

LUXURIOUS LIVIN'

(A tribute to my mother - Zola Mae Mouton)

Growing up in the post depression days of the late thirties brought a certain measure of austerity to our little family. We canned our own food, made our own soap, butchered our own meat, and somehow survived. My mother did our washing on a scrub board and carefully patched our ragged clothing which future generations would casually discard. Pearl Harbor was just around the corner and soon the difficulties of the Big Depression paled into insignificance to the rigors and hardship of war. But somehow, in retrospect, it seems that those difficult days were much better for little children than the affluence of modern times. Juvenile crime was low, teenage suicide unheard of, and a boy who lost his marbles went to the dime store and not a psychiatrist.

Though we were poor, by contrast with modern children, I was raised in the lap of luxury. I was blessed to have a mother whose main ambition in life was to raise her family. During my childhood years I had no interest in shiny new cars and plush carpet, I wanted my mother. I needed my mother more than I needed a baby sitter or a nursery school attendant. I profited more from her presence than from a hundred new toys or a thousand suits of expensive clothing. I never knew the loneliness of coming home to an empty house or the sadness of finding her bed vacant in the middle of the night. I didn't know what it was to have a "new daddy" with a different name.

So my heart bleeds for the millions of modern children who have never tasted home made bread or smelled the aroma of mother's hot rolls on the evening breeze. The real luxuries of life are not to be found in mass produced items stamped out by a machine or dropped in a huge box at the end of an assembly line. The real luxuries are the custom made specialty items made to order for each customer. So, in this regard, I was raised in the lap of luxury. My meals were prepared by my own personal connoisseur of gourmet delights. I was diapered and dandled by my own personal doctor and diagnostician. I was the recipient of perpetual maid service. I had my own personal tailor who made, altered and repaired my clothing. I had my own personal tutor who read me stories at bed time. When I went down town I was accompanied by my own personal chauffeur and body guard. When I was lonely or afraid I would cling to the apron strings of my own special companion and counselor. The fact that all of these important functions were performed by only one mother does not diminish from their significance. It gave to me a measure of confidence and security that I probably could not have attained in any other way.

Certainly, it is not wise or practical to turn back the clock or to endeavor to live in the auld lang syne. It would be folly to destroy our technology while millions are starving without a crust of bread or a bowl of rice. But isn't it also folly to sacrifice our children upon pagan altars that some call "progress". Isn't it insane to place more value upon a new car or a new piece of furniture than the eternal welfare of our own children. It seems to me a crime against God, society, and family to place more value on "things" than relationships.

Socrates said it like this: "Could I climb to the highest place in Athens, I would lift my voice and proclaim: 'Fellow citizens, why do you turn a scrape every stone to gather wealth and take so little care of your children, to whom one day you must relinquish it all'".

The problem faced by Socrates lingers yet to plague our modern world. It has filled our juvenile courts, and crowded the waiting rooms of professional counselors. It is the arthritic pain that cripples the church of today and the cancer that eats away at the church of tomorrow.

Unfortunately, the cure will not be easy. Like Christianity itself, it involves the very essence of self denial. I once met a mother with two college degrees. She placed one by the diaper pail and the other by the washing machine. These were constant reminders that she was "pro-choice" in a very godly way. Like all good followers of Christ she did not choose to deny self because she "had" to, but because she "wanted" to.

There are many single mothers, and others, who for the present time must work outside of the home. I will pray that God will enlarge your harvest and increase the seed you have sown so that you too can teach your children what "Luxurious Livin'" is all about.