He brought us our last four children, Audrey, Aaron, Nathaniel and Amanda to join with Amy, Heather and Gretchen. All the praise goes to God's gift, as we longed for His longing—to have a godly offspring, like a warrior's arrows, with a quiver full of them.

Much of our confused and twisted culture suggests that children slow us down and cost too much. Our country teaches that it is wise to do whatever possible to have no more than at the most, one boy and one girl, even if it means having an abortion to get the right gender we are after. Our culture warns, frowns and at times, even looks down on women having children into their forties. This idea is often even adopted by God's people in the church. The idea our culture teaches is that no woman should become a mother again, if she is old enough to be a grandma. Beloved, God doesn't have

those foolish rules. At whatever age God opens the womb, He rejoices to give His rich gifts of children as He is seeking a godly offspring. When Sarah, at age 90, had her only son, Isaac, she laughed and nursed him herself. Other young mothers in her world in their twenties and thirties and forties, doubtless, were laughing with her. (Genesis 21:6,7). We read, “And Sarah said, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.” And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children?” Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.” When Elizabeth was probably 65 or older, and was expecting John the Baptist, Luke 1:25 tells us that she exclaimed, “This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when he looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men.” Notice, Elizabeth didn’t curse and swear because she was too old to be expecting. No, a godly home longs for the wife to be the mother of children.

Notice verse 3, this fruitful vine is “within your house.” This draws attention to motherhood being normally the sphere of a wife’s ministry to her husband and her children in a house where she makes that house a home. There in the home, as a gift from God, mothering is one of the highest callings on earth. Go back to Psalm 127:3-5 which declares, “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They shall not be ashamed, when they speak with their enemies in the gate.” As a father with 7 children, I have often been told unrepeatable things about having seven children. I can only say, “Let God be God and every man a liar.” And my words to God are, “Thanks dear Lord for all seven children, and all fifteen grandchildren with # 16 on the way. Aaron called me this week and was thrilled telling me how the little baby inside of Molly is kicking and moving. A godly home longs for the wife to be the mother of children. Thirdly,

A GODLY HOME LONGS FOR CHILDREN TO SPREAD OUT AROUND THE TABLE AT MEALTIMES. (III) The psalmist declares in verses 3,4, “Your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.” Material wealth pales in significance to the riches of having children. Fruitfulness as a mother is equated with happiness in the home. The image of the psalmist is the beauty of such a home and the health of such a home. Nine years ago Jinny and I were in the Garden of Gethsemane where some of the massive olive trees, over 3,000 years old, have fresh olive shoots clustering out of the main

trunk, green and flourishing. With precious few strokes of his pen, the psalmist conveys a graphic and glorious picture of the good and godly home. But the gardens of olive trees with their ancient trees also have young olive plants or trees coming up all around the tree and only a few feet away. The aged trees are sending up young plants to take their place when they grow old and die.

W.M. Thomson wrote some sacred words 124 years ago in “The Land and the Book.” “Follow me into the olive grove. I will show you what may have suggested the comparison of children to olive plants in Psalm 128. This aged and decayed tree is surrounded, as you see, by several young and thrifty shoots, which spring from the root of the venerable parent. They seem to uphold, protect, and embrace it. We may even fancy they now bear that load of fruit which would otherwise be demanded of the feeble parent. Thus do good and affectionate children gather round the table of the righteous. Each contributes to the common wealth and welfare of the whole—a beautiful sight, with which may God refresh the eyes of every friend of mine.”

Moms and dads, don’t discount the joy of being given a chance to add another olive plant around your table, whether it be, by natural birth, by adoption, by fostering, or by grandparenting, or by great grandparenting. Long that God would give you children to spread themselves out around your table. If the Lord tarries, and your nest is empty, make plans for gracing your lonely tables at times with children to bless and nourish and nurture. Older parents, I challenge you. Invite parents in our church with children over to your homes. It’s costly to go out to eat. Bless them. Let’s make it our longing to always be dedicating babies and teaching Vacation Bible schools. May it be our hope and prayer and joy to hear the cry of babies in our sanctuary, not as a sound for us to abhor, but the sound of God’s blessing.

Beloved, God loves variety in our homes, and many olive plants around our table. God often commands us to be fruitful in the Word. To Noah who walked with God blamelessly, God said in Genesis 9: 1—“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” Don’t ever laugh at God’s instruction and His command. It is His heart, His hope, and His happy gift He longs to give us. It is the gift of enabling wives to be mothers and husbands to be fathers. What a gift of God’s love and grace! God’s love is non-preferential. I read of a mother who had twelve children. She was asked which one of the 12 she loved the most. Her answer was amazingly simple: She said, “It fluctuates. "The one who’s sick until he gets well; and the one who is away until he gets

back home!" Moms and Dads, eat together. Hold hands and pray for the meal. Laugh at meal time. Cry together there. Spread out with joy around the table. All too soon the nest becomes empty. Seek and long for all your children to sit down together with you for meals. Fourthly, and lastly,

A GODLY HOME LONGS FOR A LASTING LEGACY IN THE HOME AND IN THE NATION THROUGH ITS CHILDREN. (IV) The psalmist in verses 5,6 declares the blessing of God to the wider circle—to children and children’s children and to the nation of Israel. (Read it) The influence of our godly families is to reach the ends of the earth. Individual families are dependent upon the prosperity of our nation. Conversely, our nation’s future, our prosperity and legacy in America, is dependent upon the individual legacies of each individual family within our nation. Does this godly longing for children to make it, change a nation? Let me illustrate.

Years ago, a young mother was making her way across the hills of South Wales, carrying her tiny baby in her arms. The mother was savagely overtaken by a blinding blizzard. She never reached her destination. When the blizzard subsided, her body was found by search and rescue workers underneath a mound of snow. They discovered that before her death, she had taken off all her outer clothing and wrapped the clothes round and round her baby. When they unwrapped the little child, to their great surprise and joy, they found he was alive and well. The little mother had then mounded her body over his little body and given her life for her child, proving the depths of her love. Years later that child, David Lloyd George, grown to manhood, became prime minister of Great Britain. Without a doubt, David Lloyd George became one of England’s greatest statesmen.

To add to the blessings of these four longings is verse 5—“May you see or live to see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life.” Verse 6 says in essence, “May you have the blessing of being a grandma and a grandpa.” “Indeed, may you see your children’s children.” This bountiful sweet spot, “Peace be upon you, Israel,” (v. 6) ultimately points to Jesus, Israel’s Messiah. Turn with me to Isaiah 66: 7-13. I call us all back to God’s plan and His sweet spot for lasting legacies, and a prosperous nation. I call us to His sweet spot of divine peace. A godly home longs after the Lord! A godly home longs for the wife to be the mother of children. A godly home longs for children to spread out around the table at mealtimes. A godly home longs for a lasting legacy in the home and in the nation through its children. May God give us godly homes! Happy Mother’s Day! Let’s pray. Amen!