

Text: Lk 7.31-35

Proposition: Your children will likely reproduce your discipleship.

Good morning!

I don't usually preach a specific Mother's Day sermon (or Father's Day, either, for that matter!). Today I thought I might make an exception.

One reason to make an exception is that this is our second gathering since November, the last being Easter, this being Mother's Day, so I thought it appropriate to make a special effort today.

Another reason is that I was thinking about my 97-year-old mother this week, confined to her home in Courtenay, yet she is still a blessing to our family. I thought I'd share some remembrances of her.

Why don't I usually make a big deal of Mother's Day?

- It is very difficult to find appropriate texts for Mother's Day.
- Mother's Day sermons either seem to be too sentimental or too hectoring.
- We should always honour our Mothers and Fathers, that's a Bible command, whereas the day is a made-up holiday with no religious significance (although it isn't wrong to set aside a special day to acknowledge our mothers).
- For some, this day is one full of pain and regret due to a difficult home life one way or another, and can make a Mother's Day sermon a thing to endure rather than to receive blessing.

Today, though, I want to give an exhortation that might spur us all on to live our lives in such a way as to demonstrate a godly influence on those coming after us, whether we are parents or not.

My text is unusual: Lk 7.31-35 (the connection with Mother's Day is a tenuous reference in the last verse.)

Read Lk 7.31-35

Setting:

In the context, John the Baptist sent some of his disciples to express John's doubts about Jesus. John is languishing in prison, and he wonders, "Did I get it right about Jesus?"

- Jesus reassures them, then asks the crowd what they thought of John (7.24).
- Jesus identifies John as a prophet (7.26), and more than a prophet, the greatest of men, the forerunner of the Messiah (7.27-28).
- The people and the tax collectors voice their agreement, for they appreciated John and his message (7.29)
- Verse 30 recognizes, however, the opposition of the Pharisees and lawyers:

Lk 7.30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

That brings us to our passage, which needs a little explaining.

I. Understanding, “wisdom is vindicated by all her children”

- A. Our passage is the response of Jesus to the two reactions to his evaluation of John
1. Rejoicing of the people and tax collectors
 2. Grumpy rejection of the Pharisees and lawyers
- B. The opening illustration: children at play with uncooperative friends
1. The image is children in a group, one (at least) wants to “act out” things they observe in life (a wedding or a funeral)
 2. So, the child says, “Let’s play at a wedding” and he plays a flute: but the other children won’t dance
 3. Undeterred, the child says, “Let’s do a funeral then” and he sings a lament: but the other children won’t wail

I find it hard to imagine “playing at” a funeral, but no one in the story remarks at it, so likely this is something familiar to the hearers.

- C. The comparison is the attitude of the “men of this generation”
1. They see John the Baptist living his ascetic life, and say, “He has a demon!” (33)
 2. They see Jesus living his normal, non-ascetic life, and say, “He is a drunkard!” (34)

In other words, "You can't win with these people."

D. The concluding proverb: "wisdom is vindicated by all her children"

1. The meaning of the proverb as a proverb:

a. Children tend to mimic their parents

1) Opinions

2) Actions

3) Personality

4) Prejudices

b. Both wisdom and folly have those who follow them, "children"

1) Here, only wisdom is in view

2) Wisdom is *vindicated* by her children: vindicated = justified (or "proved")

3) In other words, at the outset, you can challenge wisdom, but it will show itself in its children

2. Here, we have two groups of leaders: the Pharisees and lawyers vs. John and Jesus

a. Who did the people follow and profit from?

b. Answer: John and Jesus

"wisdom is vindicated by all her children"

II. Comparing the proverb to human circumstances

A. Let's consider our own circumstances

1. No matter what kind of home you had, your parents shaped your life in profound ways

2. We could say, "Your parents are proved or demonstrated in their children"

That doesn't mean we are each exactly like our parents, of course we are individuals, too.

B. Let's consider our own responsibilities

1. Some of you have little children, and you are right there in the "major influence" stage
 - a. Your time to influence most is right now
 - b. You need to be sure the influence of your words matches the influence of your deeds
2. Some of you have grown children
 - a. You might be hearing me and saying, "Man, I blew it"
 - 1) No doubt even the best parents can make mistakes.

I think my mother and dad were good parents, but I know they made mistakes. One vivid memory I have is of a mistake my dad made. He later talked to me about it as an adult, expressing his regrets (though I have to say I can see how I drove him crazy at the time).

- 2) The mistakes will only last if you can't or won't learn from them

- b. It isn't over yet: "the fat lady hasn't sung"

There remains, even now, the power of influence

C. Let's consider the goals of Christian leadership

Ep 4.11-13 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

1. The goal is not material success (nice job, lots of money, big house)
2. The goal is not political power or influence
3. The goal is Christlikeness

The goals here are those that every Christian should have as an influencer of others.

- If you have your own children, of course this is it
- If you have no children, you still have an influence on others
- If you have grown children, the power of your influence continues

III. Challenging us to be seekers of true wisdom

“wisdom is vindicated by all her children”

A. Consider our recent teaching on the fruit of the Spirit

1. We are in Galatians on Wednesday nights
2. Our most recent messages are on YouTube, you can catch up with them
3. We spent four messages describing the various aspects of the fruit of the Spirit
4. Along the way, I've commented on how to display the fruit of the Spirit in your life
 - a. You don't display the fruit by setting up a “more loving” chart and marking off each day the number of times you showed love
 - b. You don't display self-control by subscribing to a time management program and diligently following its precepts
5. The fruit has its source in the Spirit, not in your human self-effort
 - a. You need to know the Spirit
 - b. You need to walk close with the Lord

B. Now compare the way Jesus and John the Baptist influenced their disciples

1. The disciples spent time with Jesus and John, taking in their sermons, observing their ways
2. They valued what Jesus and John said, attempting to model it in their lives

“wisdom is vindicated by all her children”

C. How will you become the best influence for your children, young, grown, or “by proxy”?

1. You need to grow in Wisdom (*i.e.* in your relationship with God)
2. You need, first of all, to know God personally
 - a. That means a confession of sin
 - b. And a confession of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour from sin
 - c. And a call to Jesus to save you from your sin
3. Beyond that, you need to faithfully walk with the Lord every day
 - a. Read your Bible
 - b. Pray
 - c. Orient your life around Christian worship (attend church, get involved, serve others)

Your children will observe, and will receive your influence.

As we close, I want to offer a tribute to my own mother. There are a lot of stories I could tell, but the thing that got me thinking about her at this time of year was how involved she was in the lives of many children, not just her own.

- As far back as I can remember, she took an interest in the children of our town that she met
 - There was the family of the bartender who lived up the street — she got the kids involved in Sunday school, camp, all kinds of church activities. Many of those kids are Christians today.
 - There were other kids she would have in to help her with household chores, but also to get them involved at church, teach
- to influence

In short, my mother was a soul winner. No one was too far gone for her not to try to influence for Christ. And to some extent, she succeeded, not only with her own children, but many others in our town.

“wisdom is vindicated by all her children”

Conclusion:

Proposition: Your children will likely reproduce your discipleship.

How close do you walk with God?

Do you want those who follow you to walk with God?

Then you need to walk as close as you can with God, make Him BIG in your life, thereby making him BIG in the eyes of your children (or your “proxy” children).