

DEDICATED UNTO THE LORD
Raising Our Children in and for the Lord

Sanctity of Life Sunday 2026
Palmetto Baptist Church

Texts: Psalm 127:1-5; Ephesians 6:1-4

Psalm 127:1-5 *A SONG OF ASCENTS. OF SOLOMON.* ¹ Unless the *LORD* builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the *LORD* watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. ² It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. ³ **Behold, children are a heritage from the *LORD*, the fruit of the womb a reward.** ⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. ⁵ Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

Ephesians 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the *Lord*, for this is right. ² "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, **but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the *Lord*.**

Introduction:

It is fitting that on a Sunday dedicated to calling the church to abhor the murder of millions of unborn children around the world, including thousands murdered in our state and in our own city, we honor and lift up the sanctity of human life, particularly the life of the unborn and of the children in our midst. There are three ways I want to accomplish this in our service this morning.

1. I want us to thank and honor the Piedmont Women's Center for its efforts and ministry to the unborn. We applaud and support the Piedmont Women's Center, whose leaders and employees labor tirelessly to preserve the lives of the unborn and to serve the mothers who bear them and their families – often at great personal cost and, at times, unjust criticism and persecution. On this Sanctity of Life Sunday, we applaud their efforts, honor their sacrifice, and stand with them in prayer and support for their work!

2. I want to honor and praise every woman who has chosen to preserve the life of her unborn child when faced with the difficult choice of an unexpected or unwanted pregnancy. Not only do I want to thank them and those who encouraged and supported them along their journey, but I also want to honor them this morning. So, whoever you are and however your pregnancy came about, thank you for choosing life. I know God will honor and bless you for that choice, and we are humbled to stand with you this morning.
3. I want to celebrate what Pastor Garett and Pastor Jonathan have led our church to covenant with the parents who stood before us to present their children and to dedicate themselves to raising them to know, love, and serve God, and not just the parents of these newborn infants, but every parent in our church!

As we consider the covenant we have made this morning, I want us to consider it and our responsibilities carefully, thoughtfully, intentionally, and through a biblical lens.

Psalm 127 helps us to regard our children properly – as a spiritual Heritage from the Lord! This term “heritage” is the word “inheritance.” While it is not God’s will for every couple to bear children (and there are many examples of this in Scripture), when children are born to a couple, they are not to see those children as burdensome. Rather, they are to consider their children in the same way they would consider a rich inheritance or a prized reward!

Ephesians 6:1-4 helps us to raise our children properly – not with our own wisdom or words but with the nurture (wisdom) and admonition (warnings) that God put in His Word for that purpose (think Proverbs).

And what we are celebrating this morning brings these two Biblical realities to the forefront of our minds as parents and as a church!

WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT THIS CEREMONY DOES NOT MEAN

- It is not a religious ritual – it is a spiritual ceremony.
- It does not impart salvation to our children.
- It is not a means of grace for our children.
- It is not the spiritual equivalent of circumcision in the Old Testament or baptism in the New Testament.
- It does not make our children holy; they are still sinners, beautiful and charming as they may appear before us this morning.
- They must come to Christ by repenting of their sins and trusting in His finished work for them, just as their parents had to come and just as you and I had to come to Christ for salvation.

WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT IT MEANS AND WHAT IT IMPLIES

First, this is a spiritual ceremony where we come together with these children and their parents to make a sacred commitment that obligates each of us to do our part in raising these children to know, love, honor, and serve God with a wholehearted, single-focused, fully trusting faith!

Second, this is as much a dedication of the parents themselves as it is of their infants. These parents are committing themselves to raise their children (each of them) in the nurture and admonition God has given in His Word. This means they are committing themselves to using distinctively Spiritual means – what the theologians have called the “means of grace” – to raise their children.

Third, these “means of grace” are the spiritual instruments (tools) that God has given His people to lead them to salvation, grow them in progressive sanctification, instruct them in the proper worship of Him, and develop in them the gifts and callings by which they will discover and do His will for their lives and in their vocations. They are the reading and obeying of Scripture; fervent biblical-shaped prayers; the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; the accurate teaching and preaching

of God's Word; the regular observance of the Lord's supper; membership in a local expression of Christ's body; and the devotion of our resources to the One who has given Himself for us for His use and not our own.

Fourth, while this spiritual ceremony is made in the context of a worship service and before the gathered membership of our church, it must be lived out at home! This is what Moses meant when he instructed God's people how to teach Israel's most sacred theological truth, the Shema, to their sons and daughters:

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 "Hear, O Israel: The *LORD* our God, the *LORD* is one.⁵ You shall love the *LORD* your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

This ceremony brings all of those realities before us this morning!

WE NEED TO KNOW WHY WE DO IT

We observe this spiritual ceremony this morning, first and foremost, because it is rooted in Biblical precedent. At least three primary texts (and a host of supporting passages) prescribe and describe God's people bringing their children to the tabernacle or temple and presenting them to Him in a ceremony of spiritual significance like this one.

In that precedent, we find three important reasons for setting this Sunday aside for parents to present themselves and their children before the Lord in accordance with the biblical pattern and with three primary purposes in mind.

I. Grateful Recognition that Our Children Belong to God (*Exodus 13:1-2, 11-16, 22:29; 34:19-20; Numbers 3:11-13; 8:16-18; 18:15-18*)

Exodus 13:1-2 The *LORD* said to Moses,² "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."

Here is the point God is making: “I redeemed you from Egypt and made you my own people and my own chosen nation.”

- I want you to never forget that.
- And to remind you of your own redemption, I want you to consecrate and redeem your firstborn – to remind you that the child who opened the womb, and all the other children who come from that womb, are mine! Their lives belong to me!
- They are not yours to do with as you please. They do not exist to love, serve, and honor you alone – but to love, honor, and serve me!
- They are mine alone, and I alone will determine the plan and purpose to which they are devoted.
- It is your responsibility to raise them to know me; to love me; to honor (worship) me; and to serve me!

Four different verbs are used in these texts to describe what parents are to do with the children that come from the womb:

- They are to ***set them apart*** as belonging to the Lord (Ex 13:2; Num 3:13)
- They are to ***give (devote)*** them to the Lord (Ex 22:29)
- They may ***turn over*** or ***return*** their child to the Lord and to His service (Ex 13:2)
- They are to ***offer*** their child to the Lord as a gift (Num 18:15).

There are three massive implications from this observation:

- A. Our children are a gift from the Lord and should be received with joy and gladness.
- B. Because they belong to the Lord, raising them to know, love, serve, and honor God is our chief responsibility regarding our children.
- C. This ceremony serves as an ongoing reminder from generation to generation that we must know God’s redemption not merely as a historical reality or a theological truth, but as a reality we have experienced personally. One way we remind ourselves of its importance is by presenting our children to the Lord in this way.

So, as we participate in this spiritual ceremony, we are reminded that God says over the firstborn and over all of our children, “Mine!”

But how are we to raise children who belong to God in ways that honor Him and show our dependence on Him to do this?

II. Hope-filled Consecration that God will use our Child according to His Sovereign Purposes and for His Supreme Glory. (1 Sam 1:24-28)

1 Samuel 1:24-28 *And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three-year-old bull, an ephah of flour, and a skin of wine, and she brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh. And the child was young.*²⁵ *Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli.*²⁶ *And she said, “Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD.*²⁷ *For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition that I made to him.*²⁸ ***Therefore I have lent him to the LORD. As long as he lives, he is lent to the LORD.*** And he worshiped the LORD there.

There are many things we could focus on in this passage regarding raising our children; however, this morning I am interested in two particular statements Hannah makes that describe the nature of what she did when she presented her son, Samuel, to the High Priest at the Tabernacle.

A. She “lent” her son, Samuel, to the Lord.

- The term “lent” means to give or turn over to someone for a specific purpose or use.
- The NASB translation uses the term “**dedication**” here to indicate that whatever plans and desires one might have for the object being dedicated are fully renounced by the one doing the dedicating. However, the term can also mean “**entrust**”
- Hannah had longed for and prayed for a child for years (1 Samuel 1:1-10).
- Doubtless she had the same desires and hopes for her child that any mother might have. Certainly among them was the desire to be with that child and to enjoy watching him grow up in her home and under her care.

- What makes what she says and does in this text so stunning is that she takes this child and completely turns him over to the Lord for His purposes and plans, regardless of what it might mean for her own purposes and plans! She renounces her rights of ownership and use with regard to her long-awaited son!
- She “entrusts” her longed-for child to the Lord!

B. He was “lent to the Lord” for as long as he lived.

- This was not a temporary accommodation to the Lord for a few years, and then she would receive her son back again! This was for his whole life.
- Nor was this a partial accommodation to the Lord of a portion of her son’s life. In other words, regarding his worship of God, he would be devoted, but in the other areas of life, she and her husband would be free to deploy and employ their child as they saw fit. That is not what Hannah did when she dedicated Samuel.
- This was a dedication of his whole life for his whole life!
- Think of what this must have felt like for Hannah when she gave her son over to the High Priest and went home to an empty tent.
- But, looking back over time, do you think if you met Hannah today, she would tell you she regrets her choice to trust God with her son’s life and future?
- Every parent has dreams and desires for their children. And those dreams and desires are natural and proper as long as they are submitted to the Lord.
- However, sometimes we have our own designs and desires for how our child should live and what our child should do with their life and with our grandchildren!
- What happens when your son or daughter says to you, “I think I want to be a pastor or a missionary?” And you have dreamed they would be a doctor, a lawyer, or an accountant?

- What happens when your child, whom you know is gifted athletically and has the potential to earn a spot on a college team, comes to you with a desire to spend his summer at a camp instead of going to “elite training camp”?
- Or what happens when your child tells you he is thinking about turning down an athletic scholarship at a prestigious university to attend a Christian university or college whose sports program is nowhere near his or her ability?
- How you respond at that point reveals whether your child belongs to you, whether you have truly “lent” them to the Lord, and whether you trust Him with their future!

Which brings us to the final text in Scripture, where we see parents bringing their child to present him to the Lord.

III. Prayerful Dedication that God will Save and Sanctify our Child through the work of His Son. (Luke 2:21-24, 27-32)

*Luke 2:21-24 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. ²² And when the time came for their purification **according to the Law of Moses**, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (**as it is written in the Law of the Lord**, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”) ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice **according to what is said in the Law of the Lord**, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”*

*Luke 2:27-32 And he (Aged Simeon) came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ²⁹ “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ **for my eyes have seen your salvation** ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”*

The third example we see in Scripture of parents presenting their child to the Lord at the Temple is when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple on the eighth day after his birth.

Luke tells us two important things about this moment in Jesus' life.

First, even Jesus' birth conformed to the demands and expectations of the Law God had given – three times, Luke reminds us that His parents obeyed the Law of Moses and the Law of God in how they cared for their child. And so must we! We must follow what God has said in His Word as we raise our own sons and daughters!

Second, we are told of an amazing encounter that occurred while they were at the temple, in obedience to God's Word. Mary and Joseph encounter an aged, righteous servant of God named Simeon, who had been waiting expectantly for the coming of the Messiah his entire life!

When he saw the parents of Jesus, he took the baby from their arms and blessed God aloud! In that blessing, he made a stunning statement, "My eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples (nations)."

There is a salvation that God has prepared for all peoples, including all of the sons and daughters who were presented to the Lord here this morning!

That salvation is found only in the finished work that infant in Simeon's arms accomplished through His obedient life and sacrificial death! So, as we covenant with these parents to raise those children, let us pray fervently for their salvation!

No parent can save their child. No parent can decide for their child. But every parent has the responsibility to create a gospel-saturated environment where their child hears, sees, and understands the gospel and where that child comes to know the mercy, grace, kindness, and love of God because they feel and receive them daily from a mom and dad who are desperately dependent and fervently praying for God to save their son or daughter!

Conclusion: *WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT THIS SPIRITUAL CEREMONY OBLIGATES EACH OF US TO DO*

1. Pray with their parents for them.
2. Love them and enjoy them.
3. Be with them and around them.
4. Encourage and uplift them.
5. Forgive them eagerly, repeatedly, and fully.
6. Model the Gospel for them! Don't just tell them; show them!