

Sixth Weekend of Easter (RCL/A): "Mother's Day Love & Obedience"
John 14:15-21
May 13-14, 2023
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Manasquan, NJ

I like tee shirts with sayings on them. The one that announces "Runs with scissors" always makes me smile: shotputs us right back to kindergarten, when we were certainly taught NOT to run with scissors (and, if we were giving them to someone, to have the handles and not the sharp ends pointed toward the other person).

What were **other** rules that your mother, father, grandparent, kindergarten teacher or other responsible adult in your life taught you to obey??

- My Dad was an accountant and always aware of the electric bill, so one of his rules (observed more in the breach than in the keeping) was "Turn **out** the lights when you leave the room!"
- But Dad was also concerned for our well-being, so another expectation was, "Turn **on** the lights if you're reading! You'll ruin your eyesight!" (And I think Dad was right.)
- "No talking with your mouth full!" (Because that's acting gross and you'll be considered a social pariah at the school lunch table ☺.)
- "Never lie." I think I heard "O, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive," long before I ever read Shakespeare.
- "No humming or singing at the table." That's a mystery. We barely sang, even in church. We certainly were not the Family Von Trapp, breaking into song at the drop of a hat.....
- "No elbows on the table!" I still don't get that one. What's so very close to the edge of the table that elbows would threaten to knock it off?

There were also church rules that became family rules, like:

- No meat on Fridays.
- Mass every Sunday. (That's dating me! Saturday wasn't an option yet. Or it was, but we didn't take it, because we were a stalwart 8 a.m. family. For being Roman Catholic, we kinda had a Protestant work ethic. Worshiping later than 8 a.m. made you a slug-a-bed! Also – we might actually be expected to **sing** at later services.)

Truth be told, I followed the Church rules so I wouldn't go to Hell, and I followed the family rules (pretty much 😊) so I wouldn't be punished. But truly, I didn't want to disappoint my Dad **or** my stepmom Mimi once he married her.

God gives us rules. What are some of **them**?

- We can go down the list of 10 commandments, for sure.
- The big umbrella over them our Lord calls "the 2 greatest commandments":
 - To love God above all else;
 - To love our neighbor as ourselves.
- Then Jesus added "a new commandment" the night before He died ["Maundy" Thursday, from the Latin *mandatum*, "command"] : "Love one another as I have loved you." (John 13:34)

And the reason we obey these commandments, these holy rules, hopefully/mostly isn't out of fear of punishment but out of love for the One Who lays out the holy rules, and Who says:

*"If you **love** Me, you will **obey** My commandments."* (John 14:15)

The Message paraphrase of that is:

*"If you **love** Me, show it by doing what I've told you."*

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"Don't do it because you might go to Hell if you don't. Don't do it because you think it'll earn you brownie points. Even if you don't see the logic in it (like no elbows on the table), do it because I ask it of you."

There's a point to it all. "Don't worship false gods, because you'll put all your eggs in the wrong basket. Don't take the Lord's name in vain, because then you'll overlook the **power** in His Name. Don't ignore the Lord's Day, because you'll lose track of holy priorities. Don't commit adultery, because it destroys families. Don't lie and don't steal, because those sins erode trust and

fray community. Don't covet, because then you'll be tempted to steal, which often involves lying, too."

Our Lord Jesus wants to be as close to us as possible. He says, "*I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.*" (John 14:20) A little later (John 15) He says,

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

It's Mother's Day weekend, and I have to think of the unborn baby's relationship to the mother, via the umbilical cord. No mother, no umbilical cord, no baby. If Jesus were a woman, maybe He would have used that metaphor. He **wasn't** a mother, but elsewhere He did use a maternal image:

How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings...! (Matthew 23:37)

And much earlier, through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord God says:

Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

"I will not forget you, not because I'm afraid of Hell or punishment, but because I love you," says the Lord.

We show our mothers that we love them on Mother's Day, by giving them **presents** (gifts), by offering our **presence** (spending time with them), and by offering our **prayers** for them. (Did you catch our message on the front lawn sign? "Whisper your mother's name in God's ear.")

We thank God this weekend for our mother's love and care – and/or for those who loved and cared for us in our mother's physical or emotional absence. "*If you love me,*" says our Lord, "*show it by doing what I've told you.*" That is an earthly parent's prayer – and also the prayer of our heavenly Parent. Amen

Pastor Mary Virginia Farnham

