



## *Keeping the Promise*

Text: John 14:15  
O.T.: Psalm 66:8-20  
N.T.: John 14:8-21

When we were children playing on Stoutenburg Drive in Norwalk, Ohio, my mother often watched us play in the front yard. I've been thinking about my mother quite a bit after Mother's Day. One of my memories of her love for my brother and me was her watchfulness while we played outside.

Snippets of memories from my childhood remain 50 years later. One of our children's games was punctuated by shouting, "Finders keepers! Losers weepers!" We played our way to bed many nights. We kept alive the joy of our childhood as we excitedly told our mother about our fun little world. She pleasantly smiled and quietly listened. Then she dutifully led us in prayer, and we went to sleep.

Next week is Memorial Day. I've lost the sound of my mother's voice – that warm-hearted watchfulness that never changed until it was gone from us. The love she gave my brother and me is a precious keepsake in the vast storehouse of our memory.

Keeping love in our hearts for parents is a daily responsibility. It is not only a responsibility when they're present. It's more of a promise to keep when they're with our Father in Heaven.

Many of us will call or visit, grandparents, brothers and sisters this weekend, keeping alive our love for them on Memorial Day.



Others of us will visit their graves. We keep the custom they taught us of honoring family members who now lie in peace. Flowers or flags show our diligence in keeping alive our promise to love them.

When we keep the love journey of Memorial Day weekend, we follow the commandment our parents were first taught as children beyond our lives. Their example of remembering our loved ones taught us what they had been taught by their parents, "Honor your mother and father, that you may live the day long."

Honoring parents is God's fifth commandment. It is the first commandment that was given which discusses human relationships. It calls us to keep a love promise to our parents that they gave us,

The first four commandments call God's chosen people to honor God. But when you study the Ten Commandments separately, and consider what is needed to obey them, loving God and loving one another unites them.

It is no coincidence Jesus said as much in His Gold Rule.

Memorial Day weekend is about keeping our promise to love God through keeping alive our love for our families. When we keep God's commandments by loving God, we're compelled to certain activities on Memorial Day weekend that show love by remembering.

Jesus will never get credit for beginning Memorial Day. But today's words from John 14:15-21 gave us command to live that we recognize among those families who honor their loved ones this coming weekend.



Loving Jesus keeps the promises of family love. Every family that honors their loved ones has been kept together by Christ's love. He promises that His spirit will be with those who love Him. And that spirit evokes loves within us for each other.

Christ's spirit ensures the gifts of godly grace and reconciliation bless families. Families that show God's grace overcome their differences by the work of Christ's spirit. Christ's spirit of love helps them overcome disagreements, moments of separation, and estrangement. Christ's spirit of love helps them fulfill baptismal oaths and confirmation commitments to love one another as Christ loves.

When families see Christ's forgiveness in each other, each member isn't concerned about keeping alive an argument. Each isn't perpetually concerned to correct an injustice. Each is committed to love one another as Christ loves them. Each fulfills their promises to God by honoring Christ with repentance and grace to each other.

Families live vital lives by Christ's spirit. They're alive with love for God. They're not perfect in their love. But the perfection of Christ's love helps them keep a greater love that rises above their imperfections. Christ's love restores their promise to keep His commandments. It enables them to honor God's commandments in spite of their disagreements.

Sadly, too many Christian families have lost their love for God. When a family loses love for God, it loses the promise of Christ's spirit. They're threatened with losing family members. It's like the childhood game, "Finders keepers. Losers weepers!"



Finding God's love keeps His commandments. It's promise keeps families together. Losing God's love leads to the loss of His commandments and the promise of His healing spirit. Eventually, families weep as they lose their capacity to honor God by forgiving one another.

I gave my mother plenty to forgive throughout her years with my brother, father, and me. She always lived above the temptation to abandon me. She was hurt by my transgressions. She was bruised in spirit by my iniquities.

When she corrected me, she told me it hurt her more than it hurt me. I didn't believe it then.

I do now that I am a parent and grandparent.

She never failed to love God, and to keep His commandment. She lived by the promise of Christ's spirit. She showed my father, brother, and me how to love God by forgiving me.

The best of mothers and fathers live by the spirit of Christ's grace. We will honor them next Memorial Day weekend by remembering them. The act of remembering will restore, renew, and inspire us in the spirit of Christ's love.

Through the years I have met children who never remembered their parents' grace that these children didn't deserve. They've held resentments and punished parents with their absence and their silence. Their example is noticed by younger generations. There will be a cost to their example.



By withholding and forgetting the power of grace to heal families, they break the bond that ties families together. God's promise of the spirit of love vanishes. Future generations will become losers, not only of the sacred relationship between mothers, fathers, and children, but between a family and God.

Let us remember that fulfilling our promise to love God is the foundation from which we keep His commandment to honor our loved ones this coming Memorial Day – and each day – until we are reunited by the promise of God's grace in Christ's heavenly kingdom.

Amen.