

TEXT: Song of Solomon 2:15

THEME: Little Foxes in Our Homes

Dear Christian friends, and especially all mothers and all of you who have or had mothers:

Mother and home—when you mention one you just automatically think of the other. And when most of us think of home we forget the bad things and remember only the good. Those of us who are older remember the sights, smells, and sounds of home: banging screen doors in the summer time, the fresh aroma of cookies just out of the oven, and of freshly baked bread. We enjoyed a sense of acceptance there and of being loved. No matter what anyone said or did, we knew that mother loved us. We were certain of that.

But since leaving home, we've found that the world is not as kind. It's always judging us and trying to place us into categories: are we good-looking enough, smart enough, ambitious enough, successful enough. And we if don't pass muster, the world rejects us like a worn-out shoe.

But there is always home and mother. Unfortunately, home is not what it used to be. With the help of the Holy Spirit this Mother's Day worship service, let's evaluate what is happening within the walls of the home and in our family relationships today.

The verse I've chosen for our meditation today is from the Song of Solomon, chapter 2, verse 15: **"Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom" (Song of Solomon 2:15).** That verse sounds kind of strange, doesn't it? But Solomon was simply saying that little things can often ruin or destroy the big and important things in life.

That is exactly what is happening in many homes today. Little things are getting through the cracks and crevices of our homes and they are opening the way for destruction. So, let's look at the LITTLE FOXES IN OUR HOMES.

One of those foxes is the input that comes into our homes through the TV. When you turn on the TV, there's a portrayal of what many seem to think is the typical American family. Dad is having an affair with his secretary and the next door neighbor is putting the moves on Mom, who is just about ready to submit. The son is bragging to his buddies about how many girls he has seduced, while the daughter is struggling with puberty and going to bed with one boy after another. And someone in the family is a happy, successful, well-adjusted gay person. Even the commercials today portray mom and dad as pretty dense—although dad definitely doesn't have a clue—and the kids as experts at manipulating them. Too often that's being accepted as the way a home really is.

Now I don't think television is all bad. But I do think it becomes a cop-out for us. Most of us agree that the programming is mediocre. Much of it is in very poor taste. So normally we wouldn't watch it, but we watch it because it's easier to watch than it is to talk to each other. I'm not suggesting that we all go out and throw away our TV sets. But I am suggesting that once in a while it would be good therapy for the family to turn it off and talk to one another, to communicate as a family. After all, when the TV is on, it is impossible to follow God's encouragement to us in **Philippians, chapter 4, verse 8: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is**

lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Try doing that watching a reality TV show; it can't be done. Destroy the fox of evil input in the home by censoring TV and internet sites, and by talking with each other about things that are true, noble, right, and pure.

Another fox that has entered the home and destroys it is the idea that marriages today are disposable. I read recently that a law-maker is suggesting that marriage licenses should be issued on a two-year renewable basis. Then, at the end of every two years, if you don't renew the license, the marriage is automatically dissolved. We haven't accepted that idea yet, but I wonder how far away we are from it. Destroy the fox of disposable marriages by following God's plan for marriage: **“Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Mark 10:9).**

Thoughtlessness and ingratitude are two more little foxes that ruin the vineyards of our homes. That is why we need special days like Mother's Day to jog our memories so that we'll send flowers (before the funeral) or make the phone call to tell Mom we love her. Otherwise she might be forgotten in the maze of our activities. And I think the phrase “thank you” probably ought to be used second only to “I love you” within the home. “Thank you, Mom, for all the meals you've prepared. Thank you, Mom, for cleaning the house and ironing my shirts. Thank you, Mom, for taking care of me and loving me and accepting me. Thank you, Mom, for being Mom.” God encourages this kind of behavior in the home with one of his top Ten Commandments. The Fourth Commandment says: **“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you” (Ex 20:12).** That's the way to destroy the foxes of thoughtlessness and ingratitude.

I suppose that there are many more little foxes that get into the vineyards of our homes and try to destroy them. We could mention discourtesy, preoccupation, criticism, and nagging, along with many others. But one more fox that ruins many homes is the absence of spiritual input. Our lives get so busy with work, meetings, and extra-curricular activities that God and our spiritual life are almost forgotten these days. How long has it been since you sat down with your family and talked about the things of God...about the Father's love, about the work of Jesus that saved all of us from our sins and won heaven for us, about the Holy Spirit working and strengthening faith in us through the means of grace? How long has it been since you prayed together, since you shared a family devotion? Men, the best Mother's Day present you could give your wives today is to become the spiritual leader in your home—the spiritual leader God wants you to be. Lead in the study of God's Word. Lead in prayer. Help your children recognize the importance of God and of following his will in your life, so that they will keep God in first place in their lives and serve him faithfully on this earth. God gives that responsibility to you, whether you like or not: **“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).**

Friends, let us dedicate our homes to God. Let his Word be the major influence in our lives. And let us pledge that we will always love and respect and honor one another no matter what the world may say. May we all have a Happy Mother's Day. Amen.

Easter 6—Mother's Day Prayer of the Church

Lord of all creation, we raise our voices in thanks to you for the opportunity to come together to worship you. You have given life to all. On this Mother's Day we especially thank you for the gift of motherhood, through which you bring human beings into this world. Your Son, our Savior Jesus, was born to a woman named Mary and gave us an example by seeing to it that she was cared for after he left. Thank you, dear God, for the wonderful expression of your love that most of us have received through our mothers. Help us never take this gift for granted. May we follow Jesus' example by showing our love for our mothers.

Lord, today so many little foxes are finding their way into the vineyards of our homes and family relationships. By the power of your Word and Sacraments working in us, help us to catch those little foxes so that our homes remain dedicated to you. Make our homes safe havens where our children—your children—can be brought up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

On this Mother's Day celebration, dear Father in heaven, we ask you to bless the work of the Pregnancy Counseling Center. Give all the workers the courage, strength, and wisdom they need to share your Word and will with women who sometimes do not want to be new mothers. Give success to their efforts so that the earthly lives of unborn babies are saved, giving those children an opportunity to be brought to faith by the Holy Spirit, using the means of grace. We thank you for the new building that has been made available to the Pregnancy Counseling Center and ask that you give an abundance of volunteers to complete the remodeling. Perhaps some of us can be among them. Let the new Pregnancy Counseling Center location serve your purpose and bring only glory to your name.

We ask these things in the name of our glorious and victorious risen Savior Jesus, who has taught us to pray:

THE LORD'S PRAYER