

*13By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*

*14And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. 15God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. 16So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.*

*17Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. 18There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. 19We love because he first loved us. 20Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. 21The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.*

Each Wednesday when I meet with the confirmation class, I begin by going over the memory verses for the coming Sunday. Last Wednesday the verse was this: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

The first stone, the best stone, the guide for all else that follows, this is the cornerstone. For if that stone is square and straight the walls that proceed from it will have a better chance of being straight. If it is flat on top and bottom, then the walls will have a sure and steady foundation and will stretch up securely. "Though the religious and political leaders rejected Jesus, God has chosen him as the cornerstone for all his people," I explained.

Later in the week, as my thoughts turned to this sermon, I thought of cornerstones again.

And of mothers. As a child is carried in her mother's womb, first learns warmth at his mother's breast a cornerstone for a life is being set. As gentle hands hold her, and bathe her, and smiling eyes speak love to him, that stone is being squared for a whole life to be built upon it. As a child is consistently disciplined, limits are set, a wider and wider world being explored, the structure of a life is being laid down, row by row. Every layer that is carefully laid down, set in place means that what will follow will not be tilted.

Only as life goes on do we understand the importance of a mother's work in setting the cornerstone - for life brings storms and earthquakes that shake the structure to the very foundation or times when row after row of bricks is slapped down with little attention, carelessly. Sometimes we build with bricks that are defective that soon crumble. As walls

tumble down, a life must be rebuilt brick by brick once more. Then to have a cornerstone that is straight and true means everything.

To be a mother or a father is an awesome responsibility. The office of parent is the highest office in this world, higher than pastor, or senator or police chief or president. For a parent must be all of these, teaching and praying, ruling and restricting, legislating what will be best for a young life. And so our God has commanded honor for mother and father. "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you."

As we keep this commandment today is no different from every day as we honor our mothers.

As I have thought about today, another image has filled my mind also, standing between two mirrors. You have done that, I'm sure. You look and see your reflection but also the reflection of your reflection from the mirror behind you, and beyond that another reflection still, each reflection smaller and further and dimmer, stretching further than the eye can see.

Now imagine with me that in each of those mirrors stretching forever in both directions are the faces of all who have come before you, first mother and father, then smaller and further grandmothers and grandfathers, great grandparents and great-great grandparents, all reflecting themselves into who you are. Strengths and weaknesses, clarity and distortion from many generations reflected in you. And through you to those who come after you.

The mother who lays the cornerstone of a life has herself been set in place by those who have gone before her. What is tilted or distorted is passed on through parent to child to grandchild.

Which is why it is not enough this day simply to have a party. To say, "Aren't moms wonderful!" because for every mother's heart that is full of pride and joy this day, there are a hundred mother's hearts that ache over their children's lives, seeing so clearly that the cornerstone was not set straight.

Time and again mothers tell me that you never stop being a mother. As they say it they are talking of sharing the pain of their child's life and feeling so responsible for it all.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.

God has acted to take the responsibility off of your shoulders. He has provided the cornerstone, Jesus Christ our Lord, his new cornerstone for every life.

God is love, our second lesson tells us. While my love for my children is imperfect, God's love for you is a perfect love. He never listens with half an ear, or shouts, "I told you not to do that!" when we stumble or fall.

God is love. And the cornerstone of that love is Jesus Christ. He is the love of God that was born of Mary for you. He is the love of God who endured the ridicule of the soldiers, the mocking of the religious leaders, the abandonment of his friends for you. Jesus is the love of God who drank the cup that he prayed might pass from him for you. Jesus is the love of God who died that you might live forever with God, be raised from death as he has been raised.

If the image we see as we look in the mirror is distorted, if the walls of our lives upon which we build are crumbling or leaning, the love of God, Jesus Christ will clear the distortion, lay a new foundation.

God is love. He is the love for whom your heart aches, the image which you have hoped to see as you look in the mirror. God's love, Jesus Christ is the cornerstone for your life and mine.

The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes. Amen.