

**Family Shield Ministries Sunday
Worship Service
The Family from God's Perspective**

Introduction

We live in a world where community values are put secondary to individualism. In the world of Christianity, the emphasis is not on individualism but on relationship—relationship with God and with one another. This concept is symbolized by the cross itself where vertically it points to our relationship with God and horizontally with one another through faith in Jesus Christ. Today we celebrate relationships made possible through Jesus, especially the relationship of family.

In **The Family: A Christian Perspective** (Baker Books, 1991), the authors Jack and Judith Balswick speak of the theology of family relationships. Though family is defined differently by some people, we are going to define family as a group of people living together who share common goals and values and who help one another survive and thrive by meeting each others' needs. They may be related by marriage or biology, by adoption or simply for reasons of affection, obligation, dependence or cooperation. As Christians we would assume those who are living in such relationships are doing so in accordance with God's Word.

The Balswicks list four stages or elements present in God's relationship with man. These elements are also necessary for us to have healthy relationships with one another. The four elements are as follows: 1) COVENANT; 2) GRACE; 3) EMPOWERMENT; 4) INTIMACY. Any relationship always begins with God. He made the initial COVENANT; it was entirely on God's action. Even after mankind broke the COVENANT in the Garden, God continued to love mankind by promising a Savior (Gen. 3:15). No such COVENANT could have happened without pure unadulterated GRACE and mercy on His part (Jn. 3:16). Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God and man were reconnected and brought back to health. Through the Means of Grace—Word and Sacrament—He continues to EMPOWER people to a new life (Jn. 10:10). A new INTIMACY occurs—to know and to be known (Rm. 5:11). God is revealed to us as we never knew Him before. A new transparency occurs; a close INTIMATE communication develops between the Lover and the lovers.

In many ways we see these four ingredients—COVENANT, GRACE, EMPOWERMENT, INTIMACY--incorporated in worship. At the very beginning of worship, in confession and absolution we celebrate COVENANT and GRACE. We confess our sin and a gracious God showers us with His GRACE and promise. INTIMACY—to know and to be known—continues to build as we hear His Word spoken in the lessons for the day as well as the sermon message. Not only does God speak to us but we speak to Him in our prayers. During Holy Communion, the Holy Spirit EMPOWERS us, enabling us to enable others with love and compassion. Just as Aaron spoke the words of the benediction over the people of Israel, so these words are spoken over us as we leave the church and journey into our own respective worlds to serve Him.

PRELUDE

Welcome

Pastor:

A word of introduction to the worship service

OPENING HYMN All God's People Sing, 78

"Brothers and Sisters in Christ"

Sing Alleluia! Amen!
Let your prayers and your praises ascend.
Lift up your voices and sing
to our Lord God, our Savior and King!
Here brought together by grace,
We are gathered as friends in this place.

REFRAIN:

And assembled as one, in the name of the Son,
Lifting hearts, lifting hands, Celebrating as friends,
And proclaiming the Lord, All our praises afford.
We are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Man walked alone and in need,
Without faith, hope or promise or creed;
Wandering aimlessly lost
unaware of the staggering cost;
That God in His mercy would save
All His people from death and the grave.

(REFRAIN)

Lord, teach us how to proclaim
All Your goodness, Your love and Your name!
Lord, teach us how to forgive,
and in love, teach us Lord, how to live.
Raising our voices in song,
Help us tell all the world we belong.

(REFRAIN)

COVENANT

Pastor:

We begin, even as He placed His COVENANT of promise upon us in Holy Baptism, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation:

Amen.

Assistant Pastor (Elder):

The Bible teaches that God desires all humankind to be in relationship with the Creator as well as in relationship with one another. Our relationship with God began with Him, not from within ourselves. The establishment of COVENANT was based entirely on God's action.

Pastor:

And God said to Noah, "I will establish my COVENANT with you, and you will enter the ark" (Gen. 6:18).

Congregation:

And "Noah did everything just as God commanded him" (Gen. 6:22).

Pastor:

To Abraham God said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be (perfect). I will confirm my COVENANT between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers" (Gen. 17:2).

Congregation:

Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:28).

Pastor:

However, like the prodigal son, we've time and time again "set off for a distant country" (Lk. 15:13), separating ourselves from God and one another.

Congregation:

Returning homeward, "while...still a long way off...the father saw him and was filled with compassion for him, ... ran to (him), threw his arms around him and kissed him" (Lk. 15:20).

GRACE

Assistant Pastor (Elder):

With COVENANT comes GRACE—unmerited mercy and favor. Relationship between God and man or man with man can only be lived out in an atmosphere of GRACE and not law.

Pastor:

Even at the Garden exit, His COVENANT was splattered with GRACE as a Savior was promised (Gen. 3:15).

Congregation:

“...When the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons”(Gal. 4:4-5).

Pastor:

Lord God, as we come before You in this worship, we come recognizing how we have failed to keep our COVENANTS, our promises, our commitments to You and to one another.

Congregation:

But we also come aware that God makes another promise to us, “If we confess our sins, (You are) faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9).

Pastor:

Lord God, the promises we make are sincere, but they are short-lived. We don't make promises with intentions to break them, but so many circumstances get in the way, and what we wanted to do, we find ourselves not doing.

Congregation:

Forgive us for Jesus' sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, we made all sorts of promises to You and to our families, to love them, with patience, kindness, having no jealousy, not being rude, not self-seeking, not easily angered, keeping no record of wrongs, not delighting in evil but rejoicing with the truth, always protecting, trusting, hoping, persevering, but we have failed miserably in so many ways.

Congregation:

Forgive us for Jesus' sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, we are aware that “it is by GRACE (we) are saved, through faith—and this not from (ourselves), it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”, however, we confess too often we do not live with such confidence; we believe and act as if we have to do something for our salvation, as if Your grace and mercy aren't enough (Eph. 2:8-9).

Congregation:

Forgive us for Jesus' sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, though You are a “GRACIOUS God” bestowing us with “GRACIOUSNESS” so that we might be “GRACIOUS” to others, we confess we are not always “GRACIOUS.”

Congregation:

Forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, though You communicated in the most INTIMATE way with us in that You “became flesh and made (Your) dwelling among us”, we confess we do not always communicate well with You or others (Jn. 1:14). We do not always praise You with our words and actions.

Congregation:

Forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, You EMPOWER us with Word and Sacrament, but we confess we do not always use the “resurrection power” that is ours in serving our families, lifting up the fallen, encouraging responsibility and maturity and enabling the unable.

Congregation:

Forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, we desire for our words to be wholesome and helpful for building others up, according their needs, but often that has not happened (Eph. 4:29).

Congregation:

Forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, we have sought to be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, You forgive us, but the good I sought to do, I did not do (Eph. 4:32; Rms. 7:19).

Congregation:

Forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, we confess, “...(we) do not understand what (we) do. For what (we) want to do (we) do not do, but what (we) hate (we) do” (Rm. 7:15). We have sought, played with, fondled, and, yes, even embraced so many sins while turning coldly away from You and our families.

Congregation:
Forgive us for Jesus' sake.

Pastor:
Be assured, even now, wherever you've been, whatever you've said or done, however you have broken your promises to Him or others, He has not forgotten His promise to you; God is GRACIOUS and merciful. He reaches out to you with outstretched arms and promises GRACE: " 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be as wool' " (Isa. 1:18). As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation:
Amen.

Pastor:
We make confession of the things we are assured of in the words of the Apostle's Creed:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

From the Lutheran Service Book, 2006

INTIMACY and EMPOWERMENT

Assistant Pastor (Elder):
Human beings are different than animals in that we have the ability to communicate with language, a capacity which makes it possible for us to know each other INTIMATELY. INTIMACY is to know and to be known. Through His Means—Word and Sacrament—the Spirit of God creates INTIMACY and EMPOWERS us. He EMPOWERS us to live out GRACE-filled lives to His glory and honor.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (Only God can bring life out of death, even relationships.)

EPISTLE LESSON

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (Love is the key ingredient in any relationship.)

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 10:38-42 (All of life must be centered in the Word of God.)

A CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

CONGREGATIONAL SERMON HYMN The Lutheran Hymnal, 394

“My Faith Looks Up to Thee “

My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine.

Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
Oh, let me from this day Be wholly Thine!

May Thy rich grace impart Strength to my fainting heart,
My zeal inspire!

As Thou hast died for me,
Oh, may my love to Thee
Pure, warm, and changeless be, A living fire!

While life’s dark maze I tread And griefs around me spread,
Be Thou my Guide.

Bid darkness turn to day,
Wipe sorrow’s tears away,
Nor let me ever stray From Thee aside.

Concordia Publishing House

SERMON

“Promised Resurrection for Families”

Ezekiel 37:1-14

PRAYERS

Assistant Pastor (Elder):

It has been said, “God’s promises are like the stars; the darker the night the brighter they shine.” We pause to give thanks for His promises. As we do, may our days and nights shine brighter and our homes be rekindled.

Pastor:

Lord God, You made a COVENANT with your people, a promise of a Savior who would “(take up our infirmities and carr(y) our sorrows...(be) pierced for our transgressions...crushed for our iniquities...(so that) that the punishment that brought us peace (would be) upon Him, and by His wounds (we would) be healed” (Is. 53:4-5).

Congregation:

And a Savior was born, Christ Jesus, One who lived, died and rose for our salvation; we give You thanks for promises made and promises kept.

Pastor:

Lord God, Your promise is that Your Words are “written that (we) may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing (we) may have life in His name” (Jn. 20:31).

Congregation:

We believe; we have eternal life. Thanks be to God.

Pastor:

Lord God, as You keep your promises to us, so help us keep the promises we make to our families, our spouses, our children, grandchildren and others. Lord God, Your COVENANT came with GRACE: “If you confess your sins, (I) ... will forgive (you) your sins” (1 Jn. 1:9).

Congregation:

We say “Amen” to Your promise of GRACE through Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God.

Pastor:

Lord God, as You show us GRACE—unconditional love and mercy—so help us show unconditional love to the members of our families. May we not expect from them perfection which belongs alone to You, Lord Jesus, but show compassion and kindness toward each one, forgiving, even as You forgive us.

Congregation:

Grant it for Jesus’ sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, with Your COVENANT, Your GRACE, came also INTIMACY. Through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, You made our relationship with You and others possible. You came in person to earth and became our “high priest who is (able) to sympathize with our weaknesses...(because He was) tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin...(so that we can) approach the throne of GRACE with confidence...” (Heb. 4:15-16).

Congregation:

We celebrate this INTIMACY and give You thanks, O Lord.

Pastor:

Lord God, build INTIMACY in our families. Open up the doors and the windows of communication in our families so that we might know and be known in new ways.

Congregation:

We celebrate and give thanks for the anticipated renewed INTIMACY.

Pastor:

Lord God, we confess that often we attempt to control others, to gain power over them instead of helping them recognize the potential You have placed within them and the potential you can bring to fruition through the power of the Holy Spirit. Forgive and change us to desire the best for each member of our family and each person we meet, to “build them up” with our words and actions.

Congregation:

Grant it for Jesus’ sake.

Pastor:

Lord God, as You EMPOWER us through the Means of GRACE even today in Word and Sacrament, so grant that we, through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us, might EMPOWER those within our families to new possibilities, to lift those who have fallen, encourage responsibility and maturity for those who are weak, and to enable the unable.

Congregation:

Grant it for Jesus’ sake.

Pastor:

Your promise to us is, “Ask and it will be given...”, and so we come asking for Your help for those who are sick, those who are troubled, and those mourning the death of loved ones; we pray silently...(Lk. 11:9).

(Silence)

You also promise, “Cast your anxiety on (Me) because (I) care for you and so we bring our concerns before You now; We pray silently...(1 Pe. 5:7).

(Silence)

Pastor:

Lord God, God of COVENANT, GRACE, INTIMACY and EMPOWERMENT, send us now out into the world to be in relationship with others sharing Your COVENANT, GRACE, INTIMACY and EMPOWERMENT.

Congregation:

It shall happen in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven Hallowed be Thy name
Thy kingdom come Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven
Give us this day our daily bread;
and Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil
For Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

OFFERING

SACRAMENT

Assistant Pastor (Elder):

The Balswicks write: “EMPOWERING in relationships is born out of the COVENANT and GRACE offered in God through Christ.” The Spirit of God indwells believers and enables them to enable others. A Means in which God comes to us to offer EMPOWERMENT is the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Though in the secular world, power is a commodity which has a limited supply, in God’s world, the power of God is available in unlimited amounts.

Pastor:

St. Paul said, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16). In this Sacrament, He comes to us with His very presence, in, with, and under the bread and wine. He comes to bring us EMPOWERMENT, and, in doing so, He EMPOWERS us to EMPOWER others.

We come to celebrate His COVENANT of promise and GRACE.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: ‘Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.’

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: ‘Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me’” (Matt. 26:26-28).

May this Means of GRACE EMPOWER you and strengthen you.

Congregation:

We believe it shall because He promises it will. Amen.

During Distribution (Hymns)

..... The Lutheran Hymnal, 388

“Just As I Am, Without One Plea”

Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me
And that Thou bidd’st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am; Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down.
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Concordia Publishing House

..... The Lutheran Hymnal, 305 (v. 1-4, 9)

“Soul, Adorn Thyself With Gladness”

Soul, adorn thyself with gladness,
Leave behind all gloom and sadness;
Come into the daylight’s splendor,
There with joy thy praises render
Unto Him whose grace unbounded
Hath this wondrous Supper founded.
High o’er all the heav’ns He reigneth,
Yet to dwell with thee He deigneth.

Hasten as a bride to meet Him
And with loving rev'ence greet Him;
For with words of life immortal
Now He knocketh at thy portal.
Haste to ope the gates before Him,
Saying, while thou dost adore Him,
Suffer, Lord, that I receive Thee,
And I never more will leave Thee.

He who craves a precious treasure
Neither cost nor pain will measure;
But the priceless gifts of heaven
God to us hath freely given.
Tho' the wealth of earth were proffered,
Naught would buy the gifts here offered:
Christ's true body, for thee riven,
And His blood, for thee once given.

Ah, how hungers all my spirit
For the love I do not merit!
Oft have I, with sighs fast thronging,
Thought upon this food with longing,
In the battle well-nigh worsted,
For this cup of life have thirsted,
For the Friend who here invites us
And to God Himself unites us.

Jesus, Bread of Life, I pray Thee,
Let me gladly here obey Thee.
By Thy love I am invited,
Be Thy love with love requited;
From this Supper let me measure,
Lord, how vast and deep love's treasure.
Through the gifts Thou here dost give me
As Thy guest in heaven receive me.

“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”

Sent forth by God’s blessing, Our true faith confessing,
The people of God from His dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended. O now be extended
The fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of His teaching, Receptive souls reaching,
Shall blossom in action for God and for all.
His grace did invite us, His love shall unite us
To work for God’s kingdom and answer His call.

With praise and thanksgiving to God everliving,
The tasks of our ev’ry-day life we will face.
Our faith ever sharing, In love ever caring,
Embracing his children of each tribe and race.
With Your feast You feed us, With Your light now lead us;
Unite us as one in this life that we share.
Then may all the living With praise and thanksgiving
Give honor to Christ and His name that we bear.

Concordia Publishing House

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Pastor:

Lord God, we have broken Your bread and received Your EMPOWERMENT. We thank You. Now, by the power of Your Spirit, send us forth to enliven others. In Jesus’ name.

Congregation:

We shall, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Assistant Pastor (Elder):

Someone once said, “The Promised Land always lies on the other side of a wilderness.” So it was for the people of Israel, who stood at the precipice of the wilderness, after journeying for years. The Promised Land was before them and Moses instructed Aaron to speak the words we know as the Aaronic benediction upon them. As you leave this worship and journey through the new week, may you be comforted by the same words as were the Israelites.

Pastor:

“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you;
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace” (Nu. 6:24-26).

Congregation: Amen.

CLOSING HYMNThe Lutheran Hymnal, 658

“Onward, Christian Soldiers”

Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus Going on before.
Christ, the royal Master, Leads against the Foe;
Forward into battle See His banners go!
Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus Going on before.

Concordia Publishing House

POSTLUDE