

Do Not Be Weary In Doing What Is Right
2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13
All Saints Lutheran Church, Calgary

November 17, 2019
Pentecost 33

I want to spend some time with you reflecting on the verse from 2 Thessalonians 3, saying, “Brothers and Sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.”

Children’s message

Do you have jobs to do at your house? What kind of jobs? How many of you have to brush your teeth? How many have to make your bed? How many have to pick up your toys after you are done playing? Anyone here cook supper? You have jobs to do that you can do, jobs that help everyone in the house. Anything else?

Let’s pretend that we are listening in at a house that has two brothers... a mom and a dad....Mom has been away for a few days, leaving the “men of the house” to look after everything. At this moment, Dad is at work. Mom is coming back home in a few hours.

One brother says to the other,” Whew, look at the mess we have made. We better straighten things up before Mom gets home.”

The other brother says, “Yes, I know. I’ll get after it in a little while.”

The other brother says, ”No, really! We’ve got a ton of work to do! Mom’s going to be really upset if she finds the house like it is now.”

The other brother says, “I’ll get on it. I just have a few things to do first!”

The other brother says, “Maybe if we divide things up... You do the dishes, and I’ll pick up and vacuum the living room.”

But the first brother says, “It’s OK. Don’t worry about it. If we don’t get it done, Mom will pick up. That’s what Mother’s do!”

{Can I get a BOOOO?}

So it turns out, Mom comes home and nothing has been done. She opens the door and steps in and sees everything a wreck. You’d think a storm had happened throughout the house. What do you think Mother will say? What do you think will happen to the boys?

Will she get angry? Will she yell? Will she punish the boys, maybe send them to their room or take away TV for a year? ****

Let’s pretend some more and see what will happen....

Let’s pretend we go over here to the back door... Mom opens the door and she has to step over six pairs of boots and shoes, three pairs of gloves and mittens, and a toque – all lying on the floor, right in front of the door! A ski jacket in hanging on the back of a chair....

Mom's eyes are enormous! But she doesn't say anything. Not yet. She's still stunned as she looks around the kitchen. What do you think she sees?*****

There's a stack of dirty dishes in the sink... plates, glassware, pots and pans... filling both sinks and all across the counter! There's food sticking to things... spaghetti all dried and crusty... crusts from grilled cheese sandwiches....with dried ketchup... Someone spilled milk and it's run over the edge of the counter and down the front of the cupboards.... Mom opens the oven door, just barely daring to peek inside. There's burned cheese all over the bottom!

"What happened here?" she asks. One of the boys says, "I made pizza with extra cheese and it melted over the edge and burned on the bottom. You should have seen the smoke!"

"Hush up!" shouts the brother.

Can you take any more?

Mom can't! So, she walks into the living room.

What do you think she finds there?**** Newspapers... toys....sunflower seed shells... empty glasses... and there's little white bits in the carpet... what is that? Fluff from socks? Spitballs? Bits of used Kleenex?

Ewww!

Mom walks to the boys' bedroom... The beds aren't made. Toys and comic books are strewn everywhere... And there's socks over here and underwear over there and shirts this way and jeans that way... And I don't know what happened, but there's a lamp lying on the floor!

Mom walks to the parents' bedroom. It's not as bad, but it's not good. This bed's not made either. Dad obviously ate cheezies while watching tv; there's orange dust in the sheets.

Mom just turns and quietly says to the boys, "I'll talk to you after a while. In the meantime, get ready for bed." And mom slowly and quietly shuts the door.

After a while, maybe an hour, Mom comes to the boys' bedroom and says to them, "I don't want to talk about this tonight. I want to speak with your Father when he gets home from work. You better go to bed now and we'll discuss this in the morning."

The boys are just jittering. Who can sleep? What's Mom going to do? What's Dad going to say? It would have been easier if she had just yelled at them right then and there. Now they have to wait! And who can forget the look in her eyes?

What do you think those eyes looked like? Show me. ****What do you think Mom is going to do or say?*****

But the boys did fall asleep. But in the middle of the night one brother heard a noise... He couldn't quite make out what it was, so he opened his door and peeked down the stairs.

You know what the noise was? You know what he saw? Mom was vacuuming the living room! She had already picked up toys and newspapers, and now she was vacuuming all the little white bits... And she was crying!

You can go sit with your parents now and we'll see what more happens....

What would you have done, Mothers? When you first walked in that door, would you have turned around and left? That would have been abandonment, the worst thing children – and adults - fear most.

You might have blown your top. But then we have a messy house and messy hearts and still have a sense of separation. Even a very small house can seem very, very big after an argument.

Hey Dads, you're not off the hook, are you? You are complicit in the catastrophe. You didn't pick up after yourself either... or ensure that the boys "did what was right" one day at a time.

I don't know what was said between Mom and Dad here. Maybe that's a story for another time. But two more things happen between Mom and the boys.

Overnight it snowed... several inches... and the boys were awakened to the skritch...skritch... skritch of a shovel on the deck. Mom was shovelling a path to the driveway, so Dad could get to the car and scrape off the snow and ice without being late for work.

And, in the morning, after Dad has left for work, Mom said, "There isn't time for you boys to clean all this up before school. And I'm not going to live with this mess. So, when you get home, you'll find things picked up, washed and put away. And we'll start over. I want you to think about this. And beginning today, you will do what is expected of you. You'll do what you are capable of doing. I know you can do it. I'm not asking too much! We all have a part to play in the well-being of this house, in the support of this family. I'll do my part. And you'll do yours. Deal?"

Do you think the boys said, "Deal?"

When we get angry, we have the mess that made us angry... and a broken relationship to boot. Oh sure, Mom was angry, that's why she went to her room first to count to ten, or maybe seventy times seven.

Then she came back to set some boundaries around the relationship, boundaries around the immediate behaviors of the evening and of the next morning.

But Mom did not punish. No yelling. No spanking. No confining the boys to the house for two weeks (which frankly would confine her as much as them!)

But she did insist there would be a change of behavior. And she did remind the boys of what she expected of them.... That is, she still affirmed the relationship would continue; they would remain persons capable of doing better; but further disruptions like this would not be accepted.

And what about Dad? We don't know. But the fact that Mom was outside in the cold, helping her husband get safely to the car and off to work on time, probably indicated that there was some forgiveness there. Would it have helped if Dad apologized? Probably. Would it help if Dad accepted responsibility for dropping the ball and expecting too much of her? Probably. Would it have helped if

Dad had promised never to do it again; if he had said he would do something to make it up to her? Probably. We don't know. We can only know what we see, and what we see is Mom making an effort to reconcile.

Don't get me wrong! This is not to say that it is the responsibility of the Woman to make the first move. This is not to say that it is the responsibility of the Woman to keep the balance in relationships and maintain the sanity of the home. Not at all. Those would be unfair expectations.

But in this story, as we illustrate what it means to do the right thing... as we illustrate what God is like, it's helpful to use the feminine, to illustrate God as a warm, nurturing, forgiving Mother.

Oh, we do hurt God! Big time! I know God sometimes cries over children... and adults... but God seeks steadfast love. God initiates renewal. God will not let our carelessness and thoughtlessness separate us, nor let God's anger abandon us. No, God does the right thing. God invites us to begin again, start over. God maintains that we are good and capable of doing good. And then God does one more thing....

God bestows on us a Spirit of renewal; God raises us up to new life; just as though breathing once again on clay beings, at the beginning or time. Or breathing once again that moment when we took that first breath at birth. Or breathing once again as we had water splashed upon us and God said, "You are mine... no matter what.

In that new life... after all God has done for us, we say in return, "Thank you.... I love you.... Deal."

When Christ came home recently, Christ opened the door and saw all the mess we have made of this earth. What chaos!

Then Christ takes a deep breath and Christ comes to each of us.... one by one.... and touches our minds (+) and touches our hearts (+) and says....

There are four people I want you to go see. They need my care. Go, do the right thing. You know who they are....

And then Christ says, "I want you to look at the mess around here(slide 1 +)... (Slide 2 +)... (Slide 3 +) and...(Slide 4 +)... Go do the right thing."

And you know what? One of our sisters will say to one of our brothers... "Did you see his hands? How did he get those marks? Did he get those marks from doing our work for us?"

And the brother will say, "He got those marks from doing the work of all of us!"

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