

Victory of the Lamb – October 14, 2018 – Family Matter Series

Genesis 21:1-6 The (Im)Perfect Family – Pastor Bill Limmer

Picture the perfect family. You know the one on FB. Everyone is smiling. There is an extravagant, immaculate home with a pristine yard. The vacations are only to glorious places. The kids don't need braces. They have no debt and the bank account is full. The family is so perfect they don't even know anyone who is imperfect. . . besides you. And so, you have to keep some secrets because even other imperfect families would be dismayed. How perfect is your family? Is everyone talking and listening to one another without jumping to conclusions? [Clothes are all washed, folded and put away?](#) Kids on the honor role? Fall cleaning already done? Is the Sunday lunch cooking and the dishes already laid out on the table for lunch because after all you are going to eat at the table today like you do for every meal? Healthy snacks packaged and ready to go? Everything peaceful and calm? And when you walk in after church today are the angels singing? Or are there stress fractures, miscommunications, selfishness, lack of understanding, insecurities, bad attitudes, missteps, aka sin.

This morning we are in our series Family Matters where we have dived into the Scriptures and looked at various family matters including Jesus being the key ingredient in every person's life and every family matter. Then in weeks two and three we saw the men and women are both image bearers of God. The man is to give himself up for his wife like Christ gave himself up for the church. The woman is to be a strong essential counter part to the man giving him the support he needs. Then we saw that the goal of parenting was to teach and model the love of Jesus to their children. And last week we saw the giftedness of singleness and how singleness can lead to giving time and money to kingdom priorities. Today we are going to look at Biblical families and see the (Im)Perfect Family.

Genesis 21:1-6 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. ²Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. ³Abraham gave the name Isaac^[a] to the son Sarah bore him. ⁴When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me."

Abraham and Sarah had the perfect family. Except for the fact on at least two occasions Abraham introduced Sarah as his sister not his wife. Husbands if you think that is a good idea, you go ahead and do that. And I assure you, you will find out what an imperfect life is all about. And I will see you in my office this week for counseling. They were perfect except that their family included years and year of pain because they were not able to conceive. And then finally they had a child, Isaac, which means laughter. So there is Sarah in her 90's and Abraham with a newborn. It was perfect. Except for the fact that Isaac was just like any other child and so he woke up in the middle of the night. By the way, how do you think that was with Sarah in her 90's and Abraham 100. I know a lot of 20 and 30 something parents who are exhausted. Imagine what it was like to be 100 and having an infant in the house. But they had a son, a nuclear family. Everything was perfect, except Abraham already had a child from another woman that Sarah had, believe it or not, told Abraham he could sleep with. If you want to read about the grief that all caused and the threat to Christianity still today you can read about it in the rest of Genesis 21. And this still is a cause of trouble, friction and death today as Islam points back to the son born to the slave girl being the son of the promise instead of Isaac. Do you know anyone who is trying so hard to have children? Do you know anyone who is trying to make blended families work?

Adam and Eve were the perfect family. Until they decided they wanted to put God on the back burner and go their own way. It didn't take long before there was fear, confusion, cover-up, justification, blaming and death. Remember it was their son Cain, the first child born into the world, who became a murderer. Do you know anyone whose family has someone who has not only had a run in with the law but was also incarcerated?

Remember Noah? Noah is the guy who built the ark that saved his family from the flood. And everything was perfect except that it wasn't exactly easy to build an ark. Not every piece fit together as he wanted. I wonder if it was Noah who came up with the saying, measure twice cut once. But everything was perfect except that there were some really hot days and some really cold days. But other than it was perfect. And then the rain came and it was perfect. Except that they were on the ark for a whole year without internet or tablets. Except for the fact that there were moments of fear and terror as the both ebbed and rolled in the wind and waves. But it was perfect because the the ark always smelled fresh and clean like a ly-sol? And then the flood was over and everything was perfect. So Noah planted a vineyard and made some red, red wine and until he was supine. His one son mocked him for his sin and Noah got super angry that his sin was found out. Do you know anyone who has had a bad day at work, or works outside in the elements, or who has a boss or an employee who either has an annoying habit or ten or isn't a great worker? You know inside of families where there is addiction people take on different roles like the enabler and the hero. Those roles get replicated in virtually everything they do.

In the Bible we learn about a great prophet named Elijah. He was full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit. He was perfect. But then he fell into depression and lost his will to live. Studies show that 20 percent of people suffer from clinical depression. If we are average, that means about 30 people here have depression and I am willing to be you maybe only know one. Anyone in your family suffer with mental health issues, anything depression to anxiety, schizophrenia, to eating disorders, and more?

In Scripture there were these parents named Mary and Joseph. They went on vacation to the big city. And everything was a great until they were on their way home. They traveled for a full day before they realized they left the kid behind. Really. Somehow they missed the fact that the Son of God was no longer with them on the way home. They turned around and went back for him. When they found him they were relieved and yet so mad. They found made him get in the very back of the van. I remember one Sunday morning after church and everybody was talking. And then one by one cars started to pull out of the lot and go home. But some parents had left without their kids. Internally I died laughing so hard. How do you forget your kids? And It would still be super funny today, if I hadn't done it myself. Do you know anyone who has always been a great parent?

Then there is the woman that Jesus met at the well. Remember the woman with the very imperfect background shows up at the well in the heat of the day so that she can get some water for her family without being ridiculed and mocked by all those other families that allegedly have their act together. She meets Jesus there who offers her living water and tells her to go and get her husband and come back. She replied, I am not married. Jesus said, You are right. You have been married five times and the man you are now living with isn't your husband. You know anyone like that. Someone who has a tough run on marriage either of their own doing or another's, or both.

Maybe you remember the perfect family in Luke 15. This is the perfect family where the young son comes to his father and says in full blown rebellion. He has the audacity to ask for his share of the inheritance in the process. He is telling his dad, I wish you were dad. The dad is shocked and yet in

humble love gives his son his portion of the inheritance. And the son is gone faster than the lights turn off when you hit the switch. And he became an alcoholic, a drug dealer. He didn't want the commitment of marriage so he just slept around. He also stunk at finances and blew through his inheritance. You know anyone like that who has had an affair not just with a person but with drugs or alcohol? Do you know anyone whose finances are in a bad spot either by their poor choices or health crises or physical crises like a hurricane?

Our families are just like the biblical ones. Some of our families are like that family with the older son who was not happy that his brother repented from his addictions, or want to hold a grudge against someone for past sins and indiscretions.

One of the things every family in Scripture need was forgiveness, The closest we come to having a perfect family here on earth is to admit that we have problems and that we need help. It's not just other people who have to struggle with the lies of Satan and with evil. Each one of us is flawed and cracked, and everyday Satan is hammering away trying to break us apart. He wants to tempt into us thoughts, words, attitudes and actions of dismissing God so that we give up on our faith or we think we could never be accepted.

And that brings us back to Abraham and Isaac. God promised Abraham that through offspring all nations would be blessed. It is not the Isaac is the fulfillment of that promise but the child, the chosen one that would come later, Jesus! What a relief to find out that God knows that we weak and he doesn't despise or give up on us. Jesus has not only purchased our forgiveness for our sins of the past, but he sends the Holy Spirit to help with the temptations of today and tomorrow.

I remember being a ECFE class when our son was a toddler and people started talking about what it was like to have a toddler in their home. And I was like, shut -up. That happens in our house too. I thought we were the only ones. You see all too often we put a wall around ourselves and we act like the other brother in the story of the prodigal son. The one You know small groups are a perfect place to get real with God, with one another, and with service.

In just a few minutes we are going to be offering communion to imperfect people who need forgiveness. If you are perfect, if you have your stuff together, you don't need to bother coming to church let alone communion, because you are all good. However, if you have messed up, if your life is messed up now or has been, if you are hurting, if you are lonely, if your life has been messed up by someone else, if you need forgiveness, you need Jesus. And for those of you who are new here or just checking things out we offer our Foundations Class about so that you can see what Jesus has done for you so that you will want to come to Communion because in Communion you will find Jesus, his very body and blood, his forgiveness, new life and salvation. That is what and who every ImPerfect family needs. Jesus is the one who holds us together for eternity whatever the family matter.