"A FAMILY AFFAIR"

A Sermon By

Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church
106 East 86th Street
New York, New York 10028
November 3, 1996
It's good...it's great to be a part of the family of God! Families are so much fun. Where would many of us be without our church family...without our home church.

An eight year old young man sent a postcard to his parents from summer camp that read,

"Dear Folks: I knew all along that something awful was going to happen. Well, last night it did. Love, Johnny"

In a warm and delightful book entitled, Children's Letters to God, children six years of age and younger direct their questions to God. Here's one that Larry wrote,

"Dear God: Maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other so much if they each had their own rooms. It works with my brother."

And here's one that six year old, Anita, asked:

"Is it true my father won't get into heaven if he uses his bowling words around the house? My mother says so!"

And five year old Neil wondered and wrote,

"I went to this wedding here in my church and they kissed right in front of the altar. Is that OK with you, God?"

It's fun being a part of a family and our family ties mean everything to us.

When he was a member of the sociology faculty at an Ivy League University, Tony Campolo tells of how he and his wife were expected to attend "gat-togethers" with his colleagues and their spouses. And on more than one occasion someone would ask Tony's wife in what seemed to him to be a rather condescending manner, "And what is it that you do...my dear?" Tony's wife found a perfect response for such occasions and in machine gun fashion, she would reply,

"I am socializing two 'homo sapiens' into the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition so they might be transformers of the social order into the kind of eschatological utopia God willed for us from the foundation of the earth".

Then she would smile and asked, "And what is it that you do?" And the inquirer would usually look somewhat flustered and rather meekly say something like, "Oh, I teach sociology."

One of the greatest challenges and one of the greatest privileges God gives each of us is to belong to a family. Now that is not to say that all families are perfect. They are not. There are many dysfunctional families that I have known. There are
nice people...Christian people...who unfortunately bear scars from some misguided parenting.

For instance, in Charles Darwin's autobiography, you read about some of the forces that shaped him into becoming one of the world's great scientists, yet some of those same forces seemed to haunt his life and pushed him away from any belief in a higher power, a belief in God.

His mother died when he was quite young and his father, a physician, was imposing and very strict. He often would stand his children in line and lecture them for two hours at a time on their flaws and weaknesses. Young Darwin, apparently, was a rather sickly boy who didn't seem to excel at anything in particular. But Darwin found his niche when he began studying natural sciences and at the age of 22, he was asked to take a surveying journey for the British government, a trip that took him to different islands where he would catalogue plant and animal life. Even at this mature age, Darwin asked his father's permission to go on this trip. Evidently, his father still held great authority over him and with the help of a persuasive uncle, his father finally agreed.

In the year 1831, Darwin set out on the HMS BEAGLE. Conditions on the ship were rough and his job as a naturalist was strenuous. Some of the sailors couldn't stand the rigors of this assignment and died, but Darwin, who was seemingly more weak and sickly than the average sailor, thrived at sea. His spirits lifted, he performed the work with great vigor.

The voyage lasted about five years and upon returning to England, Darwin returned to his father's house. He was now a man of strength and quite robust and had made a mark, but soon after returning home, Charles Darwin became an invalid again. Soon his strength failed him and suffering from a variety of physical ailments, he began to lose all taste for music and poetry and art and literature that had once enchanted him. Terribly depressed, doctors couldn't seem to put their fingers on the source of his sudden decline. They felt there was no reason for his physical sufferings...no physical reason.

And suffer he did. For the next forty years...until his death...Charles Darwin was desperately ill and fatigued. Some modern observers believe that his illness was psychosomatic...a reaction to returning to England and to his father and the dry, academic work in which he was engaged. Others have even gone so far as to suggest that Darwin's dislike and fear of his own father crept into and showed in his constant rejection of God or of a spiritual element in life. The man who contributed so much to the cause of atheism may have just been reacting to a lack of love and tenderness in his own father.

Families are not perfect because human beings are not perfect. Human beings are flawed. And the reason human beings are flawed is that we are not sure who our father is.

WE MAY NOT KNOW WHO OUR FATHER IS

Did you hear that? Let me repeat that. We're not sure who our father is. We may know who our biological father is, but we are not so sure about God. We find ourselves wondering...doubting....does God really exist? Does He really love us as the Bible says. Do our lives really matter? We are not certain who our Father is, and because we are not certain on this matter....we end up being uncertain about ourselves and who we are.
Robert Schuller of California's Crystal Cathedral and who is on television every Sunday morning told a story several weeks ago about a little girl who was "hearing-impaired". Therefore, she could never hear her father's most important message, "Sarah...I love you!"

According to Schuller, as I remember it, her father traveled a great deal as a part of his job and he would often call home around supper time and after talking to his wife, he would then talk to their six year old deaf daughter. One night his wife said,

"Hold on...just a minute and I'll put her on the phone".
The next voice he heard was wonderfully familiar to him.
"Hi, daddy!" "Hi...Sarah....I love you". But Sarah did not, could not hear him. Instead, she started chattering non-stop as only a six year old can do..."Wait till I tell you what we did in school today" she would say...."We had so much fun....first, we....."

And whenever she paused for a breath, her father would say, "Sarah....I love you". But Sarah couldn't hear and would continue her excited recap of the day. "Sarah....I love you". Again, no response. Finally, little six year old Sarah simply ran out of steam.

"Well, gotta run, daddy" she'd say. "See ya later." Click.

And she was gone and she never heard her father's reassuring and loving word, words so important, "Sarah, I love you."

Some of us may have allowed the years to deafen us to the most important voice in our lives. (Tim...or George...whatever your name may be)....I love you. Or, (Ann...or Mary...whatever the name may be)....I love you. And because we do not hear God's voice we are not certain that life really matters...uncertain as to whether our lives are really important and that can lead us to devalue ourselves.

WE ARE VALUED HUMAN BEINGS

Did you know that we speak to others at a rate of something like 110 words per minute, but that we speak to ourselves at something like 900 words per minute. And that's what you are doing right now. Yes, even as I speak to you, you are making editorial comments to yourself about what is being said and one idea triggers another....and you think about that idea and on and on it goes. It's called "self-talk".

But here is the real importance of all of this. Psychologists tell us that up to 70 percent of all "self-talk" is negative. In other words, you tell yourself all of the things you can't do, the things you shouldn't try, the things you will never do, or aren't good enough to do...at a rate of over 600 words per minute...and it is because you are uncertain as to who your father is.

Now, imagine what would happen if you were to replace that negative self-talk with positive self-talk...and tell yourself all of the things that you can do. Suppose you were to tell yourself that you are a worthwhile person. Remember the words of Ethel Waters,

"God made you....and God don't make junk."
Just imagine the difference it would make in your life if you really believed that. Who...no one could stop you. You would be the energetic, dynamic, and attractive person you imagine yourself to be in your dreams. So, read and reflect on those great words that provide us with today's text,

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God and such we are!"

"For this reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."

That's who our Father is. We are children of God and we need to remember that, always!

Queen Victoria's daughter Alice, once took an old woman certain gifts and the old woman inquired of her,

"And who is the lady to whom I am indebted for all this exceeding kindness?" The princess replied, "I myself am nobody, but my mother is the Queen of England!" The princess understated her case, for she was an heir...just as you and I are heirs.

Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann puts it this way,

"It is great freedom to know who owns you. If you do not know to whom you belong, you are apt to be the pawn of anyone whose identity is strong enough to overwhelm your own sense of inadequacy."

We don't have to carry around with us that deep feeling of inadequacy that sometimes we do carry. We may be flawed, yes...and our family may be flawed, but you and I know who our Father is and should make the difference. We know God loves us, that we are valued human beings and we know our lives are precious, so very precious in His sight. We know where we came from. We came from the very heart of God.

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God....."

The cross of Christ is there before us to remind us that we are loved with an unimaginable love and that God "so loved the world that He sent...." So stop all of that negative self-talk...."I'm too fat, or I'm too dumb....or I come from a poor family....or, I'm just a nobody". Out with that kind of talk and "in" with the blessed assurance that you are God's child...yes, that he doesn't make junk. Believe in yourself and walk always with the dignity as a child of the Divine.

The late Senator Hubert Humphrey once said something like this,
"You must remember that in politics, how you stand depends on where you sit...."

Of course, he was referring to the political party seating arrangement in the Senate, but someone has applied his words to our life "in Christ". How we stand depends on where we chose to sit. And we can be seated with Christ in the "heavenlies". We are flawed people, but we know who our Father is. We know we are God's children because of what Christ did on our behalf. And we go forth from this place into a world...secure in the knowledge that God who loves us and gave His Son for us, goes with us to be His family in all we do.

PRAYER
"A FAMILY AFFAIR"

A Sermon By

Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church
106 East 86th Street
New York, New York 10028
November 3, 1996
"A FAMILY AFFAIR"

INTRODUCTION It's good...it's great to be a part of the family of God! Families are so much fun. Where would many of us be without our church family...without our home church. It means so much to us!

An eight year old young man sent a postcard to his parents from summer camp that read,

"Dear Folks: I knew all along that something awful was going to happen. Well, last night it did. Love, Johnny"

In a warm and delightful book entitled, Children's Letters to God, children six years of age and younger direct their questions to God. Here's one that Larry wrote,

"Dear God: Maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other so much if they each had their own rooms. It works with my brother."

And here's one that six year old, Anita, asked:

"Is it true my father won't get into heaven if he uses his bowling words around the house? My mother says so!"

And five year old Neil wondered and wrote,

"I went to this wedding here in my church and they kissed right in front of the altar. Is that OK with you, God?"

It's fun being a part of a family and our family ties mean everything to us.

ILLUSTRATION When he was a member of the sociology faculty at an Ivy League University, Tony Campolo tells of how he and his wife were expected to attend "get-togethers" with his colleagues and their spouses. And on more than one occasion someone would ask Tony's wife in what seemed to him to be a rather condescending manner, "And what is it that you do...my dear?" Tony's wife found a perfect response for such occasions and in machine gun fashion, she would reply,

"I am socializing two 'homo sapiens' into the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition so they might be transformers of the social order into the kind of eschatological utopia God willed for us from the foundation of the earth".

Then she would smile and asked, "And what is it that you do?" And the inquirer would usually look somewhat flustered and rather meekly say something like, "Oh, I teach sociology."

NOT ALL FAMILIES ARE PERFECT One of the greatest challenges and one of the greatest privileges God gives each of us is to belong to a family. Now that is not to say that all families are perfect. They are not. There are many dysfunctional families that I have known. There are
nice people...Christian people...who unfortunately bear scars from some misguided parenting.

For instance, in Charles Darwin's autobiography, you read about some of the forces that shaped him into becoming one of the world's great scientists, yet some of those same forces seemed to haunt his life and pushed him away from any belief in a higher power, a belief in God.

His mother died when he was quite young and his father, a physician, was imposing and very strict. He often would stand his children in line and lecture them for two hours at a time on their flaws and weaknesses. Young Darwin, apparently, was a rather sickly boy who didn't seem to exc at anything in particular. But Darwin found his niche when he began studying natural sciences and at the age of 22, he was asked to take a surveying journey for the British government, a trip that took him to different islands where he would catalogue plant and animal life. Even at this mature age, Darwin asked his father's permission to go on this trip. Evidently, his father still held great authority over him and with the help of a persuasive uncle, his father finally agreed.

In the year 1831, Darwin set out on the HMS BEAGLE. Conditions on the ship were rough and his job as a naturalist was strenuous. Some of the sailors couldn't stand the rigors of this assignment and died, but Darwin, who was seemingly more weak and sickly than the average sailor, thrived at sea. His spirits lifted, he performed the work with great vigor.

The voyage lasted about five years and upon returning to England, Darwin returned to his father's house. He was now a man of strength and quite robust and had made a mark, but soon after returning home, Charles Darwin became an invalid again. Soon his strength failed him and suffering from a variety of physical ailments he began to lose all taste for music and poetry and art and literature that had once enchanted him. Terribly depressed, doctors couldn't seem to put their fingers on the source of his sudden decline. They felt there was no reason for his physical sufferings...no physical reason.

And suffer he did. For the next forty years...until his death...Charles Darwin was desperately ill and fatigued. Some modern observers believe that his illness was psychosomatic...a reaction to returning to England and to his father and the dry, academic work in which he was engaged. Others have even gone so far as to suggest that Darwin's dislike and fear of his own father crept into and showed in his constant rejection of God or of a spiritual element in life. The man who contributed so much to the cause of atheism may have just been reacting to a lack of love and tenderness in his own father.

Families are not perfect because human beings are not perfect. Human beings are flawed. And the reason human beings are flawed is that we are not sure who our father is.

Did you hear that? Let me repeat that. We're not sure who our father is. We may know who our biological father is, but we are not so sure about God. We find ourselves wondering...doubting...does God really exist? Does He really love us as the Bible says. Do our lives really matter? We are not certain who our Father is, and because we are not certain on this matter...we end up being uncertain about ourselves and who we are. Let me develop this thought with you.
Robert Schuller of California's Crystal Cathedral and who is on television early Sunday morning told a story several weeks ago about a little girl who was "hearing-impaired". Therefore, she could never hear her father's most important message, "Sarah....I love you!"

According to Schuller, as I remember it, her father traveled a great deal as a part of his job and he would often call home around supper time and after talking to his wife, he would then talk to their six year old deaf daughter. One night his wife said,

"Hold on...just a minute and I'll put her on the phone".

The next voice he heard was wonderfully familiar to him.

"Hi, daddy!" "Hi...Sarah.....I love you". But Sarah did not, could not hear him. Instead, she started chattering non-stop as only a six year old can do...."Wait till I tell you what we did in school today" she would say...."We had so much fun....first, we....."

And whenever she paused for a breath, her father would say, "Sarah....I love you". But Sarah couldn't hear and would continue her excited recap of the day. "Sarah....I love you". Again, no response. Finally, little six year old Sarah simply ran out of steam.

"Well, gotta run, daddy" she'd say. "See ya later." Click.

And she was gone and she never heard her father's reassuring and loving word, words so important, "Sarah, I love you."

Some of us may have allowed the years to deafen us to the most important voice in our lives. (Tim...or George...whatever your name may be)....I love you. Or, (Ann...or Mary...whatever the name may be)....I love you. And because we do not hear God's voice we are not certain that life really matters....uncertain as to whether our lives are really important and that can lead us to devalue ourselves.

WE ARE VALUED HUMAN BEINGS Did you know that we speak to others at a rate of something like 110 words per minute, but that we speak to ourselves at something like 900 words per minute. And that's what you are doing right now. Yes, even as I speak to you, you are making editorial comments to yourself about what is being said and one idea triggers another....and you think about that idea and on and on it goes. It's called "self-talk".

But here is the real importance of all of this. Psychologists tell us that up to 70 percent of all "self-talk" is negative. In other words, you tell yourself all of the things you can't do, the things you shouldn't try, the things you will never do, or aren't good enough to do...at a rate of over 600 words per minute. "You're not worthwhile as to who your father is."

Now, imagine what would happen if you were to replace that negative self-talk with positive self-talk....and tell yourself all of the things that you can do. Suppose you were to tell yourself that you are a worthwhile person. Remember the words of Ethel Waters,

"God made you....and God don't make junk."
Just imagine the difference it would make in your life if you really believed that. Why...no one could stop you. You would be the energetic, dynamic, and attractive person you imagine yourself to be in your dreams. So, read and reflect on those great words that provide us with today's text,

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God and such we are!"

"For this reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."

That's who our Father is. We are children of God and we need to remember that, always!

Queen Victorïa's daughter Alice, once took an old woman certain gifts and the old woman inquired of her,

"And who is the lady to whom I am indebted for all this exceeding kindness?" The princess replied, "I myself am nobody, but my mother is the Queen of England!" The princess understated her case, for she was an heir...just as you and I are heirs.

Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann puts it this way,

"It is great freedom to know who owns you. If you do not know to whom you belong, you are apt to be the pawn of anyone whose identity is strong enough to overwhelm your own sense of inadequacy."

We don't have to carry around with us that deep feeling of inadequacy that sometimes we do carry. We may be flawed, yes...and our family may be flawed, but you and I know who our Father is and should makes the difference. We know God loves us, that we are valued human beings and we know our lives are precious, so very precious in His sight. We know where we came from. We came from the very heart of God. As the Scriptures well remind us...

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God....."

The cross of Christ is there before us to remind us that we are loved with an unimaginable love and that God "so loved the world that He sent...." So stop all of that negative self-talk...."I'm too fat, or I'm too dumb....or I come from a poor family....or, I'm just a nobody". Out with that kind of talk and "in" with the blessed assurance that you are God's child...yes, that he doesn't make junk. Believe in yourself and walk always with that special dignity as a child of the Divine.

The late Senator Hubert Humphrey once said something like this,
"You must remember that in politics, how you stand depends on where you sit...."

Of course, he was referring to the political party seating arrangement in the Senate, but someone has applied his words to our life "in Christ". How we stand depends on where we chose to sit. And we can be seated with Christ in the "heavenlies". We are flawed people, but we know who our Father is. We know we are God's children because of what Christ did on our behalf. And we go forth from this place into a world...secure in the knowledge that God who loves us and gave His Son for us, goes with us and through it all, it is still a family affair!

PRAYER

Make us sensitive to Your nearness and to Your presence in these moments on this Sunday when we celebrate All Saints Day...remembering loved ones and family members no longer with us, but now gone home to be with you in the great Kingdom of light and love. Confirm within us the feelings and the decisions, the resolutions and intentions of this Sunday when we gather as a church family. Visit our sick with the assurance of Your care and encircle the bereaved with Your lifting and warming presence.

Remind us, once again, that the race is short...even at its longest and we would try to run it well and always to Your glory. In the name and spirit of Christ, we pray. Amen.
"A FAMILY AFFAIR"

A Sermon By

Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church
106 East 86th Street
New York, New York 10028
November 3, 1996
"A FAMILY AFFAIR"

INTRODUCTION  It's good ... it's great to be a part of the family of God! Families are so much fun. Where would many of us be without our church family.... without our home church. It means so much to us!

An eight year old young man sent a postcard to his parents from summer camp that read,

"Dear Folks: I knew all along that something awful was going to happen. Well, last night it did. Love, Johnny"

In a warm and delightful book entitled, Children's Letters to God, children six years of age and younger direct their questions to God. Here's one that Larry wrote,

"Dear God: Maybe Cain and Abel would not kill each other so much if they each had their own rooms. It works with my brother."

And here's one that six year old, Anita, asked:

"Is it true my father won't get into heaven if he uses his bowling words around the house? My mother says so!"

And five year old Neil wondered and wrote,

"I went to this wedding here in my church and they kissed right in front of the altar. Is that OK with you, God?"

It's fun being a part of a family and our family ties mean everything to us.

ILLUSTRATION  When he was a member of the sociology faculty at an Ivy League University, Tony Campolo tells of how he and his wife were expected to attend "get-togethers" with his colleagues and their spouses. And on more than one occasion someone would ask Tony's wife in what seemed to him to be a rather condescending manner, "And what is it that you do... my dear?" Tony's wife found a perfect response for such occasions and in machine gun fashion, she would reply,

"I am socializing two 'homo sapiens' into the dominant values of the Judeo-Christian tradition so they might be transformers of the social order into the kind of eschatological utopia God willed for us from the foundation of the earth."

Then she would smile and asked, "And what is it that you do?" And the inquirer would usually look somewhat flustered and rather meekly say something like, "Oh, I teach sociology."

NOT ALL FAMILIES ARE PERFECT  One of the greatest challenges and one of the greatest privileges God gives each of us is to belong to a family. Now that is not to say that all families are perfect. They are not. There are many dysfunctional families that I have known. There are
nice people...Christian people...who unfortunately bear scars from some mis-guided parenting.

For instance, in Charles Darwin's autobiography, you read about some of the forces that shaped him into becoming one of the world's great scientists, yet some of those same forces seemed to haunt his life and pushed him away from any belief in a higher power, a belief in God.

His mother died when he was quite young and his father, a physician, was imposing and very strict. He often would stand his children in line and lecture them for two hours at a time on their flaws and weaknesses. Young Darwin, apparently, was a rather sickly boy who didn't seem to excel at anything in particular. But Darwin found his niche when he began studying natural sciences and at the age of 22, he was asked to take a surveying journey for the British government, a trip that took him to different islands where he would catalogue plant and animal life. Even at this mature age, Darwin asked his father's permission to go on this trip. Evidently, his father still held great authority over him and with the help of a persuasive uncle, his father finally agreed.

In the year 1831, Darwin set out on the HMS BEAGLE. Conditions on the ship were rough and his job as a naturalist was strenuous. Some of the sailors couldn't stand the rigors of this assignment and died, but Darwin, who was seemingly more weak and sickly than the average sailor, thrived at sea. His spirits lifted, he performed the work with great vigor.

The voyage lasted about five years and upon returning to England, Darwin returned to his father's house. He was now a man of strength and quite robust and had made a mark, but soon after returning home, Charles Darwin became an invalid again. Soon his strength failed him and suffering from a variety of physical ailments he began to lose all taste for music and poetry and art and literature that had once enchanted him. Terribly depressed, doctors couldn't seem to put their fingers on the source of his sudden decline. They felt there was no reason for his physical sufferings...no physical reason.

And suffer he did. For the next forty years...until his death...Charles Darwin was desperately ill and fatigued. Some modern observers believe that his illness was psychosomatic...a reaction to returning to England and to his father and the dry, academic work in which he was engaged. Others have even gone so far as to suggest that Darwin's dislike and fear of his own father crept into and showed in his constant rejection of God or of a spiritual element in life. The man who contributed so much to the cause of atheism may have just been reacting to a lack of love and tenderness in his own father.

Families are not perfect because human beings are not perfect. Human beings are flawed. And the reason human beings are flawed is that we are not sure who our father is.

**WE MAY NOT KNOW WHO OUR FATHER IS**

Did you hear that? Let me repeat that. We're not sure who our father is. We may know who our biological father is, but we are not so sure about God. We find ourselves wondering...doubting...does God really exist? Does He really love us as the Bible says. Do our lives really matter? We are not certain who our Father is, and because we are not certain on this matter...we end up being uncertain about ourselves and who we are. Let me develop this thought with you.
Robert Schuller of California's Crystal Cathedral and who is on television early Sunday morning told a story several weeks ago about a little girl who was "hearing-impaired". Therefore, she could never hear her father's most important message, "Sarah...I love you!"

According to Schuller, as I remember it, her father traveled a great deal as a part of his job and he would often call home around supper time and after talking to his wife, he would then talk to their six year old deaf daughter. One night his wife said, "Hold on...just a minute and I'll put her on the phone". The next voice he heard was wonderfully familiar to him. "Hi, daddy!" "Hi...Sarah.....I love you". But Sarah did not, could not hear him. Instead, she started chattering non-stop as only a six year old can do..."Wait till I tell you what we did in school today" she would say...."We had so much fun....first, we....."

And whenever she paused for a breath, her father would say, "Sarah...I love you". But Sarah couldn't hear and would continue her excited recap of the day. "Sarah...I love you". Again, no response. Finally, little six year old Sarah simply ran out of steam.

"Well, gotta run, daddy" she'd say. "See ya later." Click.

And she was gone and she never heard her father's reassuring and loving word, "Sarah, I love you."

Some of us may have allowed the years to deafen us to the most important voice in our lives. (Tim...or George...whatever your name may be)...I love you. Or, (Ann...or Mary...whatever the name may be)....I love you. And because we do not hear God's voice we are not certain that life really matters...uncertain as to whether our lives are really important and that can lead us to devalue ourselves.

WE ARE VALUED HUMAN BEINGS

Did you know that we speak to others at a rate of something like 140 words per minute, but that we speak to ourselves at something like 900 words per minute. And that's what you are doing right now. Yes, even as I speak to you, you are making editorial comments to yourself about what is being said and one idea triggers another...and you think about that idea and on and on it goes. It's called "self-talk".

But here is the real importance of all of this. Psychologists tell us that up to 70 percent of all "self-talk" is negative. In other words, you tell yourself all of the things you can't do, the things you shouldn't try, the things you will never do, or aren't good enough to do...at a rate of over 600 words per minute.

Now, imagine what would happen if you were to replace that negative self-talk with positive self-talk....and tell yourself all of the things that you can do. Suppose you were to tell yourself that you are a worthwhile person. Remember the words of Ethel Waters,

"God made you....and God don't make junk."
Just imagine the difference it would make in your life if you really believed that. Why...no one could stop you. You would be the energetic, dynamic, and attractive person you imagine yourself to be in your dreams. So, read and reflect on those great words that provide us with today's text,

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God and such we are!"

"For this reason, the world does not know us because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."

That's who our Father is. We are children of God and we need to remember that, always!

Queen Victoria's daughter Alice, once took an old woman certain gifts and the old woman inquired of her,

"And who is the lady to whom I am indebted for all this exceeding kindness?" The princess replied, "I myself am nobody, but my mother is the Queen of England!" The princess understated her case, for she was an heir...just as you and I are heirs.

Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann puts it this way,

"It is great freedom to know who owns you. If you do not know to whom you belong, you are apt to be the pawn of anyone whose identity is strong enough to overwhelm your own sense of inadequacy."

We don't have to carry around with us that deep feeling of inadequacy that sometimes we do carry. We may be flawed, yes...and our family may be flawed, but you and I know who our Father is and should makes the difference. We know God loves us, that we are valued human beings and we know our lives are precious, so very precious in His sight. We know where we come from. We came from the very heart of God. As the Scriptures well remind us...

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God..."

The cross of Christ is there before us to remind us that we are loved with an unimaginable love and that God "so loved the world that He sent...." So stop all of that negative self-talk..."I'm too fat, or I'm too dumb...or I come from a poor family...or, I'm just a nobody". Out with that kind of talk and "in" with the blessed assurance that you are God's child...yes, that he doesn't make junk. Believe in yourself and walk always with that special dignity as a child of the Divine.

The late Senator Hubert Humphrey once said something like this,
"You must remember that in politics, how you stand depends on where you sit...."

Of course, he was referring to the political party seating arrangement in the Senate, but someone has applied his words to our life "in Christ". How we stand depends on where we chose to sit. And we can be seated with Christ in the "heavenlies". We are flawed people, but we know who our Father is. We know we are God's children because of what Christ did on our behalf. And we go forth from this place into a world...secure in the knowledge that God who loves us and gave His Son for us, goes with us and in it all and through it all, it is still a family affair.

PRAYER

Make us sensitive to Your nearness and to Your presence in these moments on this Sunday when we celebrate All Saints Day...remembering loved ones and family members no longer with us, but now gone home to be with you in the great Kingdom of light and love. Confirm within us the feelings and the decisions, the resolutions and intentions of this Sunday when we gather as a church family. Visit our sick with the assurance of Your care and encircle the bereaved with Your lifting and warming presence.

Remind us, once again, that the race is short...even at its longest and we would try to run it well and always to Your glory. In the name and spirit of Christ, we pray. Amen.
CHRISTMAS CRAFT DAY

We will be making Christmas Table items to sell at the 40th Annual All-Church Christmas Fair. If you are interested in crafts and would like to help create something unique and beautiful, please come help us on November 9th, at 10:30 a.m. Your help and talents would be greatly appreciated so come join us.

-----------------------------------

HELP!

♦ Workers are needed for a pre-sort day on November 9th at 10:30 a.m. Please come join us in preparation for the big day (November 23, 1996).

♦ If you cannot be here on November 23rd, there are other ways you can help! We need your support in the evenings before the Fair -- for setting up and decorating tables on the evenings of November 21st and 22nd.

♦ HELP! HELP! We still need a captain for the Plant Table. If you are interested, please call Julie Klein or Tracey Thomblade for details.

-----------------------------------

RAFFLE TICKETS

50-50 Raffle tickets will be on sale before the Fair, during coffee hour, at $1.00 per ticket. Please see Tracey Thomblade to purchase tickets.

-----------------------------------

PECANS

Pecans from the 1995 Annual All-Church Christmas Fair will be on sale at the reduced price of $5.00 per pound bag. If you prefer to wait for the 1996 crop, they will be available on the day of the Fair (at $6.50 per pound bag). To purchase, please call Judi Ferland at the Church Office, 427-5421.

-----------------------------------

Call Julie Klein (212/722-3187) or Tracey Thomblade (212/586-8596) if you have any questions or need more information.

-----------------------------------

Note: On November 9th, light refreshments will be served at 12:30 p.m.
THINGS I GOTTA DO FOR
THE 40TH ANNUAL ALL-CHURCH CHRISTMAS FAIR
NOVEMBER 23, 1996, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

☐ NOTE THE DATE ON MY CALENDAR
☐ CLEAN OUT THE CLOSETS
☐ CLEAN OUT THE TOY BOX
☐ CLEAN OUT THE BOOK CASES
☐ SIGN UP TO BAKE
☐ HANG UP A FAIR POSTER IN MY BUILDING
☐ VOLUNTEER SOME TIME
☐ INVITE A FRIEND(S)
☐ WRITE DOWN SOME BUSINESS ADDRESSES IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD TO ADD TO THE MAILING LIST (DONATIONS FROM THEM ARE NEEDED AND WELCOME)
☐ SAVE UP AND BRING SHOPPING BAGS FOR THE FAIR
☐ PRAY FOR GOOD WEATHER
☐ HELP WITH SET-UP OR CLEAN-UP
☐ WILL COME BUT WON'T HELP
☐ GIVE A DONATION TO EASE MY GUILT IN CASE I CAN'T COME!

CALL JULIE KLEIN (722-3187) OR TRACEY THORNBLADE (586-8596)
Your donation is a vote vs hunger

canned fruit

canned vegetables

instant potatoes

dry milk

stew
# November 1996

**PARK AVENUE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
106 EAST 86th STREET  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10028 (212) 427-5421

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **DECEMBER 1996**  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 | 9:30 AM - Choir Rehearsal (RR)  
9:30 AM - Adult Bible Class (3rd Fl.)  
11:00 AM - Worship (nursery care available)  
- Sunday School for Children (4th Fl.)  
12:15 PM - Coffee Hour (RR) | | | If your birthday is incorrect or is not listed, please call the church office. | | |
| 3 23rd Sunday after Pentecost | 4 | 5 Election Day | 6 | 7 Outreach Committee 7:30pm | 8 | 9 |
| CANVASSER'S MEETING  
1997 CANVASS 5 – 8pm | | | | | | |
| Alberta Williams | | | | | | |
| 10 24th Sunday after Pentecost | 11 Veterans Day | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| | | | | | | |
| Betty Berg | | | | | | |
| 17 25th Sunday after Pentecost  
Bible Sunday  
DEDICATION SUNDAY  
"Conversations in Membership" 6:00 pm  
Ann Cavallaro / Thomas Perkins | 18 Board of Trustees 7:30pm | 19 | 20 | 21 Finance Committee 7:30pm | 22 | 23 |
| | | | | | CHURCH FAIR 10 – 4pm |
| Joseph L. O'Hara | | | | | | |
| 24 Christ the King Sunday  
United Methodist Student Day (offering) | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 Thanksgiving Day | 29 | 30 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | Bill Bonwitt | Louise O'Neil | Bob Trinha |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | National Bible Week, Nov. 24–Dec. 1 | | |

Official United Methodist Program Calendar
ANTHEM: "Create in Me, O God"

"Create in me, O God, a pure heart and grant a right spirit within me."

ANTHEM: "All Ye That Cried Unto the Lord"

"All ye that cried unto the Lord, in distress and deep affliction, He counteth all your sorrows in the time of need."

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering of our praise to God - is played after the Benediction. Time permitting, we invite you to share in the beauty of it.

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are held on Sunday mornings at 9:30 in the downstairs Choir Room. Now's a good time to consider joining the choir as the holiday season approaches.

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Join Bill Bonwitt, our Assistant Minister, at 7:00 pm for about thirty minutes in the sanctuary for a quiet mid-week time of "prayer and praise". Those who come are saying that it is making a difference in their busy lives.

PICK UP YOUR COPY

Be sure to pick up your copy of the November issue of our monthly news sheet, "A Word In Edgeways". Copies are by the door in the narthex as well as on the table in the Russell Room.

TONIGHT'S PHON-A-THON

Callers in connection with tonight's PHON-A-THON are invited to meet in Fellowship Hall at five o'clock. Calls will be made to church members and friends in connection with our 1997 Pledge Drive. Supper will be served at six o'clock. The twenty callers will be making their calls from one of five telephone lines here in the church.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE TO MEET

The Outreach Committee of our Church will hold its Fall meeting on Thursday evening, November 7th, at 7:30 pm in the downstairs Russell Room. All members are urged to attend, including those recently elected at the Church Conference.

NEW MEMBERS TO JOIN

Persons interested in strengthening a tie with the Church later on this Fall are invited to be in touch with either Mr. Clarke or Mr. Bonwitt. New members will be received in early December. "Conversations in Membership" will be held on Sunday evening, November 17th.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED

Volunteers are needed for the Saturday afternoon Feeding Program at the Park Avenue Christian Church, 1010 Park Avenue (85th Street), from 1:30 to 3:30 pm. Be in touch with Janet Ernst if you're free to lend a hand.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

The Trustees will be meeting on Monday, November 18th. The Finance Committee will meet on Thursday, November 21st.
CHURCH FAIR

The Church Fair is coming to town on Saturday, November 23rd. Take a few moments at today's coffee hour to chat with Julie Klein about some of the ways to be involved. The Fair is now less than three weeks away and there's lots to be done. Sign up today to do your "Fair Share" as a church member or friend.

CHRISTMAS CARDS ON SALE

Christmas cards are available at the coffee hour from now through November 17th. Take a look at the many cards that are now available and place an order with Julie Klein. Remember that there's no sales tax and that proceeds from the sale of the cards go to the Church Fair to help undergird our many outreach concerns.

HOLIDAY PECANS

Holiday pecans are on sale once again as part of the Church Fair. The supply is limited and the cost is $6.50. If you're interested, call Judi at 427-5421.

Dear Members and Friends,

The special affection which each of us has for this particular Church can be expressed in many intangible ways...in the giving of our time, our loyalty, our talents, our energies, and in the warm regard we hold for each other and for those who are our leaders.

These intangibles are vital to a Church's health and survival in this city, but financial support is vital and essential, too.

We now enter that month of the year when each of us is asked to be "tangible" - to decide what proportion of our personal financial resources we can commit to the life of our Church in the year ahead.

I am convinced that our Church is doing splendid work in a unique section of the world's greatest city. I also feel that we can do even more. This community in which we live offers unlimited opportunities for partnerships with Christian endeavors. We must work to make our Church an ever-growing and ever more vital influence in this city which is our home.

The program for meeting the challenges and opportunities for service in 1997 was mailed to you on Wednesday. We seek your response and hope that you will want to consider committing yourself to the program of service through the presentation of a pledge of financial support at the service on November the 17th.

Sincerely,

Larry M. Morales
Lay Leader
Park Avenue Methodist Church
PARK AVENUE 
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH 
106 East 86th Street 
New York, N.Y. 10028 
427-5421 

CHURCH DIRECTORY 

Philip A. C. Clarke ........................................... Minister 
William Bonwitt .................................................. Minister of Administration 
Lyndon Woodside .............................................. Organist-Choir Director 
Judi Ferland ....................................................... Secretary 
Judith Keisman .................................................. Day School Director 
Roberto Meriles .................................................. Custodian 

GENERAL OFFICERS 

Lay Members, Annual Conference ..................... Edward J. Brown 
Lay Leader ......................................................... Larry Morales 
Associate Lay Leader ........................................ Eric de Freitas 
President, Board of Trustees ............................. Michael Schaffield 
Chairperson, Administrative Council ................ Grace Thomas 
Chairperson, Education Committee .................. Carl Condra 
Chairperson, Finance Committee ....................... Dan Boone 
Chairperson, Membership Committee ................. Douglas McPheters 
Chairperson, Outreach Committee ..................... Janet Ernst 
Chairperson, Worship Committee ..................... Jane Chaney 
Chairperson, Publicity Committee ..................... Sam Wilson 
Chairperson, Day School Committee ................ Anna Delson 
Chairperson, Ushers .......................................... Effie French 
Superintendent, Sunday School ....................... Tom DeBow
TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
November 3, 1996

ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A. M.

ORGAN
"Prelude in G" Mendelssohn

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 711 "For All the Saints"

APOSTLES' CREED

GLORIA PATRI

***

SCRIPTURE
I John 3: 1 - 3 Page 1066

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "Create in Me, O God" Brahms

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 710 "Faith of Our Fathers"

SERMON "A Family Affair"

PRAYER

ANTHEM "All Ye That Cried Unto the Lord" Mendelssohn

***

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Invitation
The Great Thanksgiving (Page 9)
The Sanctus
The Lord's Prayer
The Breaking of the Bread (Hymn 361)
The Taking of the Cup (Hymn 314)
The Prayer of Resolution

HYMN NO. 708 "Rejoice in God's Saints"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Fugue in G" Mendelssohn

*** Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome Tom, a native of Nashville, Political Science graduate of Columbia, an associate at the firm. Here in the Church Committee and serving...

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers are donated by Hattie Hopson, gratefully.

GREETERS AND USHERS

The greeters are Dr. and Mrs. Landon, Jane Sayers.

AN INVITATION

Coffee and doughnuts following the service. Moments of warm fellowship. Nique Roosa, Miriam Sayers.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND ADULT BIBLE CLASSES

Sessions of Church School following Sunday morning for infants and toddlers.

ADULT BIBLE CLASSES

The Adult Bible Class meets at 9:30 in Fellowship Hall. Coffee and doughnuts are served.

"A FAMILY AFFAIR"

INTRODUCTION  Today is Mother's Day. It's not really necessary for me to remind you of this for Mother's Day is an established date on our national calendar. It is the one day in the year when we pause to express our formal tribute of love and respect to one whose care, affection, patience, and wise example have done more for us than we shall ever be able to put into words.

To think about Mother's Day is to think about the home and the family for it is in the home where the mother's influence is the greatest. She makes the home; the home takes its tone and character from her. The father is the head of the family. The mother is the heart of the family.

DEVELOPMENT  In more recent years, the trend in the Protestant Church has been to enlarge upon the celebration of Mother's Day, and to observe this second Sunday in May as the "Festival of the Christian Home". This is the approach I should like to follow today.

Before I pursue this, however, allow me to pay a very sincere and honest tribute to those who, for one reason or another have not become homemakers, who have not had families and children of their own. The Lord himself only knows the service which has been rendered by persons who, themselves childless, have given themselves for the sake of the children of others.

I remember a trio of teachers from my grammar school days at PS #22 in Albany. We were not always kind and considerate; we were not always obedient. There were times when we were called upon to stay after school. But some of us hadn't been out of school very long before we realized how much we owed to those teachers. And somehow in my memory, these three ladies stand for all of the persons who have given themselves to me and to many others as we were growing up. In service and affection they have given themselves for the sake of others. So in all that we say about the home and the family, we remember many persons who, themselves childless, have regarded the children of others as their own.

HOME AND NATION  It is well for us to be reminded from time to time that no man is what he is entirely by himself. He is largely a product of his home environment and what his family has made him. The home, as you know, is the most basic and fundamental of all human institutions. It is the breeding ground of character, the source of dreams, and values. And...it can also be the source of a great many troubles.

Someone has pointed out to us that "A nation's first and best line of defense is always to be found in its homelife". How true! All that makes a nation strong and great is a matter of moral and spiritual tradition, slowly accumulated and enriched, and the home is the guardian and propagator of that tradition. We call to mind those familiar lines of Grace Nowell Crowell:

"So long as there are homes to which men turn, At close of day,
So long as there are homes where children are
Where women stay,
If love and loyalty and faith be found
Across these sills,
A stricken nation can recover
From its greatest ills.

Give a child a good home, and by that I do not mean simply a com-
fortable home, and the chances are ten to one that when he becomes a
man he will be upright in character, honest in business, a responsible
citizen, lending strength and stability and integrity to his com-
munity.

This past week I started re-reading Winchester's "The Life of
John Wesley". I read it several years ago for a course in Methodism
that was required in seminary. The first chapter of the book deals
with Wesley's home life - his father and his mother and the things
that were a part of that unusual home. Nineteen children in twenty-
one years were born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley. John Wesley
was the fifteenth. With this as part of our Wesleyan tradition and
Methodist heritage, it continues to amaze me that our General Con-
fereces and our Methodist Discipline advocate planned parenthood.
Susanna Wesley truly was an unusual woman, an outstanding woman.
To quote a line from the book,

"It is often said that Methodism began in the
University of Oxford; with more truth it might be
said that it began in Susanna Wesley's nursery".

Nineteen children in that home. The religious training of those
children received careful attention. Susanna Wesley was accustomed
to meet each child separately once a week, at a specified time, for an
hour of religious conversation and instruction. I wonder how many
modern Methodist church women do that. And long afterward, John
Wesley, when a Fellow of Lincoln College, wrote to his mother
begging her to give him an hour of her thought and prayer every
Thursday evening, as she used to do when he was a boy at home.

PRESENT DAY FAMILY LIFE

It becomes apparent with each passing day
that family life in this nation is not
at its highest point. Billy Graham is right when he says: "The
stern Puritan starch has gone out of American home life, and has left
in its wake a jellied sticky mass of sentimentality". Disciline seems
to be lacking in our homes. Behind a delinquent child there is apt
to be a delinquent parent. And when we read, as we did this past
week, about the vice rings involving suburban house-wives in a
neighboring county, we see pointers pointing in the direction of a
decay of family life and marriage. More than one nation has been
brought low by a moral decay within its own borders.

Remember the five factors cited by Gibbon for the collapse of
the Roman Empire in his monumental work, "The Decline and Fall of
the Roman Empire". (1) The rapid increase of divorce; the under-
mining of the dignity and the sanctity of the home, which is the
basis of human society. (This he put first). (2) Higher and
higher taxes and the public monies for free bread and circuses for the populace. (3) The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming more and more brutal. (4) The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy was within, in the decadence of the people. (5) The decay of religion - faith fading into mere form, losing touch with life and becoming impotent to warn and guide the people.

DIVORCE What about this matter of divorce? I sometimes have the uneasy feeling that for some people marriage is not a life-long contract, that it has no real religious significance, that it is not a matter of total commitment of one person to another person, through thick and through thin. Affinity is substituted for fidelity and when the sense of affinity is lost, and in many cases its only basis is physical, there is nothing to keep husband and wife together.

One of the leading churchmen of America asked a question some time ago in an article in the Christian Century. He asked: "What is the meaning of incompatibility or for that matter, what is the meaning of mental cruelty?" He then went on to answer his own question in these words:

"All too often it means no more than this - two persons who took each other for better, for worse, have neglected to make the adjustments called for by differences in temperament and possibly in sex urge or have failed to meet with courage and with good humor the inevitable wear and tear of daily life".

How it lifts the level of homelife and our understanding of what Christian marriage ought to be when we see some one like the former Senator from Connecticut, Senator Bush, come out as he did last June and public criticize a member of his own political party and a man who aspires to the highest office of our land for the mess he has made of his own private life.

What about this matter of divorce? Divorce is not the answer to the problems that cause it. It is symptomatic of deeper difficulties, difficulties that may be overcome. Professional help and guidance can often make the difference between couples staying together and separating. There are times when a divorce may be the best way out of a bad situation. I do not believe in easy divorce. If it is resorted to at all, it should be with extreme reluctance, after all else has failed, and from a conviction that it is the lesser of two evils.

BACK TO THE HOME A nation's best line of defense is found in the homelife it produces. Provide moral and spiritual guidance there, and you provide the nation with a stabilizing quality that ensures it of a sound future and destiny.

What then about our homes? What about the moral and spiritual values of your home? What about the religious nourishment of the young life that is being reared in your home? Do you see this primarily as the responsibility of the parent? Or have you completely delegated it to the church - or to the school. Take this
matter of school room prayer. I honestly think that if the home of our land were doing the job that ought to be done at this point, there would be no worry about getting prayer back into the schools by altering the First Amendment to the Constitution. It's a family affair. We ought to be more concerned about getting prayer back into the homes than into the schools.

I was brought up in a home where every morning it was a part of our family routine to have five or ten minutes of "devotions" together around the breakfast table before we went off in our different directions. My father would read from the Bible, lead us in prayer, and we would join hands and together repeat our Lord's Prayer. I attended schools, public schools, where it was not uncommon in one or two grades to have a short reading from the Bible, and a short sentence prayer. Few of the boys and girls responded; discipline was poor; bells usually started ringing before we were finished. Of the two, there is no question in my mind as to which meant more, as to which had a deeper and more lasting effect on my own life. Those moments around the breakfast table as a family, seeing my father bow his head in prayer, leading the family in a simple spiritual exercise - those moments I shall never forget. I shall always treasure them.

I honestly think that if we want our children to make a place in their lives for religious values, we had better see to it that we make a place for them in our own lives, and that we do this - regularly, not hapazardly as the spirit moves us. If they do not see in us any reverence for a power greater than ourselves, any evidence of religious conviction in our conversation or in our daily conduct, the chances are they will not have it in their lives. It is my belief that if the head of the family, and the heart of the family together live under Divine Authority, their children will respond to their authority and all of the respect, obedience and love that builds a strong home and a strong nation will be there.

We need to recapture in the family life of this land this element of Divine Authority. And what better time to begin, to make a fresh start, than on this day when we think of the home, the family, - on this Mother's Day when we offer our tribute of love and respect to one whose life has meant more to us than we shall ever be able to put into words.

PRAYER: Guide and strengthen, O God, the homes of this land, and grant that they may ever be cradles of truth, love, integrity. In the spirit of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen