

Motherhood

by Billy Sunday

The sermon highlights the importance of mothers in shaping the lives and characters of their children, and the significant influence they have on their children's choices and actions throughout their lives.

Scripture: Exodus 2:9, 1 Samuel 1:27-28, Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 22:6, Proverbs 31:28, Isaiah 49:15, Matthew 19:14, Luke 1:48, Ephesians 6:4, 2 Timothy 1:5

Topics: "Motherhood", "Faith and Responsibility"

Description

Billy Sunday emphasizes the profound impact of motherhood through the story of Moses' mother, who defied Pharaoh's decree to save her child. He illustrates her unwavering faith and determination, highlighting how she prepared an ark for Moses and entrusted him to God. Sunday argues that the role of a mother is crucial in shaping the character and future of children, asserting that a mother's love and guidance can lead to greatness. He calls on mothers to recognize their divine responsibility and the importance of raising their children in faith, as they are entrusted by God. Ultimately, he encourages mothers to commit to nurturing their children for the Lord, promising that God will reward their efforts.

Transcript

"Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages" -- Exodus 2:9

THE STORY OF MOSES is one of the most beautiful and fascinating in all the world. It takes a hold on us and never for an instant does it lose its interest, for it is so graphically told that once heard it is never forgotten.

I have often imagined the anxiety with which that child was born, for he came into the world with the sentence of death lagging over him, for Pharaoh had decreed that the male children should die, and the mother defied even the command of the king, and determined that the child should live, and right from the beginning the battle of right against might was fought at the cradle.

Moses' mother was a slave. She had to work in the brick yards or labor in the field, but God was on her side and she won, as the mother always wins with God on her side. Before going to work she had to choose some hiding place for her child, and she put his little sister, Miriam, on guard while she kept herself from being seen by the soldiers of Pharaoh, who were seeking everywhere to murder the Jewish male children.

For three months she kept him hidden, possibly finding a new hiding place every few days. It is hard to imagine anything more difficult than to hide a healthy, growing baby, and he was hidden for three months.

Now he was grown larger and more full of life and a more secure hiding place had to be found, and I can imagine this mother giving up her rest and sleep to prepare an ark for the saving of her child.

I believe the plan must have been formulated in Heaven. I have often thought God must have been as much interested in that work as was the mother of Moses, for you can't make me believe that an event so important as that and so far-reaching in its results ever happened by luck or by chance.

Possibly God whispered the plan to the mother when she went to Him in prayer and in her grief because she was afraid the sword of Pharaoh would murder her child. And how carefully the material out of which the ark was made had to be selected!

I think every twig was carefully scrutinized in order that nothing poor might get into its composition, and in the weaving of that ark, the mother's heart, her soul, her prayers, her tears, were interwoven. Oh, if you mothers would exercise as much care over the company your children keep, over the books they read and the places they go, there would not be so many girls feeding the red light district, nor so many boys growing up to bad, criminal lives.

And with what thanksgiving she must have poured out her heart when at last the work was done and the ark was ready to carry its precious cargo, more precious than if it was to hold the crown jewels of Egypt. And I can imagine the last night that baby was in the home.

Probably some of you can remember when the last night came when baby was alive; you can remember the last night the coffin stayed, and the next day the pallbearers and the hearse came. The others may have slept soundly, but there was no sleep for you, and I can imagine there was no sleep for Moses' mother.

There are whips and tops and pieces of string

And shoes that no little feet ever wear -

There are bits of ribbon and broken wings

And tresses of golden hair,

There are dainty jackets that never are worn,

There are toys and models of ships;

There are books and pictures all faded and torn,

And marked by finger tips

Of dimpled hands that have fallen to dust -

Yet we strive to think that the Lord is just.

Yet a feeling of bitterness fills our souls;

Sometimes we try to pray,
That the reaper has spared so many flowers
And taken ours away.
And we sometimes doubt if the Lord can know
How our riven hearts did love them so.
But we think of our dear ones dead,
Our children who never grow old,
And how they are waiting and watching for us
In the city with streets of gold.
And how they are safe through all the years
From sickness and want and war.
We thank the great God, with falling tears,
For the things in the cabinet drawer.

Others in the house might have slept, but not a moment could she spare of the precious time allotted her with her little one, and all through the night she must have prayed that God would shield and protect her baby and bless the work she had done and the step she was about to take.

Some people often say to me: "I wonder what the angels do: how they employ their time?". I think I know what some of them did that night. You bet they were not out to some bridge whist party. They guarded that house so carefully that not a soldier of old Pharaoh ever crossed the threshold. They saw to it that not one of them harmed that baby.

At dawn the mother must have kissed him goodbye, placed him in the ark and hid him among the reeds and rushes, and with an itching heart and tear dimmed eyes she turned back again to the field and back to the brick yards to labor, and wait to see what God will do.

She had done her prayerful best, and when you have done that you can bank on it that God will not fail you. How easy it is for God to give the needed help, no matter how hopeless it might seem, if we only believe that with God all things are possible, no matter how improbable.

What unexpected answers the Lord would give to our prayers! She knew God would help her some way, but I don't think she ever dreamed that God would help her by sending Pharaoh's daughter to care for the child; but it was no harder for God to send the princess than it was to get the mother to prepare the ark. What was impossible from her standpoint was easy for God. Pharaoh's daughter came down to the water to bathe, and the ark was discovered, just as God wanted it to be, and one of her maids was sent to fetch it. You often wonder what the angels are doing. I think some of the angels herded the crocodiles on the other side of the Nile to keep them from finding Moses and eating him up.

You can bank on it all Heaven was interested to see that not one hair of that baby's head was injured. There weren't devils enough in Hell to pull one hair out of its head. You may be sure the angels were not out to some bridge whist party then. God had something for them to do.

The ark was brought, and with feminine curiosity the daughter of Pharaoh had to look into it to see what was there, and when they removed the cover there was lying a strong, healthy baby boy, kicking up its heels and sucking its thumbs, as probably most of us did when we were boys, and probably as you did when you were a girl.

The baby looks up and weeps, and those tears blotted out all that was against it and gave it a chance for its life. I don't know, but I think an angel stood there and pinched it to make it cry, for it cried at the right time. Just as God plans, God always does things at the right time. Give God a chance - He may be a little slow at times, but He will always get around in time.

The tears of that baby were the jewels with which Israel was ransomed from Egyptian bondage. The princess had a woman's heart, and when a woman's heart and a baby's tears meet, something happens that gives the devil cold feet. Perhaps the princess had a baby that had died, and the sight of Moses may have torn the wound open and made it bleed afresh. But she had a woman's heart, and that made her forget she was the daughter of Pharaoh and she was determined to give protection to that baby.

Faithful Miriam (the Lord be praised for Miriam) saw the heart of the princess reflected in her face. Miriam had studied faces so much that she could read the princess' heart as plainly as if written in an open book, and she said to her: "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" and the princess said, "Go."

I see her little feet and legs fly as she runs down the hot, dusty road, and her mother must have seen her coming a mile away, and she ran to meet her own baby put back into her arms and she was being paid Egyptian gold to take care of her own baby.

See how the Lord does things. "Now, you take this child and nurse it for me and I will pay you your wages." It was a joke on Pharaoh's daughter, paying Moses' mother for doing what she wanted to do more than anything else - nurse her own baby.

How quickly the mother was paid for these long hours of anxiety and alarm and grief, and if the angels know what is going on what a hilarious time there must have been in Heaven when they saw Moses and Miriam back at home under the protection of the daughter of Pharaoh. I imagine she dropped on her knees and poured out her heart to God, who had helped her so gloriously. She must have said: "Well, Lord, I knew you would help me. I knew you would take care of my baby when I made the ark and put him in it and put it in the water, but I never dreamed that You would put him back into my arms to take care of, so I would not have to work and slave in the field and make back and be tortured almost to death by fear that the soldiers of Pharaoh would find my baby and kill him.

"I never thought you would soften the stony heart of Pharaoh and make him pay me for what I would rather do than anything else in this world." I expect to meet Moses' mother in Heaven, and I am going to ask her how much old Pharaoh had to pay her for the job. I think that's one of the best jokes, that old sinner having to pay the mother to take care of her own baby. But, I tell you, if you give God a chance, He will fill your heart to overflowing. Just give him a chance.

This mother had remarkable pluck. Everything was against her, but she would not give up. Her heart never failed. She made as brave a fight as any man ever made at the sound of cannon or the roar of musketry. Mothers are always brave when the safety of their children is concerned.

This incident happened out west last summer. A mother was working in a garden and the little one was playing. The mother heard the child sitting under a tree in the yard scream; she ran, and a huge snake was wrapping its coils about the baby, and as its head swung around, she leaped and grabbed it by the neck and tore it from her baby and hurled it against a tree. She is always brave when the safety of her children is concerned.

Fathers often give up. The old man often goes to boozing, becomes dissipated, takes a dose of poison and commits suicide; but the mother will stand by the home and keep the little band together if she has to manicure her fingernails over a washboard to do it.

If men had half as much grit as the women there would be different stories written about a good many homes. Look at her work! It is the greatest in the world; in its far reaching importance it is transcendently above everything in the universe - her task in molding hearts and lives and shaping character. If you want to find greatness, don't go toward the throne; go to the cradle, and the nearer you get to the cradle, the nearer to greatness.

Now, when Jesus wanted to give His disciples an impressive object lesson, He called in a college professor, did he? Not much. He brought in a little child and said: "Except ye become as one of these, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of God."

The work is so important that God will not trust anybody with it but a mother. The launching of a boy or girl to live for Christ is greater work than to launch a battleship.

Moses was a chosen vessel of the Lord and God wanted him to get the right kind of a start, so He gave him a good mother. There wasn't a college professor in all Egypt that God would trust with that baby, so He put the child back in its mother's arms. He knew the best one on earth to trust with that baby was its own mother.

When God sends us great men He wants to have them get the right kind of a start. So He sees to it that they have a good mother. Most any old stick will do for a daddy. God is particular about the mothers.

And so the great need of this country or any other country is good mothers, and I believe we have more good mothers in America than any other nation on earth. If Washington's mother had been like Happy Hooligan's mother, Washington would have been a Happy Hooligan.

Somebody has said, "God could not be everywhere, so He gave us mothers." Now there may be no poetry in it, but it's true that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world," and if every cradle was rocked by a good mother, the world would be full of good men as sure as you breathe. If every boy and every girl today had a good mother, the saloons and disreputable houses would go out of business tomorrow.

A young man one time joined a church and the preacher asked him: "What was it I said that induced you to be a Christian?" Said the young man: "Nothing that I have ever heard you say, but it is the way my mother lived." I tell you an ounce of example outweighs forty million tons of theory and speculation.

If the mothers would live as they should, we preachers would have little to do. Keep the devil out of the boys and girls and he will get out of the world. The old sinners will die off if we keep the young ones clean. The biggest place in the world is that which is being filled by the people who are closely in touch with youth. Being a king, an emperor or a president is mighty small potatoes compared to being a mother or the teacher of children, whether in a public school or in a Sunday school, and they fill places so great that there isn't an angel in Heaven that wouldn't be glad to give a bushel of diamonds to boot to come down here and take their places.

Commanding an army is little more than sweeping a street or pounding an anvil compared with the training of a boy or girl. The mother of Moses did more for the world than all the kings that Egypt ever had. To teach a child to love truth and hate a lie, to love purity and hate vice, is greater than inventing a flying machine that will take you to the moon before breakfast. Unconsciously you set in motion influences that will damn or bless the old universe and bring new worlds out of chaos and transform them to God.

A man sent a friend of mine some crystals from the Scientific American and said: "One of these crystals as large as a pin point will give a distinguishable green hue to 116 hogsheads of water." Think of it! Power enough in an atom to tincture 116 hogsheads of water. There is power in a word or act to blight a boy, and through him, curse a community. There is power enough in a word to tincture the life of that child so it will become a power to lift the world to Jesus Christ. The mother will put in motion influence that will either touch Heaven or Hell. Talk about greatness!

Oh, you wait until you reach the mountains of eternity, then read the mothers' names in God's hall of fame, and see what they have been in the world. Wait until you see God's hall of fame; you won't see any Ralph Waldo Emersons, but you will see women bent over the washtub. I want to tell you women, fooling away your time, hugging and kissing a poodle dog, caressing a "Spitz," drinking society brandy mash and a cocktail, and playing cards, is mighty small business compared to molding the life of a child.

Tell me, where did Moses get his faith? From his mother. Where did Moses get his backbone to say "I won't be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter"? He got it from his mother. Where did Moses get the nerve to say, "Excuse me, please", to the pleasure of Egypt? He got it from his mother.

You can bank on it that he didn't inhale it from his dad. Many a boy would have turned out better if his old dad had died before the kid was born. You tell your boy to keep out of bad company. Sometimes when he walks down the street with his father, he's in the worst company in town.

His dad smokes, drinks and chews. I would not clean his old spittoon. Let the hog clean his own trough. Moses got it from his ma. He was learned in all the wisdom of Egypt, but that didn't give him the swelled head.

When God wants to throw a world out into space, He is not concerned about it. The first mile that world takes settles its course for eternity. When God throws a child out into the world He is mighty anxious that it gets a right start.

The Catholics are right when they say: "Give us the children until they are 10 years old and we don't care who has them after that." The Catholics are not losing any sleep about losing men and women from their church membership. It is the only church that has ever shown us the only sensible way to reach the masses - that is, by getting hold of the children.

That's the only way on God's earth that you will ever solve the problem of reaching the masses. You get the boys and girls started right and the devil will hang a crepe on his door, bank his fires and Hell will be for rent before the Fourth of July.

A friend of mine has a little girl that she was compelled to take to the hospital for an operation. They thought she would be frightened, but she said: "I don't care if mamma will be there and hold my hand."

They prepared her for the operation, led her into the room, put her on the table, put the cone over her face and saturated it with ether, and she said, "Now, mamma, take me by the hand and hold it and I'll not be afraid".

And the mother stood there and held her hand. The operation was performed, and when she regained consciousness they said: "Bessie, weren't you afraid when they put you on the table?" She said: "No, mamma stood there and held my hand. I wasn't afraid."

There is a mighty power in a mother's hand. There's more power in a woman's hand than there is in a king's scepter. And there is a mighty power in a mother's kiss - inspiration, courage, hope, ambition, in a mother's kiss. One kiss made Benjamin West a painter, and the memory of it clung to him through life. One kiss will drive away the fear in the dark and make the little one brave. It will give strength where there is weakness.

I was in a town one day and saw a mother out with her boy, and he had great steel braces on both legs, to his hips, and when I got near enough to them I learned by their conversation that wasn't the first time the mother had had him out for a walk.

She had him out exercising him so he would get use of his limbs. He was struggling and she smiled and said: "You are doing fine today; better than you did yesterday," and she stooped and kissed him, and the kiss of encouragement made him work all the harder, and she said: "You are doing great, son," and he said, "Mamma, I'm going to run: look at me." And one of his toes caught on the steel brace on the other leg and he stumbled, but she caught him and kissed him, and said: "That was fine, son; how well you did it!"

Now, he did it because his mother had encouraged him with a kiss. He didn't do it to show off. There is nothing that will help and inspire like a mother's kiss.

If we knew the baby fingers pressed

against the window pane,

Would be cold and still tomorrow, never

trouble us again,

Would the bright eyes of our darling catch

the frown upon our brow?

Let us gather up the sunbeams lying all

around our path.

Let us keep the wheat and roses, casting

out the thorns and chaff!

We shall find our sweetest comforts in the

blessing of today,

With a patient hand removing all the briers

from our way.

There is power in a mother's song, too. It's the best music the world ever heard. The best music in the world is like biscuits - it's the kind mother makes. There is no brass band or pipe organ that can hold a candle to mother's song. Calve, Melba, Nordica, Eames, SchumannHeink - they are cheap skates compared to mother. They can't sing at all.

They don't know the rudiments of the kind of music mother sings. The kind she sings gets tangled up in your heart strings. There would be a disappointment in the music of Heaven to me if there were no mothers there to sing. The song of an angel or a seraph would not have much charm for me. What would you care for an angel's song if there is no mother's song? The song of a mother is sweeter than that ever sung by minstrel or written by poet. Talk about sonnets! You ought to hear the mother sing when her babe is on her breast, when her heart is filled with emotions. Her voice may not please an artist, but it will please anyone who has a heart in him. The songs that have moved the world are not the songs written by the great masters. The best music, in my judgment, is not the faultless rendition of these high priced opera singers.

There is nothing in art that can put into melody the happiness which associations and memories bring. I think when we reach heaven it will be found that some of the best songs we will sing there will be those we learned at mother's knee.

There is power in a mother's love. A mother's love must be like God's love. How God could ever tell the world that He loved it without a mother's help has often puzzled me. If the devils in Hell ever turned pale it was the day mother's love flamed up for the first time in a woman's heart. If the devil ever got "cold feet" it was that day, in my judgment. You know a mother has to love her babe before it is born. Like God, she has to go into the shadows of the valley of death to bring it into the world, and she will love her child, suffer for it and it can grow up and become vile and yet she will love it.

Nothing will make her blame it, and I think, women, that one of the awful things in Hell will be that there will be no mother's love there. Nothing but black, bottomless, endless, eternal hate in Hell - no mother's love.

And though he creep through the vilest caves of sin,

And crouch perhaps, with bleared and bloodshot eyes,

Under the hangman's rope - a mother's lips

Will kiss him in his last bed of disgrace,

And love him e'en for what she hoped of him.

I thank God for what mother's love has done for the world. Oh, there is power in a mother's trust. Surely as Moses was put in his mother's arms by the princess, so God put the babes in your arms, as a charge by him to raise and care for. Every child is put in a mother's arms as a trust from God, and she has to answer to God for the way she deals with that child. No mother on God's earth has any right to raise her children for pleasure. She has no right to send them to dancing school and haunts of sin. You have no right to do those things that will curse your children. That babe is put in your arms to train for the Lord. No mother has any more right to raise her children for pleasure than I have to pick your pockets or throw red pepper in your eyes. She has no more right to do that than a bank cashier has to rifle the vaults and take the savings of the people. One of the worst sins you can commit is to be unfaithful to your trust. "Take this child and nurse it for me". That is all the business you have with it. That is a jewel that belongs to God and He gives it to you to polish for Him so He can set it in a crown. Who knows but Judas became the godless, good-for-nothing wretch he was because he had a godless, good-for-nothing mother? Do you know? I don't.

Who is more to blame for the crowded prisons than mothers? Who is more to blame for the crowded, disreputable houses than you are, to let your children gad the streets with every Tom, Dick and Harry, or keep company with some little jack rabbit whose character would make a black mark on a piece of tar paper. I have talked with men in prisons who have damned their mothers to their face. Why? They blame their mothers for their being where they are.

"Take the child and nurse it for me, and I will pay you your wages." God pays in joy that is fireproof, famine proof and devil proof. He will pay you, don't you worry. So get your name on God's payroll. "Take this child and nurse it for Me, and I will pay you your wages."

If you haven't been doing that, then get your name on God's payroll. You have been drawing wages from the devil. Why have you a bleary eyed, sickly, cigarette smoking boy? Why have you a girl whose reputation is kicked around like a football? Why? You have been working for the devil, and see what you have.

"Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay you your wages". Then your responsibility! It is so great that I don't see how any woman can fail to be a Christian and serve God. What do you think God will do if the mother fails? I stagger under it. What if, through your unfaithfulness, your boy becomes a curse and your daughter a blight? What, if through your neglect, that boy becomes a Judas, when he might have been a John or Paul?

Down in Cincinnati some years ago a mother went to the zoological garden and stood leaning over the bear pit, watching the bears and dropping crumbs and peanuts to them. In her arms she held her babe, a year and three months old. She was so interested in the bears that the baby wriggled itself out of her arms and she watched those huge monsters rip it to shreds. What a veritable Hell it will be all through her life to know that her little one was lost through her own carelessness and neglect!

"Take this child and raise it for me, and I will pay you your wages." Will you promise and covenant with God, and with me, and with one another, that from now on you will try, with God's help, to do better than you ever have done to raise your children for God?

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