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"Don't cry, my darling" – Married and parental love in the funeral sermons of 17th-century Lutheran clergymen's wives

After the Reformation, with the introduction of clerical marriage in the Protestant areas of Europe, clerical households became models of Christian family life. In funeral sermons, clergymen's wives were portrayed to have lived according to Lutheran values and fulfilled their vocation as pious wives and mothers. In Lutheran culture, funeral sermons on both men and women served both to commemorate the dead and inspire their audience through examples of pious Christian lives. The eulogies at the end of funeral sermons describing the life course of the deceased are highly conventional, but they also contain gendered, status-related, and individual features.

This presentation discusses the representation of emotions within the clerical family in funeral sermons. I will analyse the importance of showcasing a loving relationship between the married couple, on one hand, and the mother and her children, on the other. In some of the eulogies, married or parental love was given more space than in others, and the level of intimacy in the descriptions was higher. These eulogies raise questions about the creation of narratives of female lives by male authors.

The paper suggests that the portrayal of marital and parental love was one way of honoring the widower and the descendants of the deceased in the eulogy. The representation of emotions in funeral sermons also indicates that love was considered an intrinsic part of ideal family relationships. The material is mainly from Finland that was at the time a part of the Swedish realm, a state committed to the Lutheran confession.