

Oregon City United Methodist Church
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Series: Ten Commandments

Sermon: #5, Honor Your Mother and Father

Exodus 20:12

“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Romans 12:9-18

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Ephesians 4:29-32

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Sermon

I firmly believe that much of who we are comes from where we came from. And so it is fitting that we honor our parents on two different holidays. We continue our look at the Ten Commandments and today, we shall look at the fifth command, “Honor Your Father and Mother.” You remember the ten commandments, Moses up on the Mountain, gets the tablets from God. These are the Ten Biggies. There are four Commands that deal with our relationship with God. No other gods, no idols, Don’t take my name in vain, and honor the Sabbath. And there are six commands that deal with our relationship to each other. No coveting, no stealing, no adulterating, no lying, no murdering, and honoring ma and pa. And to be honest, I am a bit surprised that honoring your mother and your father would make the top ten! When I think of the most important laws that we have in the books, this is one of the only commands that we have where it is a positive. The other commands are Don’t do this, don’t do that, don’t don’t don’t don’t. And then we get a Do. Do honor your parents. How important does God take this command? It made the top ten list of laws. Matter of fact, it was the first law that he gave after the God laws. After the first four that dealt with our relationship with God. This was the first law between us. And it comes before murder. Before stealing. Before lying. Not only is it in the top ten, but it comes in as the first law that we are to follow amongst ourselves! And because it has such a high place in the biblical code, we need to take it seriously as well.

Another thought that comes to mind as I look at this command is the fact that God puts both father and mother in the command. How do I know that the Bible is true? Because only God would write this down! Think about

it. In the history of the world, with very few exceptions, it has been a man's world. It's the men who run politics, it's the men who have made history. Can you name me any non-biblical famous women by name before, let's say 1500? (Queen Isabella of Spain, Cleopatra, etc.) Guys, we could name quite a few. Everyone from the Emperors of Rome, to some of the saints to Greek Philosophers to you name it. It's been a man's world. Thank goodness it is changing, but we still have a long way to go! But can you name any females in the Bible? It comes alive! Indeed, it is in scripture that females get some due. We know about Abraham and Sarah. Isaac and Rebecca. We know more about Mother Mary than we do about Joseph! And it is in scripture that we read, Male and Female, he created them. Together. Equal. And we have it in the Ten Commandments. When the world cares only about men. When the emphasis is about fatherhood and lineage and paternity, in a day and age when the men wear the pants in the family, God tells us to Honor your father and your mother. How do I know God was behind all this? In that day and age, honor only went to the male. But God changes that. Honor father and mother.

And this was the command we hated as children, but we love as parents. Honor my mom and dad? Honor me! Now, we parents take this command, and we make it into something that it is not. Think with me. When Moses brought down the commands from the mountain, he gave it to the people - which people? The adults. They're wandering thru the desert. Hard enough to take a toddler, but what about your aging parents? It could be so tempting for an unscrupulous Israelite to just drop of granny and grandpa at the nearing rock. We'll come back for you! Snicker, snicker. Matter of fact, in the Jewish tradition, a special event happens in the life of a 12-13 year old boy or girl where they become part of the religious community on their own volition, and that is called a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. At that time, they take on the laws, the covenant for themselves. Before that, they really don't have an obligation to the law. Now, they're raised in the law, but they don't declare for themselves until their teen years that they will follow the law. The Law was supposed to be for the adults. Honor your father and mother does not apply to kids. It applies to the grown-ups! So kids, if your parents ever say, "Honor your father and mother", you can retort back, "You honor your father and mother." That's a little bit different deal than we are used to. You might be 30/40/70 and you still have to honor your father and your mother. That obligation is not gone once you're out of the house. So then we really look at what the command says. Honor your parents. What does that mean? Sometimes we think that means "Listen" to your parents. Others might want it to read, "Obey" your parents. But that isn't it either. Obedience is not at the center of the command. It doesn't even say "Love" your parents. So what is it that we are supposed to do?

Honoring your parents is the responsibility of children of any age. Honor implies respect. It implies esteem, affection, love, fidelity, appreciation, forgiveness. This is what it means to honor. Be a blessing in other people's lives. Live a life worth remembering. Unfortunately, we can see this verse misapplied. Telling a child who has been a victim of parental abuse, that they must honor their parents, is not realistic or appropriate. I remember someone in my office years ago, "My parents aren't worthy of honor. My dad was a sleazeball and my mother was a drunk." It's tough to honor people who aren't worthy of honor. But I like how the Apostle Paul puts it in his letter to the Romans: If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Maybe they don't deserve it honor. Maybe they don't care about you now. But as much as it depends upon you, live at peace with everyone.

For all of us, we should all remember that none of us had perfect parents and none of us will ever be perfect parents. That is not an excuse to ignore the command to honor our father and mother. Wisdom and grace are needed when dealing with our families. We all need the attitude of forgiveness toward each other in our families as expressed by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

I'd like to close with a poem that I have recently stumbled upon, it was written by Billy Collins, and it is called

“The Lanyard”.

The other day I was ricocheting slowly
off the blue walls of this room,
moving as if underwater from typewriter to piano,
from bookshelf to an envelope lying on the floor,
when I found myself in the L section of the dictionary
where my eyes fell upon the word *lanyard*.

No cookie nibbled by a French novelist
could send one into the past more suddenly——
a past where I sat at a workbench at a camp
by a deep Adirondack lake
learning how to braid long thin plastic strips
into a lanyard, a gift for my mother.

I had never seen anyone use a lanyard
or wear one, if that’s what you did with them,
but that did not keep me from crossing
strand over strand again and again
until I had made a boxy
red and white lanyard for my mother.

She gave me life and milk from her breasts,
and I gave her a lanyard.
She nursed me in many a sick room,
lifted spoons of medicine to my lips,
laid cold face-cloths on my forehead,
and then led me out into the airy light

and taught me to walk and swim,
and I, in turn, presented her with a lanyard.
Here are thousands of meals, she said,
and here is clothing and a good education.
And here is your lanyard, I replied,
which I made with a little help from a counselor.

Here is a breathing body and a beating heart,
strong legs, bones and teeth,
and two clear eyes to read the world, she whispered,
and here, I said, is the lanyard I made at camp.
And here, I wish to say to her now,
is a smaller gift——not the worn truth

that you can never repay your mother,
but the rueful admission that when she took
the two-tone lanyard from my hand,
I was as sure as a boy could be

that this useless, worthless thing I wove
out of boredom would be enough to make us even.

We cannot repay this gift of life that we have received from our parents, worthy of honor or not, but we can take this gift, and use it to bring honor and glory to them, and to our Father in Heaven. Amen.

SAYINGS:

All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother," said Abraham Lincoln. Today, we're examining the fifth commandment, honoring your mother and father. It's fitting, since we've just celebrated our national holidays of moms and dads in the last month or so. Throughout today's service, you'll hear stories of folks who reflect on their parents.

Alexander Graham Bell: Eliza Grace Symonds Bell was the daughter of a surgeon in the British Royal Navy and was a talented portrait painter. Although somewhat deaf, she played the piano well. Her deafness inspired her son's research into hearing, although it was said she did not have a lot of faith in his work. He went on to make the telephone.

Hugh Jackman, English movie star: "Education. He preached education. And passion, like find whatever you're good at then do everything you can to learn every bit of it, and don't go out into the world until you've studied."

Dwight David Eisenhower: Though poor, Ida Stover was determined to go to college. She scraped together enough money to attend Lane College in Leocompton, Kan., where she met fellow student David Eisenhower. She was known as a firm but gentle disciplinarian and was deeply religious. It is said she once won a prize for memorizing 1,365 Bible verses. As a pacifist, she was not in favor of her son attending West Point but decided to let him go.

Henry Ford: Mary Litogot grew up on a farm, and met her future husband, William Ford, when she was 12 and he was 26 and came to work on the farm. They married nine years later. Mary was self-sufficient and a diligent worker. Henry later attributed his clean factories to her belief in cleanliness. She encouraged his interest in machines early on. He later said, "I have tried to live my life as my mother would have wished. I believe I have done, as far as I could, just what she hoped for me."

Patty Jenkins, "Wonder Woman" director, daughter of a Vietnam War veteran: "Perseverance and focus, first of all, because I think that that kind of job of being a fighter pilot is strangely difficult. You're on your own and you just have to put one foot in front of the other, figuratively speaking, to get things done and to deal with whatever comes up. And that actually comes up. That is very present in my life as a director every day."

Napoleon: Letizia Ramolino Bonaparte grew up during the Corsican struggle for independence from Genoa and imparted to her children an early interest in politics. When Napoleon was crowned emperor in 1804, she was named everywhere as "Madame Mere." At one time, she had three sons who were kings and one daughter as a queen, but she continued to obsess over accumulating wealth. "I may one day have to find bread for all these kings I have borne," she said. Letizia outlived most of her famous children.

Martin Luther King Jr.: Alberta Williams King was both the daughter and the wife of Baptist preachers. She taught her children to "always remember you are as good as anyone." Because of his mother's teaching and inspiration, Martin changed the course of America. Violence and tragedy became a part of her life. In 1968, Martin Luther Jr. was shot; in 1974, her son Alfred drowned; and in 1974, she herself was killed by a deranged gunman while she was playing the organ in church.

Ashley Campbell, daughter of Glen Campbell, who is battling Alzheimer's: "This one piece of advice really stuck with me. We were on tour and it was toward the end of the tour, so he was definitely not as there, not as with it. So moments of clarity were very noticeable. He looked at me and said, 'How's your music going?' I, joking, said, 'It's going well. I am going to be a superstar!' Very self-deprecatingly. And he got really serious and he said, 'Be a super person and the superstar will follow.' That's Glen wisdom."

Al Capone: When her son, Alphonse, was found guilty of tax evasion, Teresa Capone came to see him in jail with a big

dish of macaroni, tomatoes and cheese. Teresa, who came from Italy as a young woman, could not speak much English, and when her son was transferred to the Atlanta Penitentiary, she could only look at him, foreign languages were not permitted. For some, a mother's love is all they have.

George Washington

Mary Ball Washington was a strict, authoritarian figure. George always addressed his letters to her with "Honored Madam." When he wanted to join the British Navy, Mary refused her permission. Shortly after that, George left to live with his brother at Mount Vernon. When news came that he was elected president, he stopped on his way to the capital to give his mother the news -- it was the last time he ever saw her.