

Wesley United Methodist Church

May 12, 2019

"Family Ties."

A Drama for Christian Family Sunday

Written for three persons: one male, two females

A. It's Mother's Day, today.

B. It's Father's Day in June.

A. It's kids' day everyday.

B. Today is Christian Family Sunday.

A&B Thanks be to God!

C. Pardon Me?

A&B Thanks be to God!

C. For what?

A. Families

B. You know, groups of people who are kind of tied together.

A. Mothers...Fathers...

B. sisters...brothers...cousins...

A. aunts and uncles...

B. grandparents and pets.

C. Hey, you don't have to tell me what a family is. I'm not stupid. I've got parents.

B. Everybody does.

C. But what I don't understand is why you're celebrating families. You make it sound as if living in a family feels as good as winning the lottery. Well, I'll tell you something. It doesn't. Sometimes it feels like being in the penalty box.

A. You think life's a game?

C. Yeah. And I've been roped into it.

B. *(pause)* So have I.

A. Me too.

B. In fact, everyone here, everyone who has ever lived, was brought into the world without their permission. It's the one thing we have no say in. So in that way, I suppose, we have all been roped into life.

A. Actually, it's not a rope, but a cord.

B&C. Pardon me?

A. During the first moments of our lives, before we are yet born, we are attached by the umbilical cord to our mothers. Through that cord all that we need to live on is given to us. Not only food, but life itself. Once we are born, the cord is cut and discarded. From that moment onward, each of us begins to accept more responsibility for our own survival.

C. The cord might be thrown away, but your mother and father can still keep feeding you lines.

B. What do you mean?

C. (*mimicking*) Eat your vegetables...finish what's on your plate.

B. Oh, I get it. (*mimicking*) We know you can do better in school if you would only buckle down and try harder.

A. Shoot the puck! Shoot the puck! At the net, stupid.

C. And it doesn't stop when you're older. (*seriously*) You really want to marry her? There's plenty of fish in the sea, you know. Why don't you cast a wider net? You've got lots of time. Get established in your career first.

B. Why do you think you're at university? To find yourself a husband, of course!

A. We're disappointed but, I suppose if you are going to be a teacher you're smart enough to work your way up to be a principal pretty quickly.

C. (*pause*) Parents throw these lines at you until you actually feel them operating within you. You find yourself acting like a marionette, being pulled this way and that, preventing you from becoming who you want to become.

B. Or you can become totally tied up and unable to move. Paralyzed.

A. It seems that you can't escape your parents.

B. As they get older you feel you should look after them.

C. Even if you never see them again you find yourself asking: "Have I done well, mother?" "Are you pleased with me, father?"

A. Children cannot really cut themselves off from their parents.

B. Neither can parents really cut themselves off from their children.

A. Here's a letter from my daughter in Paris: "The university is great. My French is improving, but the cost of living is outrageous. Please send another thousand bucks...P.S. I think I've met the man of my dreams. He's a pavement artist.

B. There are times parents wish they never had kids. Kids get sick when the family's on vacation.

C. Kids talk back to their parents: "You're not the boss of me."

B. They make you feel guilty: "You're mean. You don't know how I feel. Everybody else is going to the party."

A. Parents cannot escape their children.

B. A mother is a child's mother forever and ever.

A. A father is a child's father forever and ever.

B. We are the children of our parents forever and ever.

C. *(pause)* Parents and children may always be tied together in some way. But families don't seem to be tied together forever anymore.

A&B. Pardon me"

C. All around us families are becoming unraveled. Both kids and adults feel at loose ends. *(pause)* Explain that.

B. Husbands and wives don't have the same single unbreakable cord between them that children have to their parents. Husbands and wives attach themselves together by tying a knot. They tie this knot when they get married. They make promises to each other, give each other rings, then kiss in front of everyone. Parents cry and bring out hankies.

C. *(pause)* Oh I get it. Knots. Hankies. Marriage is like a three-legged race.

A&B. Pardon me?

C. You've got two people who decide that life is like a race and they'd like to run it together. So they tie themselves to each other and off they go, hippity—hoppity down the road of life.

A. I suppose that's true. The knot will hold as long as they have the same ideas about where they're going and how fast they should be going there. But the tie can become very frustrating if one partner wants to run quickly and the other wants to jog slowly.

B. Or if they want to go in different directions.

C. Or if they don't find the three-legged race to their liking.

A. Or if they see someone else they'd rather race with.

B. Or they may just be sick and tired of having to smell their partner's same old bad breath day in and day out. They'd like to try a fresh start.

C. So, they untie the knot and divorce themselves from each other.

A. They are no longer husband and wife.

B. But if they have children, the father is still the father and the mother is still the mother.

C. Alright, I'll go along with that. There are different kinds of ties and bonds, but what's the point of it all? Why in a church do we celebrate family life, or families, or marriages, or childhood, or parenthood, or whatever. Because, as we have said, it is not all beautiful.

A. We celebrate family relationships because, in some sense, they are God-given.

C. I don't understand.

B. *(pause)* Where did you come from?

C. My mother and father.

A. Who were once children like these children here.

C. Yes.

B. And your parents had mothers and fathers too who told them to go to their rooms until they knew how to behave properly.

C. I suppose so.

A. And those same parents were once children who thought their moms and dads were mean and who dreamt of running away from home. And maybe if some of them did run away they may have found they could not escape from their own feelings about their mothers and fathers. They may have sailed across oceans to settle in new lands and start new lives. But still they must have remembered or wondered about their mothers and fathers.

C. You make it sound as if the feelings we experience now toward our parents and toward our children are not new, that it has been that way all through time.

B. perhaps right from the very beginning. Perhaps right from the first days of creation.

(ABC stand shoulder to shoulder)

A. The author of Genesis writes: on the sixth day of creation God said:

B. Let us make humans in our own image, after our likeness.

C. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,

B. and over the birds of the air,

C. and over the cattle,

B. and over all the earth,

C. and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.

A. So God created humans in God's own image.

B&C. In the image of God, God created them.

B. *(pointing to C)* Male

B. *(pointing to B)* and female, God created them.

A. God blessed them and said to them:

B. Be fruitful, increase in number and fill the earth.

C. *(pause thoughtfully)* We've certainly succeeded in that. There are billions of people on this planet now. *(pause)* But I'm thinking about this idea of God giving birth to all creation. Was there an umbilical cord?

A. I don't know, but if there was one, maybe God cut it and threw it away.

C. So God created us with no strings attached.

B. Like parents and their children.

C. But surely God has expectations and hopes and dreams for God's people and for his planet and indeed for all of creation.

B. Like we, on a smaller scale, have for ourselves.

A. And our children.

C. But I have strong feelings about my mother and father. Some of them good; some of them not so good.

If we have been created in God's image and likeness, does that mean that God has feelings towards us, some of them good and some of them not so good?

B. I like to think so. (*pause*) I also like to think that just as I have feelings towards my parents, I also have feelings towards God—some of them good and some of them not so good.

C. What do you mean?

B. Well, I get mad at God, like I do at my parents sometimes. I want to shout at God. Why did you have to put me here on earth at this particular point in time, with these parents, in this country. Don't you know that this planet might explode at any minute? And why do I have to hear about innocent people being killed and see children wandering through rubble of destroyed homes searching for their mother and fathers and scrounging for food in garbage tins. I hate having to know that...but I feel God wants me to know that. There are immense problems in the world right now. There is so much pain and suffering, so much anguish and helplessness. And God does not let me bury my head in the sand for long. God yanks me out of my own little world and opens my eyes again.

A. You're not alone. I feel that way too.

C. So do I.

B. And this is what makes me feel good about God. I am not alone; we are not alone. We are only a small part of a huge, "ginormous" family. Much bigger than just my mother and father and I and my brothers and sisters. We are somehow linked through God to every person on this earth and to every living creature. And like children and parents who have ties and responsibilities to each other, so do we all have ties and responsibilities to every life on this earth.

C. But it's those ties that I don't like. It's the nagging and the guilt that I don't like. I want to cut those family ties and I don't want to feel responsible for my mother and father anymore and I don't want to feel guilty about starving children anymore and I don't want to have to go on peace marches or give food to the food bank. I want to be free to live my own life.

A. But what we're saying is that you can't. You can try, but you may not find the satisfaction you're looking for. On the other hand, if you allow those strings to pull you deeper into the turmoil and relationships you want to run away from, deeper into the web of creation itself, you might discover the love and satisfaction and maybe even the freedom, you so desperately want.

C. How do you mean?

A. It's like a parent who sits down and plays a game with a child who has been nagging them about it and then discovers the joy of the game and experiences the pure pleasure of being with the child in that moment. That is the reward of involvement: talking to people, listening to people, working with people, marching with people, helping people. That is what God wants; that is what will soothe our pain.

C. So where do family ties fit into all of this?

B. Family is the starting point for us all.

A. Family is where we experience our first relationships and discover we are not alone.

- B. Family is where we learn responsibilities and how to live together.
- A. We learn how to make meals, tidy our rooms, listen to what another person has to say, learn how to resolve differences.
- B. And we learn about sickness and death,
- C. pain and suffering,
- A. birth and death.
- B. *(pause)* We also experience love and joy,
- C. giving gifts and receiving presents,
- A. telling jokes and hearing stories,
- B. celebrating special moments and special days.
- C. *(pause)* and we learn about God.
- A. God is the grandmother who hugs me close to her bosom.
- B. God is the grandfather who shares with me his joys of birdwatching and stamp-collecting.
- C. God is the grandchild who sends me her pictures to stick on the fridge.
- A. God is the mother who works to buy what her children need.
- B. God is the father who watches hockey games with the kids.
- C. God is the children who unabashedly want their parents to love them.
- A. God created the world out of love.
- B. Families are created out of love.
- C. Families can be creative with their love.
- A. Thanks be to God.
- B. Thanks be for families, family relationships, family ties.
- C. Thanks be to God.