

Dear friends in Christ! During the last week including last Sunday, the day of the dedication of your new house of worship, you have with perhaps a few exceptions listened to eight sermons, inspiring sermons that added to and increased the already present joy and gratitude of your hearts towards a gracious God who has given strength willingness and endurance to complete this your new and beautiful church home. And still another service tonight concluding the dedicatory program, as it were. During the services you were told many things so that one is inclined to think that there is very little left to be told. And yet there is.

But my friends, if you will only remember the things that have been told to you previous to this service and pondered them in your heart not only during this week but as long as God permits you to sojourn here below then you will have a veritable font of blessings stored away in your bosom from which you can draw ever anew and which should and will have a wholesome influence on your future church life. For then you will remember to pay your vows unto the Most High. Then you will always realize that surely this is the house of God and you will consider it and use it as such. Then you will compass the Lord's altar in this house of God to publish with the voice of thanksgiving and to tell all of his wonderful works. And you will be prompted to do this by love because you "love the habitation of his house and the place where his honor dwellest."

But you will not stop there. Your new house of worship will be an incentive to you to take a vital interest in the affairs and progress of your district and the church at large; to give your moral and financial support; and especially should it influence your mission mindedness, increase your zeal and longing to save immortal souls, to invite and compel to come and worship with you in this house of God those of your friends and neighbors who have no church home but are still standing idle in the marketplace of this world. If you do that, and I know you will, the new church will not only benefit you as members of this congregation but it will be a wholesome influence for the entire community in which you live, drawing evermore to the foot of the cross, confessing their sins, and finding peace and joy, and forgiveness in Jesus Christ our Savior in whom alone there is salvation, since there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.

However there is one more thing left to which your new church should mean much and will mean much and that is to the Christian home and on this topic I've been asked to speak to you this evening on the basis of our text and with the help of God I shall endeavor to answer the question: "What my new church should mean to the Christian home."

If the question were to be asked: which exercises the greater influence upon the other, the church upon the home or the home upon the church there would no doubt be many different thoughts given, some in favor of the greater influence of the church, others in favor of the greater influence of the home. And most likely, it would still remain a question to be tabled for further discussion. That the church and the home influence each other is a fact that no thinking person will bear to gainsay. Every church will influence the members of that church, and the homes of that member. Or their home life will influence that particular church or congregation to which he or she belongs. What kind of influence that will be whether wholesome or unwholesome depends much upon what kind of a home and church it is. The magnificence or beauty of a church building, in itself, but what the members of the church stand for, what is being taught and preached to them is of vital importance, for accordingly it will influence its members. Only that church will have desired Christian influence on the home of its members that is guided solely by the word of the Head of the church, Jesus Christ and him crucified; that uses as its motto: "Speak O Lord for thy servant heareth."

Your new church, dear members of Immanuel congregation, should be a mighty and wholesome influence for your homes and family life if you will but permit it to be that and where is the Christian to be found who is not interested in the welfare of his home and family. For the home and the family is of divine origin, a divine institution, and the Christian home is one of the most important institutions on earth. It's existence, it's welfare, it's problems are matters of vital concern to the church, to human society, to us as individuals, to our country and to the world at large. Just imagine a world without homes.

There are few words in the human language as dear to us as the word home. There is no place on earth to which we attach more sentiment than to our home and there is no place we would rather be. To the child the home is a beloved place where every want is filled and every need is satisfied. To the man or woman whose childhood is far away, there is no sweeter remembrance than that of the home and when the heart longs for love and comfort and aid, the foot starts to turn towards home. No wonder that the Christian poet has sung: "Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

And if that's true of the home in general, how much more of the Christian home. And, friends just because we are members of the Christian congregation it is no absolute guarantee that our homes will, as a result, remain Christian as a natural consequence. Joshua, the writer of our text experience this in the fullest measure. The people to whom he was speaking were people of the true church visible. They were God's chosen people; they had been taught more true religion and they had more spiritual knowledge than any other nation on earth at that time. Yet their lives did not prove it and the reason for this was that they disregarded the precepts and teachings of the Church. In spite of the teachings of the church, they had forsaken the true God and had turned to the service of idols. Their church life was a lie, where they lived not at home what they confessed to believe and to do as church members.

Joshua realized this and told them that they could no longer continue in that dual life. Choose this day whom you will serve. Either choose God whom you confess as church members or choose the devil whom you serve at home. For we read in verse 14 and 15 etc and then he adds the memorable words: "But as for me and my household we will serve the Lord."

My friends, today choose this motto of Joshua for your very own. Serve the Lord, not only at the church, but also in your homes. Let your new church mean more to you than a mere place for you worship a short hour during divine service. Permit its teachings to reflect in your homes and in your family life and you will never regret it for then you have the assurance of God's blessing resting upon your home. Here what he has promised the Christian home in the 128th Psalm: "Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel."

If we asked what kind of man is blessed and whence his blessings come we notice that the Lord is speaking of a man and his family, of the Christian home. And that consists of a loving husband that feareth the Lord; that he heeds the teachings of his church according to the word of the Lord which says: "Likewise husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heir together of the grace of life; and be not bitter against them." The Christian home includes also a loving wife, who according to divine directions submits herself to her own husband as unto the Lord even as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him Lord, whose daughters ye are and are not afraid with any amazement." And thus loving and helping one another they will serve the Lord in their home. If God blesses them with children, they will treasure them as a precious gift of God. And mindful of the Savior's word: "Suffer them not," they soon wend their steps to the house of God, to have their children baptized in the name of the triune God, which means it becomes a child of God and an heir of heaven. As their children grow older, they bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They will teach them to honor their father and mother that it may be well with them and that they may live long upon the earth. And Christian children will honor their parents not as a product of coercion or fear but as a fruit of the true filial love and devotion which grow and ripen in their youthful hearts as a result of their faith in Christ.

And blessed are you children of this congregation if you permit your church you to become even better members of your home and family in honoring your parents in loving obedience. For from this pulpit it will be preached to you, in your Sunday school, confirmation classes, and young people's meetings it will be taught you, "Children obey your parents in all things for this is well pleasing to the Lord."

That's what God says and he never has and never will retreat. God pity the congregation and especially the children who are influenced by their church through their so-called Shepherd of the souls, the pastor, that the filial obedience is no longer modern, or that they outgrow it as they increase in years. Such teachers deliberately gainsay the will of the Lord, and are certainly not worthy of the position they hold. I have never yet found in my Bible an age limit on this command: "Hearken unto your father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old." Therefore continue to honor and obey your parents, even after you have grown a little older, and thus help to make your family or homes truly Christian homes. For to husband and wife and children the Christian home will be a source of blessing.

Let therefore the word of God reign supreme in your home. Let religion form a part of the daily conversation in your home. See to it, that the Bible is not only seen there but also used. Let Christ be the head of your house, a guest at every meal, and a silent listener to every conversation. Let there be prayer at the table and above all, gather your family at least once daily for family devotion, either reading a portion from the Bible or some good book on family devotion, or both, not just occasionally, when convenient, but omitting it when company arrives. No, let it be a daily habit regardless who is there. The family that is ashamed to conduct family devotions in the presence of company would do well to examine itself as to its sincerity.

It is told of Justice McLean, once Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, that on the day of his conversion, he at once called his family together for evening prayers. When his wife informed him of the fact that a number of attorneys were in the living room waiting to see him and suggested the kitchen for the proposed exercises, the judge said: "It is the first time I've ever asked the Lord to come to my house and I don't propose to invite him to the kitchen." The visitors, being asked to join in the family prayer were glad to do so and the family gathered in the living room to worship the Lord. What a wonderful and lasting influence that one family devotion coupled with such sincerity must have had on all present. And why should not every Christian home exercise the same influence? And indeed it will if it is a truly Christian home.

Many have carried in their hearts for a lifetime the memory of a devout father and mother; they have remembered the prayers they learned at their mother's knee and the serious words spoken to them at some occasion by their father. The blessings of a Christian home often guide men through life and impress in their mind the thoughts that are rarely forgotten. Many stories are told of a man who left the path of goodness and virtue, but who were brought back to their God and Savior by the memory of the Christian home, of a loving mother and a kind father.

Our country's, our church's, our school's need of the day is more Christian homes. We know that the glory and strength of the country does not consist in its vast wealth, in its unlimited natural resources, in its armies and navies, but in its law-abiding, loyal and patriotic citizens. A country may have wealth and material strength in abundance (limitless) but all of it can be scattered, ruined, and devastated and the country laid waste in a short time if the citizens of the nation are not loyal and law-abiding. But where does a nation get loyal and law-abiding citizens? The answer is this: from the home, in particular from the Christian home. The character of a person is formed in the early years of his life. The impressions that he receives as a child are the most lasting ones and guide him throughout his life. Whatever is added later has some effect, it is true. But it is the home that forms the character and molds the thought and thus it is the Christian home, where love and obedience and righteousness are taught, that furnishes the nation with loyal citizens and is a blessing to the nation. Oh, that this were recognized in the nation and that our government would never countenance open or covert attacks upon the sanctity of the Christian home.

The blessings of the Christian home reach out also into the schools. Teachers in any school will vouch for the fact that the actions and behavior of children in the school room are a trustworthy index of the kind of home they come from. The child that is taught at home to obey the words of father or mother implicitly, to carry out the command immediately and without question, to be courteous and never impertinent, will show the same characteristics in the school room, to the joy and gratification of every teacher.

And finally, the blessings of the Christian home will also in return be felt in the church. It is the aim and purpose of your church to teach the articles of our faith and to instill virtue and righteousness into the hearts of its members. But this work of your church is sided immeasurably by your Christian home. Your church may urge children ever so much to attend church regularly but these efforts will be successful as a rule only with those children, whose parents insist on attending the services regularly and then accompany them in person. Your church can do very little if your home does not cooperate or antagonizes the work of the church. But if your home is a Christian home, if the saving gospel of Jesus is spoken of in the home, if the word of God dwells there, if we find prayer and devotion there, if faults are corrected by means of the word of God, there indeed the church finds fruitful ground in which to sow its seed. If home and church cooperate in the soul is best cared for.

May God's richest blessings of rest upon your new church and upon your homes. Never forget to thank God for having permitted you to spend your childhood in a Christian home, wholesomely influenced by a church that knows nothing among you save Jesus and him crucified. May there always be cooperation between your homes in your church and may they be and remain Christian homes and a Christian church until we no longer need homes or churches here below but have entered our heavenly home,

Where at my Savior side,
heaven is my home
I shall be glorified,
heaven is my home
there are the good and best
those I love most and best
There too I shall rest.
Heaven is my home.

Until then may you always endeavor to do what Joshua said in our text: "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." Amen.