

THE BON AIR PULPIT

Mother's Day, May 9, 1999

Scripture: *Psalm 127, Proverbs 24:3*

Sermon: *Join Mother at Church on Sunday*

I would like to take just a moment to express gratitude to all of you members of families in our congregation. Thank you very much for your commitment to the Lord and your faithfulness to your family and for how you continue to be faithful to this church. We are especially so very grateful this morning for all of you who are mothers and for the special place you have with your children. For the leadership that you provide in your homes, we are very grateful. I was telling the people in the earlier service that I had a unique task this morning. I had an hour and fifteen minute sermon I must deliver in 25 minutes. So you will be aware that I must talk fact and cover a lot of ground, but I hope that it will be helpful to you.

We are going to talk about two passages of scripture from the Old Testament. One is Psalm 127 which says "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stands guard in vain." Then in Proverbs 24:3 "By wisdom a home is built and through understanding it is established. Through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures."

In Greek legend, there is a king by the name of Gordius. Gordius decided one day that he would tie his yolk to a pole. Then he said if anyone could ever untie his knot, he would become the ruler over all of Asia. For many years that feat was not accomplished. So the term the Gordian Knot was passed into literature of the world to represent anything that is a seemingly unsolvable problem. All of us are aware that the challenges we face in our culture remind us of that imagery. We all know that something is desperately, tragically wrong. What we don't know how to do is "untie the knot". What makes this worse is that some people say the culture is going to continue to get worse. It seems that you

and I have loosened the demons and we can't find the cork to put back on top of the bottle. Some people speak about our culture almost with resignation. They say that after the massacre at Littleton, in a few months it will be forgotten. We cannot stay focused. We will turn and put our attention on something else. But other people are saying that maybe the events are so terrible, that maybe this is the call we have been waiting for. Maybe with all of us together we will be able to turn the corner in our culture. So in an effort to try to help those of you who are in family units, I wanted today to try to call your attention to four concepts. I hope that they will be a source of encouragement to you as well as a source of help.

The first concept is the word "perceive". The bible says that when all of us come to God the first thing we must perceive is the concept of repentance. The word "repentance" means to change your mind. It means that you begin to look at life in a different way. So things that you used to think were important, are not as important. Things that you used to think didn't matter, now matter a great deal. So what happens is that you just begin to look at life in an entirely different way. Someone said that faith in Christ is not that you look at certain things in a different way, but you look at all things in a different way. It is so much different, the bible calls it being "born again". You actually start over with a new sense of how you look at life. So one of the great challenges that all of us as parents face is to be able to look at our culture that sends its messages to us and be able to perceive and look through these messages determining which of those are true and which of them are false. For example, some of the world says the only thing that matters is the bottom line. There are many individuals who wake up everyday who have one goal in mind which is to make sure the bottom line is better. Now of course it is important that the bottom line is better, but as Christians we understand that that is not the most important thing in life. So when someone comes to us and makes decisions based only on good economics, then we begin to ask the question "but how does it affect people? What does it do for families? What does it do for me?" You begin to perceive and see through some of the things you hear. We live in a culture that says if it feels good do it. We understand as believers that we are under the lordship of Jesus Christ. We understand that it is not what we want to do, it is what He wants us to do. And even though it may look

pleasurable, and even though it may look like fun, if it is not in accord with what He says, then we understand that that is not for us.

We also need to understand that there is all kinds of gobbledy gook out there. People say all kinds of things. Christians need to be able to perceive and look through it to be able to understand if it is really true or not true at all. Let me give you an illustration. One of the things that all of us are asking in America is why so many children are disturbed. Since the event that happened in Colorado, authorities had discovered over 400 similar types of experiences. Even in our own city, we have understood there were plots that were made and plans that were getting ready to happen. Today, many children in the area of Richmond are under care. The question we keep asking ourselves is "why are some of these children talking in such violent terms, and they are eight years old?" Some of the kids that have been taken out of school and are now in the care of the authorities are seven, eight and nine years old. And the question is "where did they learn all this stuff?" Many individuals think it is learned from what they hear and see in our culture. One of those things that people talk about is the movies. This past week a Senate Sub-Committee began to show on the screen in the United States Capital some of the movies that have just come out. They are terrible, gosh-awful stuff. One actually showed the events in Colorado, before they ever happened. Kids logging on the internet, blowing other kids away. They had the head of the motion picture industry in the meeting and they asked him "Do you think you have any responsibility for this at all?" The answer he gave, which is absolutely no surprise to anybody, was absolutely not. He used the old "poison pill" logic we used to use in our logic classes. It goes something like this: You line up 100 people. You have poison pills which you give to the 100 people and all 100 people die. What caused the 100 people to die? The poison pill, well that is easy. But suppose you give the pill to 100 people and only 50 people die and 50 didn't die? So the logic is you can't blame the pill. So you hear the old poison pill argument. Lots of kids go to movies. Lots of kids watch the Internet. Lots of kids watch television. Yet, they don't go out and kill everybody. It can't be our fault.

In 1990, Billy Joel had a best selling song titled "We didn't start the fire". It was sung as young people singing to their parents. They said that every

mess is not our fault, it is your fault. That has become the theme song of almost everybody. Everybody says "whose fault is it? Well it certainly is not me. Its bound to be you." The reason is because it doesn't affect everybody the same way. Some people can listen to this and not be affected, but for some people it can destroy them. But you see that does not answer the question. Not everybody is going to become a criminal, but some people will. So you cannot say "I produce it, it doesn't make any difference." It may not make any difference to some people, but it affects others. Therefore you are responsible. People ought to be able to say, "Don't keep looking at us. If you don't like it, just turn it off." I wish life were that simple but it is not. Because my kid may cut it off and your kid may cut it on and your kid shoots my kid.

The question that Christians who perceive need to ask is not why don't we cut it off but why do you continue to want to produce stuff that you know is going to affect kids?

I cannot believe that money is so important that you would destroy the lives of kids. Christian people who hear all of this gobbledy goop that comes out have to be able to perceive and understand what is being said.

The second word I give you today is the word "protest". There comes a time in a parent's life when they just have to say, "This is not going to happen anymore. I am going to do everything I can to make sure that it does not happen anymore". Let me tell you one of the things you need to protest. So many people keep saying to our young people "You can do anything you want to do. If you feel like doing it you can do it, do anything. There are no limits. Go do what you want to do. Now you need to understand, you can't drive as fast as you want to because we have a law about that and you can't carry a gun, we have a law about that. You can't drink as much as you want, we have a law about that. You can't sell drugs, we have a law about that." On one hand we are pumping up these young people and saying do anything you want to do. On the other hand, reality hits them because we are a community of law. We say there are certain things you cannot do. You know where those two clash? I see it every week. They either end up with the juvenile authorities or at the

penitentiary because somebody didn't tell them you can't do everything you want. Parents need to protest any person who passes that sort of lie on to their children. Parents need to become angry when shock jocks get on the radio and laugh at the slaughter at Littleton and then suggest that maybe if they thought about sex, it wouldn't be so bad.

Since money sometimes is the only motive that some people operate on, you need to say to them you're not going to get my business. You need to join in with other parents and politicians who simply say we will not let our children make vital decisions. You and I need to understand that sometimes parents just need to protest and say you will not do that anymore to my kids.

You need the third word I suggest this morning, "protect". There are enough forces out in our culture today that will destroy our kids. Probably more than in any other generation, you are going to have to protect your children more. I am over 60 years of age. When I grew up I didn't know what a computer was. I didn't know what the Internet was. I didn't know that a kid could get on the Internet and figure out how to make bombs. It's hard to imagine, but I didn't know what a videotape was. I often laugh and tell kids that we did have electricity and other kinds of things like running water. You understand that there are many things that are out there. What is happening is an absolutely amazing accumulation of what the world can throw at your kids. I pulled out of my files this week an article. It was from the Newsweek magazine November 13, 1967. The front cover was entitled "The Permissive Society". Keep this in mind. In 1967, thirty two years ago, this is what is said, "The old taboos are dead. Anything goes. Our culture has changed more in the last year than in the past 50 years. This is the new Babylonian era. All the old codes are broken down. Americans want to see and hear everything." The article quotes 23 year old Rolling Stone Keith Richards who said "We are not old men, we are not worried about such things as petty morals." Now let me tell you the reason I told you a little about how old I am. You see when I grew up, my mother didn't have to worry about when I was going to get on the internet. She didn't have to worry what kind of movies I went to see. She didn't have to worry about television junk. She didn't have to worry about CD's

or videos. She didn't have to worry about all the things I could go get, she didn't have to worry about that. But guess what? You do. You do. And the word that has to come back to you is the word "protect". There is enough sewage loose in our culture to stop up every home in America. So you are going to have to spend time protecting. So that means that while the world would say to you that what you hear and see does not affect you, you are going to have to say I'm sorry that is not true. Over 200 university studies say that what you see and what you hear does affect you.

This past week a reporter was talking about the video games they showed on the television. You go down and see a person and you shoot him. You go down and you shoot. They say those were the same video games they used to train the military. Let's say you are the military and you take a fellow out of college. You put a gun in his hand and say now shoot somebody. They say that 80% of the people couldn't pull the trigger. So they had to train people to pull the trigger. What do you do? You use video games. You go down and see somebody, you shoot them. When they are finished 90% of the men can shoot somebody. As a parent you may have heard that the video games don't affect you but 200 studies say it does. The military says it does as do law enforcement officials. Therefore, you have to tell your kids you can't watch it.

Now every generation listens to different styles of music. I made a commitment to my children that they could listen to any style of music they wanted. Oh, I listened to some gosh awful stuff. Still at night, I can hear that noise. I will not impose my style on you. Whatever you want to listen to is alright. But here are the rules. Two rules: you cannot bring into our home anything that advocates murder, rape, mutilation, killing of cops or suicide. Secondly, you cannot use my money to buy it. Even if you have the money, you cannot bring it into my house. And the reason for that is I love you too much to let you get in your room and listen to that stuff.

You have to be able to say to them, we are going to set some boundaries. So that means you have to determine how long you are going to let your children watch television. Most authorities say an hour a day. It means as your kids get older, with all the junk that is out there they are not going to be able to have a television in their room. They cannot close the door and watch whatever they want on cable. Some parents are sitting

down with their children. They get a video, sit down with the children and show them some the gosh awful stuff. They then use it as a means of teaching them. It means that somehow or other you have to find out what is on the cybernet. What is there and what are the children looking at? What is possible? I know that takes time but you have to protect your kids. Unfortunately, what we as adults in America have done is we have dumped too much authority on our own kids. I become absolutely amazed sometimes when I talk to parents about what they are letting their kids decide for the whole family. I don't think it said in the scriptures to honor your children. It says to love your children and they are to honor you. Parents have to take responsibility. That means if you want a good night out with your son, for goodness sake don't take him down to see professional wrestling where someone gets beat up and calls everybody every name in the world. Don't think that is a good time with your son. Don't treat your four-year old child as if she is just graduating from high school and dress her up like she is going to the prom. Somehow or other, you are going to have to protect your children. I believe a part of that protection is that as a parent you need to go to the authorities in your school and say we want you to be the authority over our kids while they are in school. I have talked to many of our teachers during these past weeks. They just look at me and they say "Pastor, you just don't understand". I am grateful for parents in our own church who are working hard in Chesterfield County to be able to bring character to education in our schools. We need to understand that our society cannot exist without things like respect, fairness and honesty. We need to say that in our schools this is what we are going to teach. You need to protect your own kids.

The last word I will mention is "promote". I need to remind all of us that Christianity is not just a system of morals. It's not just saying to your kids here are the things you ought to do and here are things you ought not to do. You see morals are on the outside and they are trying to control us on the inside. The Christian faith is a new life on the inside and that affects people on the outside. You will never be able to change the culture around you, but, you can have a new life within you that makes you relate to the culture differently. So, you must go beyond saying to your children you cannot do something. You must hope that by a relationship with Jesus Christ they will say I don't want to do that.

Every parent needs to understand that the battle that we confront is a spiritual battle. The bible says we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and against powers. It is a spiritual battle. It's not you against Hollywood; it's not you against the TV. It's you against the evil that wants to destroy your kids. The reason that evil is having a hey-day in our culture is because we as Christian families do not understand who the real enemy is. We will spend \$100 on a kid for nothing and give him \$1 when he goes to church and wonder why he doesn't get the message. We make him go to a dance lesson but say I am not going to make my kid go to church. Somehow your children begin to understand what you feel is a commitment and important in their life. More than anything you are going to have to spend time reading the scripture with your children and praying with them and talking with them about things of value. I hope you will promote their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And you need to promote what we are trying to do as a church.

This morning a service is going on at Woodlake in the name of this church. A service is going on at Bon Air Elementary in the name of this church. We have already had one service here today and we have another now. As many of you are aware, we are presently talking with another church that may want to merge with our church. We will hold another service at that church. Somebody came to me this week and said "Why in the world would we want to do all this? Why are we building all of these buildings? Why do you want to do this?" I want to say to you, as frankly as I can, I want us to do everything that God will lead us to do because if you and I don't become burdened and interested and concerned, the world is going to suffocate us to death.

God put us in this world to be a counter-balance. He said you can throw everything you want at us, but in the name of Christ we are going to stand against you. We need to do it with all the tenacity and all the Christian courage and Christian commitment we can. I love the prayer of the lady who said, "You cannot have my children, devil, I will fight you!" When she got a little older she said, "I don't have as much strength, I can't fight you anymore, but I will bite you!" She got a little

older and she said, "I can't fight you and I can't bite you, but I'm going to gum you to death." In the name of Jesus Christ we need to make the commitment that we are going to do everything we can as a local church to spread the message of Christ and help people take a stand and find the strength to live in this kind of culture. You have to "promote".

I hope on this Mother's Day, as a family unit, you will promote again and make a fresh commitment to Christ and to His kingdom's work.

I would like for you to bow your head just a moment please. I would like for you in the quietness of this moment on this significant day, to make a fresh commitment to your family, to your grandkids. To those of you who are thinking about getting married, make a commitment to your family. Make a commitment to come and say, "We want Christ, and we want Him as Lord of our lives and Lord of our homes." And I hope that right now you just make a fresh commitment to Him. Some of you here have never given your heart and your life to Christ. I want to tell you there is just not a chance without Him within your life. There is just too much out there. You need Him more than you need your next breath. Some of you are Christians. As family units, you need to come and join the church. Make a fresh commitment to the spiritual things of your life.

My, how important that is.