

May 11, 2014  
Mother's Day  
*Three Simple Rules*  
John 2:1-11

**Opening words** You know the story. I have told you about the birth of the modern American Mother's Day in the past. It all began with the death of Anna Reese Jarvis in 1908. Her daughter, Anna M. Jarvis, didn't want her to be forgotten so she campaigned for the creation of an official Mother's Day. She dreamed of having a day when all mothers would be honored. She began by petitioning the superintendent of her church, the St. Andrew's Methodist Church, in Grafton, West Virginia. Her mother had spent over twenty years there teaching Sunday school. Her request was granted, and the first Mother's Day celebration was held on May 10, 1908. Four hundred and seven people attended. Anna Jarvis arranged for white carnations — her Mother's favorite flower — to adorn the patrons. Two carnations were given to every Mother in attendance. The idea grew fast. By 1909, forty-six different states were observing Mother's Day. In 1912, West Virginia became the first state to officially observe Mother's Day. In 1914, Woodrow Wilson signed into law the national observance of Mother's Day. (Did you know Father's Day wasn't created until 1972, when Richard Nixon signed it into law?)

On this Mother's Day we find ourselves in the second chapter of John. Obviously, it is early in his ministry. In the first chapter of John, we hear about John the Baptist and the calling of the disciples. The second chapter begins with this story, Jesus' first public miracle. It is a great piece of scripture. Notice, without his mother it never would have happened. Our Gospel lesson for today is John 2:1-11. Let me call this message *Three Simple Rules*.

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**John 2:1-11** On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup> When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." <sup>4</sup> "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." <sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." <sup>6</sup> Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup> Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, <sup>9</sup> and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside <sup>10</sup> and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." <sup>11</sup> What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

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Her name was Susanna Wesley, the mother of the founder of Methodism, John Wesley. She knew a thing or two about motherhood. She set the standard high for the generations of mothers to come. She was born in 1669, the youngest of twenty-five children. At the age of nineteen, she married Samuel Wesley. They had nineteen children. However, nine died during infancy. She was no stranger to personal problems. There was never enough money and their family home burned down twice. Yet, in spite of all of this, she is remembered as an outstanding mother. Each one of her children, both boys and girls, were home schooled. Their education began on the day after their fifth birthday. Each one of them was required to know the complete alphabet after the first day. Once their education was complete, each one of her children knew both Greek and Latin, along with the classics. All this was done within the framework of sixteen house rules. They still speak to our world today. These are her sixteen rules for parenting.

1. Eating between meals was not allowed.
2. As children, they are to be in bed by 8 p.m.
3. Children were required to take medicine without complaining.
4. Subdue self-will in a child to save the child's soul.
5. Teach a child to pray as soon as he can speak.
6. Require all to be still during Family Worship
7. Give them nothing that they cry for, and only that when asked for politely.
8. To prevent lying, punish no fault which is first confessed and repented of.
9. Never allow a sinful act to go unpunished.
10. Never punish a child twice for a single offense.
11. Reward good behavior.
12. Any attempt to please, even if poorly performed, should be commended.
13. Preserve property rights, even in smallest matters.
14. Strictly observe all promises.
15. Require no daughter to work before she can read well.
16. Teach children to fear the rod.

That list is available upon request. I like those rules. They demonstrate Susanna Wesley knew something about raising children. I think the same can be said about the mother in our Gospel lesson for today. Let's look at this morning's story together.

We find ourselves in the second chapter of John. This story is the only found in the gospel of John. It can't be found in Matthew, Mark or Luke. The scene is a wedding reception. Couples didn't honeymoon in those days. No one traveled to Mexico or the Caribbean. However, they did hold receptions that lasted approximately a week. Jesus was invited to the festivities. I liked to think it was because he was fun. Instead, he received his invitation because he was a respected rabbi. Over the generations, certain general rules of hospitality have remained intact. Running out of food or drink has always been a serious matter. In verse three we discover that the wine had run out. Everyone looks for the guilty party, but Mary looks to Jesus.

She knew Jesus had the power to save the day. She believed in Jesus when Jesus doesn't believe in himself. In verse four, we find Jesus making an excuse for his inactivity, "*My time has not yet come.*" Mary does not listen. Instead, she instructs servants to bring him water. By the end of the scene the party has resumed. Everyone had enough wine. Verse ten tells us it was the good wine. What does that mean? It means the wine Jesus produced had a kick. However, today, I don't want to talk about the wine.

I want to talk about the relationship between a mother and a son. This is a better way to say it. I want to talk about the relationship between a mother and her adult son. This story illustrates for us three simple rules that Mary must have applied in raising her children. (I am glad she didn't have sixteen rules, because we would be here all day.) Let me give you the three rules up front and then I will unpack them for you. Here are Mary's three simple rules for parenting.

- 1. Know your children**
- 2. Encourage your children**
- 3. Trust your children to God**

These three rules translate to our generation, and they can be used by anyone who wants to have a positive impact on younger generations. So if you are ready to begin, say, "**Amen!**"

#### **Rule #1: Know your children**

This is rule #1: Know your children. There is no doubt about it. Mary knew Jesus. In the text for this morning Jesus is thirty years old. That means their relationship was thirty years old. Mary knew Jesus was different from the very beginning. She must have recalled that visit from the angel years earlier, who told her that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Son of God. She remembered Jesus' birth. She remembered the visitors, the shepherds and the Magi. She must have remembered how Jesus wandered off at the age of twelve and was found in the temple. Mary remembered it all because she was part of Jesus life for thirty years. She knew Jesus better than Jesus knew himself. How well do you know your children?

When my daughter, Anna, was young, she went to a babysitter several hours each week. Her babysitter's name was Carol Bartlett. I have talked about Mrs. Bartlett in the past. She was a family friend, who watched children in her home. One of the children she watched was a little boy by the name of Bobby. He spent the majority of every day with Mrs. Bartlett. When his parents got away for the weekend, he stayed with Mrs. Bartlett. Bobby was always at Mrs. Bartlett's. One day, I arrived to pick up Anna as Bobby's mother came to pick up him. The adults were all talking, when Bobby suddenly fell down. With his mother standing there, Bobby got up and ran to Mrs. Bartlett to be comforted, not his own mother. I will never forget the uncomfortable look on Mrs. Bartlett's face. All the adults in the room knew the truth. Bobby was spending too much time with Mrs. Bartlett and not enough time with his mother. How much real time do you spend with your children? How well do you know your children?

Perhaps, this is a better question. How well do your children know you? Can you name three of your children's friends? If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

### **Rule #2: Encourage your children**

History tells us that Abraham Lincoln carried an old newspaper article with him regularly. Those who were closest to him say he read it daily. He couldn't believe the words. The article said Lincoln was a great leader. The article was correct. He is remembered as being a great leader, one of our greatest presidents. However, Lincoln didn't see himself that way. He was crippled with self-doubt. Lincoln illustrates for us a simple point. It doesn't really matter what others think of you. The only thing that matters is how you feel about yourself. How do you feel about yourself?

This is rule #2: Encourage your children. I love this story because it shows the human side of Jesus. Jesus had an insecure side. Look at the story. The Master is at a wedding reception when the wine ran out. Jesus had the power to solve the problem, but he didn't try because he was too insecure. It is his mother who gives him the nudge to try. Verse 3 says, *"When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, 'They have no more wine.'"* In other words, Mary is telling Jesus to do something. She is encouraging him to do something. Has anyone here ever needed an encouraging word? The world reminds us regularly of what we can't do. We need people in our lives to remind us of what we can do. It is not just true of the young. It is true of the not-so-young. We are often blind to our own abilities. It is impossible to receive too much encouragement. Rule #2 says, encourage your children. If that makes you think, say, **"Amen!"**

### **Rule #3: Trust your children to God**

I don't want this to sound critical on Mother's day but my mother never wanted me to go into the ministry. When I told her about my calling, she responded by saying, "Russell, you just aren't intellectual enough." As an insecure youth, I heard, "You are dumb." Maybe she was right? Do you know what my mother wanted me to do with my life? She thought I should study to be a hospital administrator. She worked in a hospital and she must have thought they weren't too smart. To me, being a hospital administrator sounds horrible! I tell you that piece of personal history for one reason. I don't want to shock you, but sometimes mothers are wrong. The only one that really knows what you are supposed to do with your life is God!

This is rule #3: Trust your children to God. Mary knew Jesus and she encouraged Jesus. However, the third rule must have been the hardest one for her to apply. She knew God had something special planned for him. She remembered how she and Joseph took Jesus to the temple when he was only eight days old. On that day, they met an old man by the name of Simeon. He knew Jesus was destined for greatness. Do you remember his words? Mary did. Simeon said, *"This child is destined for the raising and the falling of many in Israel."* (Luke 2:34) Mary didn't know what that really meant, but she must have asked the question a million times. Why does her son have to lead to the raising and the falling? Why not just the raising?

When she encourages Jesus to change the water into wine, she encourages Jesus to get on with his life. She was encouraging Jesus to fulfill his divine destiny. Jesus' future was out of Mary's control. She had done the best she could do. Now, she had to trust God with him. We only have our children at home for a short time. Most of their lives they are on their own. How far do you trust God with your children?

Every night before I go to bed, I get my iPad out and open my Netflix app. I have been watching Ken Burn's documentary on World War II, *The War*. My father served during that war, so I feel an attachment. I particularly find the interviews of the survivors interesting. That generation is dying quickly. One night they interviewed a native-American soldier who was in the infantry. Years after the conflict, he cried about the day he took a German life with his own hands. Death did not come suddenly. The soldier died slowly. Before he passed, he called out. According to the man interviewed, he didn't call out for a medic. He didn't call out for his friends. He called out for his mother, twice. Don't tell me being a mother isn't important.

This is a special Mother's Day in my family. On March 31, our first granddaughter, Pippa Rose, was born. That means our daughter, Sarah, is celebrating her first Mother's Day as a mother. It seems impossible, but it is true. Time goes so fast. She and her husband, Vic, are working hard. They are excellent parents. However, they need a good night's sleep. It is great being a grandfather because you get to sleep. It is great being a grandfather because you can relax. The child that you worried about and prayed about for all those years became an adult that you respect. It is now Sarah and Vic's job to raise a child that they will respect. I am confident they will, because they will apply Mary's three simple rules.

- 1. Know your children**
- 2. Encourage your children**
- 3. Trust your children to God**

Robert Browning once wrote, "*Love begins and ends with mothers.*" And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"