

**Opening Service 2011 Assembly  
Deuteronomy 6:1-9  
Pastor John Wertz, Jr.  
St. Michael Lutheran Church  
June 3, 2011**

The little boy -

perhaps three or four years old -

- pulled loose from his mother's hand and started to dash

- from the sidewalk to their car which -

- was parked directly across the street -

- as he was just about to step out into the road -

- her hand grabbed hold again -

- and I heard the mother's frightened, angry, loving voice say -

“Matthew - Stop!

- That's a road, honey -

- You never ever run out into a road. -

- You always need to look both ways

- to see if there is a car coming

- before you step off the sidewalk!”

- It was a simple, effective lesson

- one that has been shared

- by countless parents -

- since the invention of the automobile -

- Parents concerned
  - for the safety and well-being of their children
- Parents eager to share a bit of wisdom
  - about how to properly cross a road
    - knowing that those simple words
    - might be the difference between
      - safety and a serious accident
- Each and everyday
  - parents - just like that young mother -
    - do their best to give their children a whole, healthy life -
- Trying to provide for their children's most basic needs
  - like food, shelter and clothing
    - while also trying to teach their children
      - the societal rules and personal wisdom
        - that they will need to interact successfully
          - with the world around them.
- Equipping their children is something parents have done since the beginning of time -
  - so I guess it should come as no surprise
    - that God
      - like any loving parent
        - seeks to equip God's children
          - with the gifts we need for daily living

- Giving us guidance for how to relate to one another -
    - Providing accountability when we go astray -
      - Offering forgiveness for our mistakes -
        - sharing grace -
          - God's unconditional love, mercy and forgiveness -
            - teaching us the power of a relationship with God.
- And like any parent,
  - sometime that means
    - sharing hard and fast rules meant to promote safety and good order -
      - You shall honor your father and mother.
        - You shall not kill -
          - You shall not steal -
- And sometimes that means
  - providing the basic necessities of life -
    - through the gift of creation
      - or our through application of individual talents and skills
        - or even -
          - under certain conditions
            - stepping in to provide manna in the wilderness -
              - when there was no food to be had.
- And sometimes that means
  - sharing bits of wisdom

- to guide us and help us

- when we face times of struggle or loss -

- helpful words like - - the Lord is my refuge and strength

- a very present help in times of trouble -

- or - - the Lord is my shepherd,

- I shall not want.

- Now you and I know that the reality is

- sometimes children listen well

- they value life -

- they treat their parents with respect and honor -

- they use their gifts to grow, gather, build or acquire

- the basic necessities of life

- the understand a parent's words of wisdom -

- and sometimes children go astray -

- worshipping at the feet of some golden idol -

- instead of trusting in God

- squandering their gifts -

- misunderstanding teachings and guidance - -

- placing the loving parent

- in the position of trying to call the child back

- to a more helpful

- more faithful path

- But through it all -

- through moments of joy -

- and times of difficulty

- I am convinced that a loving parent will continue

- to do the best they can -

- to help their child experience a whole, healthy life -

- Which is exactly what I think we see

- God doing

- this afternoon in our reading from Deuteronomy -

- sharing with God's children

- commandments that will serve as the foundation

- for a whole, healthy life

- and offering us guidance for how to

- live out those commandments

- and share them with others.

“The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

- You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

- and with all your soul, and with all your might.” (Deut 6:4-5)

- In much the same way

- that the frightened, concerned, loving mother

- shared with her son -

- both a rule for life -

- and the tools necessary to put that rule into action, - -
- so too does God through Moses -
  - offer us guidance to help us establish a foundation for our life of faith.
    - and offer us a way to incorporate that guidance into the lives of our entire family.
- And please notice the text -
  - doesn't say -
    - keep these commandments because I said so -
  - and it doesn't say -
    - keep these commandments or else -
  - and it doesn't say
    - you'll understand why you need to do this when you are older
- No - God says through Moses -
  - here are two commandments that I want you to keep -
    - because keeping these commandments -
      - will allow you to enjoy long, abundant lives. -
  - "Now this is the commandment," Moses says -
    - "That the Lord your God charged me to teach you . . .
      - so that you and your children and your children's children
        - may fear the Lord . . .
          - so that your days may be long.
  - Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently,
    - so that all may go well with you," (Deut 6:1-3)

- Keep these two commandments
  - God through Moses seems to be saying
    - not simply because I say so -
      - but rather because they will give you the solid foundation you need
        - to build a balanced, healthy life of faith in the world -
- And while it would be nice to think as a parent
  - that all you need to do is say something once -
    - and your child would hear it, understand it and do it -
- God is smart enough to know -
  - that telling someone to do something is different than
    - helping someone integrate that lesson into daily life -
      - so God through Moses continues -
        - inviting us to teach this lesson to our families -
          - knowing that the best way to learn something -
            - is to practice it daily and to teach it with others
  - “Keep these words . . . in your heart,” - Moses says -
    - “Recite them to your children
      - talk about them when you are home and when you are away -
        - bind them as a sign on your hand -
          - fix them as an emblem on your forehead,
            - write them on the doorposts.” (Deut 6:6-9)
- Make time each day -

- to remember that you are a child of God -
  - remember that God's loves you
    - and we are called to love God.
- Write it on a sticky note
  - to put on your monitor or television.
    - Set aside time in the morning or at night for prayer - .
      - Frame these commands and put them by your sink -
  - Be intentional about daily remembering
    - your relationship with God
      - in whatever way works best for you
- Make time in the midst of your family life
  - to share this good news with those you love and care about -
    - help them to discover the hope and strength
      - that comes from loving God and being loved by God -
  - Pray as a family before meals -
    - modeling a life of thanksgiving -
  - Take time to read or tell Bible Stories together -
    - teaching and remembering all that God has done and is doing
  - Worship together as a family
    - for just the act of worshiping together illustrates how important
      - your relationship with God is to your family
  - Be intentional about helping your family and friends

- to experience the value of your relationship with God

Make sharing God's relationship with God's people

- a priority in your congregation -

- perhaps you literally write God's word on your walls and door posts -

- posting scripture verses at random spots around your building -

- or perhaps you look for a simple project that builds upon the strengths

- of your congregation to do God's work with your hands in the world

- collect change for Lutheran Disaster Relief

- donate supplies to a local school

- visit a local detention center -

- or perhaps you give a youth or an adult a used Bible -

- asking members of the congregation, families and friends

- to underline their favorite verses

- as a witness to the faith of the community.

- Be intentional about helping one another and the world around you

- to hear the story of God's love,

- to share the story of God's love,

- to live in response to God's love each and every day.

-

- Like that young mother talking to her child,
  - God recognized that
    - this was a very teachable moment
      -
  - it would be important for the people of Israel
    - as they stepped into a new and strange land
      - to remember who and whose they were -
  - and so as any loving parent would do -
    - God equipped them with the foundation they - -
      - and their children and their children's children needed -
        - to build a whole, healthy life in the sight of God.
  - reminding them -
    - reminding each of us
      - of the Good News that we are children of God
        -
- loving God and being loved by God
  - that the key for us to experience
    - a whole, healthy life in the sight of God
      -

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- and times of difficulty

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