

June 21, 2020
Sermon: Legacy

Good morning and congratulations to the fathers among us. And also congratulations to all the men who serve in roles that help our children grow into the kind of people who live the virtues that Christians should have in this crazy world. It is said it takes a village to raise a child and we are very fortunate to live in a village, Orwigsburg, that has nurtured many fine young people to adulthood through our families, institutions, schools and youth activities and especially through our churches. We know that, as the hymn tells us, Jesus loves the little children. This morning we will take some time to reflect on how being Christian can help our children grow into strong and compassionate adults.

As we are learning once again through all the turmoil of these times, we cannot control the world our children will live in but we can help make them resilient so they live in the world well.

Resilience is the ability to withstand the stress and setbacks in life in a healthy and effective way. Christianity provides a firm foundation that helps us to raise resilient children.

Many of us are aware of the risk factors that increase the probability that children will grow into adults with significant problems. We hear about these risk factors through the media and we see the results of them on our front pages. Some of these factors are abuse, drug use, not completing school, poverty, social isolation and other factors are often in the news. But, unfortunately, fewer of us know that there is also a list of protective factors that give children a greater probability of having good and successful lives. These protective factors can sometimes override the effects of the risk factors. These positive factors include having caring, responsible adults in their lives, being included in positive events, treating others well, and having a spiritual base. These are among the factors that are provided by a good Christian home and a good congregation.

Ecclesiastes tells us that in their lives our children will face both good and bad times. Helping children to develop their own inner moral compass to navigate those times is important. It is also complex when the culture we are raising our children in seems to have lost all its boundaries. Learning the rudiments of our

faith through Bible stories and then through the teachings of Jesus are essential. Yet teaching our children Christian values requires not only Christian education at home and church but more importantly the behavioral example set in the homes and congregations. If we say that something is important yet do not do it ourselves then the child learns that it really not important. If we say that something is wrong yet do it, the child learns that it cannot be so bad.

How do we instill the sense of conscience and compassion that will bring fulfillment and happiness to them? Children need to see acts of kindness. They need opportunities to do these acts and find the satisfaction it brings. They need to participate in the life of the community of the church. They need to understand that each person has gifts that they can use to make the world a better place.

Another important gift we can give our children is the capacity to finding meaning in adversity. The Bible has a lot to say about that. James 1:12 says, "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him."

2 Corinthians 4: 8-9 we hear, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed."

And Proverbs 24:16 tells us: "for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes."

We are resilient when we center our lives in God.

What do we turn to when our world is falling apart? Again the Bible:

Proverbs 3: 5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

Our faith is there to guide and support us. Our Christian community is also there to do the same. Our children need to know that in an inconstant world there is always the foundation of their faith, built on solid rock.

Today Matthew is giving us this message in our gospel ; Matthew 24- 27
"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into

practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. "

Our gospel today also asks who would give a child who asks for bread a stone? I think that is the question we all need to ask ourselves as parents. What are we giving our children that prepares them for the world we are leaving them? What legacy will we leave our children? Our Christian faith and the lives of gratitude, service and love that our faith nurtures in each of us is the greatest gift we can give them. It is truly the bread of life.

May we rejoice today and all days that we share the bond of life and grace with those we love. Amen.

Now we wish to share a special Father's Day present with you. In the coming weeks as we worship together, we will not be able to sing together. St. John's has a long and joyous history of using our voices raised in song to praise the Lord. We can still sing but we will need to do it in our homes.

So Trena has put together some songs for children as part of the sermon today to let us recall some of our own memories of singing at St. John's and for our children to learn them as part of the legacy of our congregation.

In addition, Trena is putting together a sing-a-long of hymns for children that will be posted online so as we worship with songs, only in our hearts, on Sunday, our children can be singing their own Bible songs all week long at home.

Happy Father's Day.