

(regal, hymnal pipe organ music) ♪ Praise God from whom all blessings flow ♪ ♪ Praise Him all creatures here below ♪ ♪ Praise Him above ye heavenly host ♪ ♪ Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ♪ ♪ Amen ♪

- Oh God, most merciful and gracious, of whose bounty we have all received, accept this offering of thy people, remember in thy love those who brought it and those for whom it is given, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, amen.

- The them of morning's splendid venture has reference, to marriage, parenthood and the forming of a home. This is to be sure it's something of an enlargement, of the theme of Mother's Day, but after all, no mothers without fathers and no fathers without children, all of this is in the context of the home. It is a splendid venture. It's splendid and it's also a venture. The married service says for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health. And one cannot foresee in advance, which it will be. In a majority of cases, the balance will probably be on the side of the better, and the richer or the adequate, and health. But not always. And anyone who has taught school as I have done for 36 years and has seen the alumni coming back after five years, 10 years, 15 years and so on, knows that there are some out of every class who will return after weathering stiff gales. There are accidents which may separate husband and wife, by land, and water and by air. Even crossing the street is precarious. And the kitchen ladder and the cellar stairs may break hips and sever arteries. We live dangerously. And there are swift, and frightful diseases not yet conquered. And by the end of a week, a husband or a wife who was hale, maybe no more on this side of the great divide. And as for children, they obviously are more subject to diseases than those who have acquired maturity and immunities. And they're more subject to accidents, I was calling recently in New York on a graduate student couple, and their child actually had gone out of a closed window on a third story and landed on an iron fence, with a prong through the leg. The grandfather took the child off, hailed a car, and luckily there happened to be a doctor in it, and he staunched the wound, and the boy's gonna make it. But one is not always so fortunate. These are the things that can happen. The purpose in mentioning them is not to deter anybody from making this splendid venture. After all the way in which young people take this kind of thing is superb. I've seen several instances in which one party was carried off or crippled by polio. One young woman left with two little boys. After a period of adjustment she has equipped herself, and is carrying on in a profession very similar to that of her husband. Another young woman crippled, a mother, manages to propel herself around the house with a wheelchair. She's able to drive a car. And she is able to control three bursting boys without making them feel sorry for her. There's another family in which the first child was a Mongolian idiot. And as soon as feasible, they went right ahead and had another child. The second one is perfectly normal, and is a great help in dealing with the older defective. All of this kind of thing can happen. One marvels in fact, that things go right as often as they do, particularly with regard to the birth of babies. It's amazing that usually they're normal. But not always. The Catholic marriage service has a good deal to say about sacrifice. I've never heard that note struck in a Protestant wedding ceremony, but it might well be there. because there is sacrifice. And there is sacrifice even if everything goes along normally without any of these drastic emergencies. Founding a home, rearing children, all of this involves renunciations, joyous renunciations, but renunciations just the same. They are perhaps greater for the

woman than for the man. Her situation has changed in the course of a century, in some respects for the better, in some respects, for the more difficult. She has a better time of it than her great grandmother with regard to the size of families, and the mortality of children and of mothers. In the old days, a mother with a baby at the breast was asked whether this was her first, and she said, "Yes, the first on the second dozen." Families often were that large. Add a great many of the children died in infancy. I was reading recently a tribute to his wife, by Thomas Platt, who was a president of Yale College in the 1830s. He married his wife on the day before her 15th birthday. She died at the age of 24 after burying six children of whom only two survived. "She often said to me," he says, "that bearing, and tending, and burying children is hard work, and I've had my full share. But it's what God made me for, and I rejoice to be able to bring more souls into his kingdom." Today we do feel that it's so important to bring more so soul into the kingdom. We're rather concerned as to what will become of them after they're here. The size of families has been reduced, and modern medicine has brought it to pass that the great majority of them reach maturity. The trials of our great-grandmothers are not in this respect, repeated in our generation. But in other respects, the lot of the wife may be more difficult, because frequently she has wider interests, she is better trained. Often, she is quite as professionally equipped as her husband. She may have been engaged in a profession before marriage, and this she gives up. And then she finds herself involved in a routine, largely manual, by day and by night, babysitting, doctoring, nursing, scouring, scrubbing, washing, even with all of the devices, disinfecting. She finds her life reduced to a primordial routine. And she is tempted to describe herself simply as a mammal. She craves intellectual stimulus, companionship on the level of other than merely physical and manual tasks. Then too, she gives up her economic independence. She ought to. While she is bearing and rearing a family, she should not have the responsibility of earning a living. She should be released from that, but the release means the relinquishment of her economic independence. The money no longer comes in in her name. She has nothing that she can call her own. And there are some who feel rather irked by that shift from a position of independence and competence, to one of dependence. And for the mother, this may be harder than for the father. On the other hand, let it not be thought that he makes no renunciations. I'm a man and I may exaggerate them. But I'd like to say a word. He earns the money. The salary comes in in his name, but it's not his! (congregation chuckles) He can't spend a cent without consent! He'd better not. A younger member of the faculty came to me a few weeks ago, and he offered me \$50 for a bicycle. And after a day or two, he came back and he said, "We've had a family consultation. Offer withdrawn." He can't even engage in charity. He can't even give anything away without a consultation. There's nothing new about that. Martin Luther wrote to a friend and said, "I'm sending you a vase as a wedding present, p.s. Katie's hid it." The man is not independent, and he ought not to be. And what's more, he may have to take on extra jobs that he doesn't too much relish in order to eek out the income. Certainly that happens in the teaching profession. Most young teachers would be glad to have the summer open in order to engage in reading preparation of courses, research, and publication. But very commonly, they have to take on summer school work in order to supplement the income. A young man in the sciences frequently take on jobs in industry. I had one friend who was in biochemistry. And he took on testing of milk in dairies. Good work, he was glad to do it, but then he would have preferred to have been able to devote his time to a research problem on something not yet solved. the husband has to make accommodations with regard to his mode of living, with regard to his recreations, for example. Occasionally he may go off with masculine friends for some sort of an athletic jaunt, but normally he will plan to take his wife and his children on whatever there may be of a vacation. And he'll have to reduce his speed. He's got children and he will soon find out that there are two

modes of travel, first-class, and with children. (congregation chuckles) He can't travel at the same speed. He can't travel for the same length of time during the day in an automobile. He can't end up at any hour of the morning. You simply have to adjust to the schedule of children. And whereas, he used to perhaps go to bed after enjoying the idyllic moonlight, now, he'll have to get there in time to get up with the chickens and the children. There are adjustments then, which have to be made on both sides. Not only are there adjustments, but almost certainly there will be clashes. And that is painful to both parties involved, because they love each other. And when they clash, they feel guilty about it, but they're almost bound to have some clashes. And they may be even more acute if the partners are persons of intelligence, character, determination, and will. By marriage, they become one flesh, but they don't become one mind. Some of the clashes arrive out of a difference in tempo, and timing, in the case of the husband and of the wife. The man goes out on his profession during the day, he has adult contacts. He talks with people on his own level. He may be talking most of the day as a matter of fact. And he comes back rather weary of talking, he wants to be quiet. And his wife has been engaged in a manual routine by herself part of the time, part of the time with only the company of little children. And when evening comes she would like to talk about something, she'd liked to talk in the first place. (congregation laughs) And talk about something on a rather different level from that in which he has been engaged. There's really nothing new about this. Martin Luther had the experience, during the day he sometimes preached three times, lectured, worked on books and had conferences with students. And when night came, he wanted to just drop in a chair. And his wife had slaughtered an ox, and brewed beer, and washed and spanked children, and superintended servants. And when Luther settled down, she would begin, "Herr Doctor," she always called him doctor. "Herr Doctor, was the prime minister of Prussia the cousin of the Duke of Brandenburg?" "Ah," said Luther, "I have to have patience with the Pope, and heretics, and my family, and Katherine." (congregation laughs) Which isn't saying how much patience she had to have with him. He says, "I don't see how Adam and Eve made it for 900 years." (congregation laughs) How often she must have said to him, "You ate the apple." And he would retort, "Well, you gave it to me." (congregation laughs) There's a very delightful little comedy which exemplifies some of these clashes in interest in modern life. It's the movie entitled, "Genevieve." I hope you've seen it, or that you may. Genevieve is the name of an antiquated automobile, vintage of about 1905. And the story is that in England, once a year, there was an old car excursion, from a radius of about 15 miles, roundabout, into the summer resort of Brighton. We have a young married couple, and the young man is extremely devoted to Genevieve, and he just loves this annual excursion. And his wife always goes with him to please him, but she hates all of the emergencies that inevitably arise. Well, an invitation comes to go to a party on the night that they've set to go with Genevieve. And she looks at it ruefully and crumbles it up, and throws it in the wastebasket. And he finds it there. And he knows how much she'd rather go to the party. So he calls up the hotel in Brighton, and cancels the reservation. But then she insists that she will go with him! And they go and they get the Brighton, and they don't have the reservation. And so they go on from predicament to predicament, alternately berating and embracing each other. Well now, the tempo was a little faster than in real life, but in real life there is this oscillation of friction and reconciliation. And if it's about comparatively trivial matters, it may not be so disturbing, but sometimes it's over questions of real moment. Sometimes, it's genuinely tragic. Take that story of Rebecca and Isaac that it began in such idyllic fashion. Twin boys were born to this couple, Jacob and Esau, and the affections of the father were fastened on Esau, the hunter, and of the mother on Jacob, the home boy. When Isaac was an old man and blind, Rebecca connived with Jacob to deceive the old man about the birthright. Well, that's a clash on a low level, but sometimes clashes

occurred on a high level. Here's the case of a couple, and each of them is an MD. They have a child, the child is sick. The father says that he can take care of the case better than any other doctor. The mother says that a doctor ought not to treat a member of his own family. In this case, the wife wins, because she convinces her husband that she's right! Now, that's the best basis on which clashes of this kind can be resolved. In little matters one can just give away out of deference, and for the sake of harmony. But if there's a fundamental difference of opinion, the best solution is to thrash it out, and to come to an agreement. It can't always be done, to be sure, and then one has to learn to live with a disagreement. But every effort should be made to talk it through and to arrive at a calm mind. Now these clashes may spoil marriage. And what began as an idyllic romance may end up as a tired friendship, or perhaps a bickering partnership. And one sometimes feels that it's providential, if death carries off one partner, in the romantic period and prevents living on into a haggling old age. But it doesn't need to come out this way. And one way to prevent it is to resolve to prevent it. Elton Trueblood rightly says that marriage is not a contract, take it or leave it, try it out. If we don't like it, dissolve it. It is a commitment! And if there is a commitment, a resolve, to resolve the clashes. In most instances, it can be done. There are certain rules that may be of help. And one is, not to try to work out a clash when tired. If a difference of opinion occurs at bedtime, it's wise by mutual agreement, to defer the discussion until the freshness of the morning. And if people have come to know each other, they're ready to take it. If one says to the other, "I'd rather drop it now, let's wait. We'll take it up again." Another help is to take breaks, breaks singly and breaks together. Anne Morrow Lindbergh has just come out with a book in which she gives some very mature reflections on the life of woman in this complex society. She doesn't think we can eliminate the complexities at least not most of them, but she does think that we can ease the strains. And she suggests periods of solitude, preferably for a brief time anyway, every day. But certainly periods during the year when a wife can go off entirely by herself, commune with the infinite, restore the body by lying in the sunshine, and looking on the stars. And then it's a good thing for the married couple, if they can arrange it, to go off together, where they can just have time and leisureliness, for hurry is one of the greatest enemies to understanding. It helps to have morning devotions together. My wife and I found it harder to do this when our five children were home than we do now, when they're all gone. Incidentally, we're up to nine grandchildren, and it doth not yet appear how many we shall be. (congregation laughs) Now, that the five children are gone, it's rather easier to keep a schedule. But we do find that a prayer and a song in the morning cause the trivial and the important to sort of shake down, and to take their proper places. And all of this gives a tone to the day. It is a venture. The way maybe fraught with severe trials. There may be clashes, and strains, but it is a splendid venture. There is no relationship of life in which love is deeper and joy more profound. Thomas Carlyle, every time he went past the spot where he had last seen his wife alive would uncover. Samuel Johnson, 30 years after his wife's death continued to remember her in his prayers. And as for the attachment of parents to children, Jesus took this as the pattern of the very love of God. He told a story about a prodigal son, but it's really a story about a prodigal's father. But when the boy came to himself and started home, we read, "And while he was yet afar off, his father saw him." It was not the boy who first saw the father, but the old man whose eyes were dimming, who first saw the son, for love opens the eyes. And very revealing is the sequel, when they were making merry over the boy who had returned, and the elder brother hearing about it was sullen. And the father went out to him, and the boy complained saying, "You never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends, and when the witless brother comes who has squandered thy living with harlots, you kill for him the fatted calf." And the father answered, "My son. All that I have is yours. But it was me to make merry, for this thy brother was dead, and

he is alive. He was lost, and he is found." And as for the love of a mother, a friend of mine told me that his parents, some 30 years previously, had had a baby which died in infancy. They moved away from that town. And the father seemed to have forgotten all about it. But the mother, whenever there was an opportunity, would go back to visit a little grave. It is a venture, it is a splendid venture in which lie all that is richest in our lives. Will you raise and engage in prayer? Oh God, our heavenly Father, who has ordained that the ongoing of life should be through the union of lives. Bless thou all those who have engaged upon this venture. And grant onto them joy and peace, and triumph. And now, may God's peace, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and thoughts in the knowledge and love of Christ Jesus our Lord, both now, and always.