

THE DOMESTIC CIRCLE

Mark 5:19

I have chosen a subject today pertaining to the household or family. When we think of the word domestic we think of duties in the household. We also think of pleasures, but there should be devotion to the home and to our domestic circle.

In searching around the Bible I found in the 5th chapter of Mark an interesting story. I have preached upon this story but I have never taken this text and tried to develop the last part of that story when our Lord spoke to the man who had been living out among the tombs and finally was healed and at the expense of the swine which went headlong into the sea. The man had a feeling that he wanted to be a disciple and follow Jesus from place to place in His travels. (Instead) Jesus gave the man a bit of advice.

Look at verse 19 - - - Jesus said unto him: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Family Report to
And the scripture says that he departed and began to publish the good news and men began to marvel at it.

There are many people who are looking for some place of service, some place to serve God. There are some who say well, if I was Martin Luther I could make a mark on history. I wish I had a great opportunity to display my christian influence. There are people who admire Paul making Felix tremble and they wish they had some such occasion to preach the righteousness which they understand.

Every person in this house has an opportunity, at least one and I think that Mark is showing you a place where you can exhibit the christian character that

you have. Go home to thy friends, go home to thy domestic circle and tell how great things the Lord hath done for you.

Every man has that opportunity. Now if one is not faithful in this small area he will not be faithful in a larger place. If Peter will not help the cripple at the gate of the temple, he will never be able to preach to 3,000 souls on the day of Pentecost. If Paul will not take pains to present salvation to the jailer in the dungeon, he will never make Felix tremble. He who is not faithful in this small area---this is an awful word---you will heap curses and weeping and ruin and despair.

The fact is that the greatest place on earth to serve God is the domestic circle. And now if you want to question Lord, what will thou have me now and here to do---He would say go home and tell thy loved ones what great things the Lord hath done for you.

The domestic circle is in our thoughts this morning. If I should ask 10 of you to tell me what is the meaning of home you would give me 10 different definitions. One would say I love the fireplace, another one would say I love the table where there is plenty to eat; another would say I love the work area where we work and are busy; another would say I love the books we have; or yet another would say I love the prayer time that we have in our home. To each one it would be different, but home might be a greeting at the door, a smile, a peace that comes over you when you enter, a joy, laughter.

Yet there are others who would say well what is home. It's a place of

hunger, of shivering, of curses. There is no Bible on the shelf. Children are taught to steal. There are no beautiful lullabys for the growing little ones. Every face and picture is a picture of ruin. There are no sabbath days kept by this house and everything spells despair.

Let us think in terms this morning of the domestic circle, the home, in some different areas. We'll be very specific and talk about a few things that you are familiar with.

I. Home is a test of character.

In the first place, when this man was directed to go back home and tell his family and friends the great things that the Lord had done for him, it was putting a test on his character. Now he could have had a disposition in the public and wore a gay costume after he met Jesus, that would have been something, but in private what is he going to be. There are playactors that may appear on the stage one way and they appear behind the scenes another way, so private character may be different in public. But we find that a man may be in his home not what he is in public. His heart may be like a swamp at home while all day long he may be courteous, and genial and goodnatured but when he comes back he is irritable, scolding, fretful. You see reputation has something to do with this and he takes his anger out on his home where he is different in public life. But in the domestic circle he will have the test of character made. Well the reason why some people do not display their bad temper in public, they do not want to be knocked down. There are people who hide their irritability for the same reason, because they know it does not pay. But when he gets home he will act like a Nero.

Early 1800's

John O-Doo-bon

When we think about the test of character we think about Audubon, the great man with gun and pencil, went out into the forests of America to bring down to sketch the beautiful birds. After years of toil and exposure he completed his manuscript. He put it in the trunk in Philadelphia and for a few days of recreation and rest, he left for a while and when he came back he found that the rats had utterly destroyed the manuscript. Without a fret or bad temper, he again picked up his gun and a pencil and he visited the great forests of America. He reproduced his immortal work.

And yet there are people with one small part of that loss who would be completely unreconcilable who at the loss of a pencil or an article of clothing would blow as long and as sharp as a four-day northeast storm.

Now the person who is pleasant in public and irritable in private, if you do not have it in the (domestic) circle, you do not have it anywhere. Your life is a pool of selfishness. Jesus told the man you go home that your character might be tested. What you are at home you are everywhere and you go home and demonstrate that the demons have left your life and that now you are a different individual and no longer are you going to be a person who cannot be managed.

II. Home is a refuge.

I think Jesus wanted this man to go back home that the man might thoroughly understand that the tombs did not offer the best kind of living and refuge, but the home was the place for him. So you go home and tell your

friends what the Lord has done and you abide with them; do not take up a journey at this time.

As a refuge it is like the army out on a march. They will have a little skirmish but at evening time they will pitch their tents, stack up their arms, hang up their warcaps and lay their head on the knapsack to sleep until the morning bugle calls to marching and action. And then how pleasant for them to rehearse the victories, surprises of the day seated around a campfire. There is sort of a refuge.

Life is like a stormy sea. There is the mast and the torn sails and the leak in the ship. But then there is the blessed harbor, they are going for repairs in the drydock of a quieter life. And a man comes from a stormy life, there's a candle in the window and there is a lighthouse to guide him to port and his children go forth to meet him like the pilots who will guide through the narrows and take in hand the ship and the home becomes the wharf to bear the heavyladen.

It is a place where they can talk about what they have done without being charged with self-gratification. It is a place where a person may lounge without being thought ungraceful. It is a place where a person may express affection without being thought silly. It is a place where a man forgets the annoyances, the troubles and that he is even a pilgrim in this earth. So he has a harbor from the storm, a place to rest. What if a man does not have that domestic circle where he can come in and rest from the greed and the

lost. God pity the man or the woman who has no home to go to.

III. Home a political safeguard.

I want briefly to say that home is the thing of safety for the state and the state is built upon the safety of the home. The state of Virginia is going to be built upon the home. This nation will capsize if we do not have the right kind of christian home. This is the cornerstone of the republic. The virtues and the culture of home are absolutely necessary for the state. If there are not enough moral principle to make the family stick, then there will not be enough political principle to make the state stand.

If there is no home that means vandals and nomads and changing from place to place and leader to leader. It means like Babel, place of iniquity, in which the tower was overturned. That will destroy the home. The same thing these storms that upset the family will sink the constitution. Jails, armies, navies are not really the best defense for this country.

The door of the home is the best fortress. The household is the best monument of safety for this nation of ours.

IV. Home is a school.

I think we learn here, we plow up the soil, we cultivate it and we wait for it to grow and the kind of seed we use and things we plant, whether good or bad, will turn up in the harvest.

You may praise the intelligence of a child and on the other hand think he is not intelligent at all. But you see the results of that at 10 years of age. You think about praising a child for beauty; that's really not enough because a child may understand more than you say and you will find him standing up on a highchair before (a mirror.)

Words and deeds and examples are the seed of character that children are very apt to use.

Did you know that children many times are second editions of their parents. Abraham begat Isaac, so the virtue is apt to go on down the line just as so iniquity is transmitted.

We need to make our home the brightest place on earth; if you would charm your children to the highest path of virtue then there must be religion. Do not think that they are going to be blind the wrong way. If you put gold before them, do not expect the little feet to keep step to a dead march. Do not cover up your walls with such pictures as death on a pale horse or massacre of the innocence.

Rather put some pictures like the mill by the mountain stream, the fox hunt, the children amid flowers, the harvest scene, something of the church.

I hope you're getting the hint that it ought to be cheerful and bright like a quail whistling, like a mountain top clear down to the meadow and if all the skies cast tempests or storm, then there is in the valley the lark's carol, the hummingbird and the waterfalls. God has just covered this earth and heaven with

beauty and with gladness. Let us take these things into our domestic circles and bring some brightness and good cheer.

A dark home makes a bad boy and a bad girl in preparation for bad men and bad women in the future.

V. Home needs christian principles.

Now let me come to this and say that could it be in this congregation of ours where we have comfortable homes, many of you do, that the voice of prayer is never lifted. What, there is no supplication at night for protection. What, there is no thanksgiving in the morning for care. How, my brother - my sister, will you answer God in the day of Judgement in reference to your children. It is a plain question that I am asking you.

Jeremiah 10:25 - Concludes - he says, there have been some who have made idols from pieces of wood and silver. But in that closing verse, he says, God is going to pour out his fury upon the families that call not upon His name.

Dear parents, when you are dead and gone. And the moss have covered the inscription on the tomb stone, will your children look back and think of father and mother at family prayer.

Will they take the old family Bible and open it and see the marks, and the tears of contrition, and the consoling promises, that were spread out before their eyes in the long ago.

If you do not inculcate these Christian principles in the hearts of your children, and you do not warn them against evil, and you do not invite them to the holiness of God - they are going to wander off, into infidelity. And they are going to make ship-wreck of their immortal souls. And at their deathbed and in their judgement day, they will curse you.

Now, what is the history on the wall that should come out of the history of the walls and halls of your home to your children. What a history. The mortal and the immortal life - every parent is writing the history of his child. He is writing it, he is composing it. And it is a message of groans, or faith.

When you go back to the home, is prayer like a roof over it. Is peace like the atmosphere in it. Do you as a parent have faith in trial and comfort in darkness.

Did you know children never forget the early home. You have been kept out of sin. You have often conquered temptation. A man who has come from a good home never gets over it. A man who has had an early bad home, never really gets over that. You will always have a scar--somewhere in his life.

We are pleading today that you would take on this equipment. And like the priests of old, who kept a fire burning upon the altar by putting wood every morning, so that the fire would not go out. We would like to encourage every family to have a quiet place. Whether it is in the living room, the kitchen, or wherever you might choose to find a place. The Bible tells us that Isaac went into the fields to meditate. That Jacob lingered on the Eastern bank of the brook Jabbok. And there prevailed with God.

Moses hidden in the cleft of Horeb - beheld something of the glory that marked the way which Jehovah had gone. (Elijah) sent Ahab down to eat and drink - while he himself withdrew to the lonely mountain Carmel.

(Daniel) spent three weeks in intercession on the banks of the river. Paul spent time in undisturbed meditation and prayer. To see what God wanted him to do at Troaz.

A poor old woman in a great city said, I cannot find a place of quietness. So I have invented one, very simply. I sit in my rocking chair and throw my apron over my head. And there is my closet.

In every home, we need that time, we need that quiet hour. I do not mean an hour of 60 minutes. But, you need time. Dr. Dale once said somewhere, that if each day had 48 hours, and every week had 14 days - we might conceivably get through our work. But as things are, it is impossible.

It would take self-denial to redeem the time and forego many other things. We will have to shut the door and spend time in secret and in prayer.

What I am saying is necessary for a well-ordered Christian life. This was the practice of Jesus to withdraw - even into the wilderness. Crowds pressed him on every side but he had to find time to pray and he shut the door.

In the morning, we should look forward to the duties of the day.

The situations, even in which temptations may be before us. We ought to take the opportunities before us of usefulness.

In the evening, we ought to remember the providences which have been good to us during that day.

Hudson Taylor was so fully occupied in the hours of the day, he said - it was not an easy thing to find time for private prayer. So he made a new rule. Each night at 2 o'clock he would get up, watch with God until 4 o'clock, and then lie down to sleep until the morning.

The Jews have a custom to spend time for meditation three times daily. In the morning, at noon, and in the evening. Daniel 6:10.

Nature, itself, teaches us that morning and evening are good occasions and a good time to approach God. As James Frazier said, I set up my sails - and pray at least twice a day. And then often, I stop in mid-day.

We need this quiet art before God. A great preacher McHeyne used to say that very much of his prayer time was spent in preparing to pray. That is why when we lead services and pray, it takes preparation. It does not need to come from a wild heart.

Bunyan one time said - oh, the starting holes that the heart has in times of prayer. No one knows how many back lanes my heart has traveled and slipped away from the presence of God.

So, let us say - we need to recognize our acceptance before God. We need to confess before him our sins. And the need of his help. We must let the Holy Spirit become a chariot for us.

George Mueller used to say, I must fix my mind upon a text of Scripture. Because you ought to go to prayer and prayer will deliver you of yourself, into the hands of God. So shall I keep forever in my heart, one silent space. A little sacred spot of loneliness. Where to set up the memory of thy cross.

A little quiet garden where no man may pass or rest forever, sacred still, divisions of thy sorrow. And thy love.

VI. HOME IS A TYPE OF HEAVEN

As Jesus said to this man, go home to thy friends and family, and tell them how great things God hath done for you. How that he has shown compassion upon you. And God has promised this man a new life. And he told him to carry some of that joy home, to his family.

How marvelous it is that the home is really and can really become a joy. When I think of Christ coming on, and on, and down and down. With only a few to greet his arrival, the glorious thing happened. From where did he come. And why did he choose this place of destination. If I go and trust in the shepherds. Or if I go and question the angels. I would find out that he is in exile. He is like Abraham - he is in exile from Ur.

Like John in exile from Ephesus. And he had come miles and miles. And Christ came far from home. When he came here. Have you ever thought of the home-sickness of Christ.

Some of you know what home-sickness is. If you are away just for a few weeks in the domestic circle. And Christ was 33 years away from home. And Christ was millions of miles away from home and knew what it was to be home-sick - even among surroundings that are pleasureable. But Christ slept in huts with a thirst, and with a hunger. He was on his way to be born in another man's barn. To be buried in another man's grave.

So Jesus came, there was persecution for Hosannah. There was weariness for rest. There was a night of storm for peace. He was a stranger - but Heaven was his home. Now we think of our homes, and we think of Heaven, where we shall meet. After long separations - and earth's sorrows will roll away.

I want to close with a story that DeWitt told. About a dream - one night he said, I was lying on my lounge. My children all around me were full of laughter and romp. I was on the lounge, half awake and half asleep. I dreamed a dream. I went to a far country - it was not Persia. Or one of the oriental countries. But it was a fruitful garden. And he said, I saw people in holiday dress. When will they put off this, and put on their workman's uniforms, I thought. But they never put off the Holiday. I wandered through the suburbs of the city to find the place where the dead sleep. I looked among the beautiful hills, and I saw towers and castles. But I did not see the monument, marker, or slab. I went into the chapel of the great town - and I said, where do the poor people worship. And where are the hard benches they sit on. And the answer came back. We have no poor.

And then he said, I walked around to find the homes of the destitute. And I found all mansions - ivory and gold. Not a tear in sight could I find. So I sat under the branches of a great tree, and I said - who am I. And where does all of this seem. And out from under the leaves and up the flowery paths - across the bright streams, there came a beautiful group of people all about me. And I saw them coming, and I thought I knew their step. And they shouted, and I thought I knew their voices. But then, they were so gloriously dressed and arrayed, such as I had never witnessed before that I almost bowed in reverence. But then again, they clapped their hands, and they shouted - welcome, welcome.

The mystery all vanished, and I found the time of dawn and eternity had come. And we were all together again in our new home in Heaven. And I looked around and I said - are we all here. And the voice, and many many generations responded - all here! And while the tears of gladness were reigning down upon cheeks, the branches of Libanon, cedars were clapping their hands. And the towers of their great city were chimming their welcome. We altogether began to leap and shout and sing. Home, home, home.

The domestic circle - will it last in Heaven. Go home and tell thy friends, and tell them what great things Thy Lord hath done for Thee. And hath compassion upon Thee. And I trust that many today who make such a decision - that you will go home and tell what great things the Lord has already done for you. That you will keep on telling it. And that the domestic circle will become a place of commitment to his blessed will. That people everywhere will marvel at the great things that have happened in your life.