

Sermon June 19, 2016 – Pentecost 5, Father's Day

Honor your Father

Exodus 20:12

“Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.



Dear friends in Christ,

Today is Father's Day, happy Father's day to all fathers here gathered today.

In our day we often honor sports heroes for their athletic abilities. We also honor entertainers for their talents; Nobel laureates for their brilliance. First responders for their sacrifice, and so on...

But in Scripture we are commanded to honor our fathers. In the Fourth Commandment we are

told: “Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.”

And to honor is to show abundant respect; to affirm great worth and value. It is important to know that right after the first three commandments that deal with God and our relationship to Him, the commandment to honor our parents comes right after, which introduces the next five commands dealing with loving others.

Now, honoring your father includes fathers of all kinds, attentive and neglectful, kind and abusive, believers and non-believers; the command is not conditional.

So, in order to honor a parent, to honor a father, requires the strength God provides, because fulfilling this command will be found impossible in the strength of our flesh; only through the power of Holy Spirit within, that we find the prompting and power to truly honor.

In sin it is difficult to willfully honor as God desires. But through Christ, through the forgiveness of sins that Christ won for us on the Cross of Calvary we are given a new nature, we are restored and given the Holy Spirit that leads us to serve God and one another in humility, and his invitation is that we would continue in his loving care so that satan, sin and the world will not bring us back to our old ways, but instead keep enjoying God's loving compassion and experience the fresh touch of his constraining love. As Paul tells us: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful” (Colossians 3:15).

The Peace of Christ can certainly help us to express love and honor, even when we live in this world where we are imperfect still. For sure, you and I are imperfect who were also raised by imperfect people! As we interact even now with parents, family, spouse, children, grandchildren, etc., we relate as imperfect people.

But God knows that actually, he is the one who teaches to love one another even as imperfect people, for he "...shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).

Demonstrating love toward imperfect people so that we might better honor them is often a process of the great physician healing us, healing us from the bad experiences from the past, so we can move "forward to what lies ahead." (Phil. 3:13)

And the way God heals us is through confession and absolution, confessing to God of course, but also confess our trespasses against each other. Confessing our wrongs and expressly speak them to whom we have wronged.

An "honoring" heart loves enough to confess any unhealed offenses to parents, siblings, and other family members, seeking their forgiveness. Now, seeking the forgiveness of those we have hurt paves the way for our initiative to fully forgive those whom have hurts us. It is nearly impossible to forgive another without a contrite heart that first deals with its own faults and that seeks God's forgiveness.

The gratitude and wonder that springs from having been forgiven by God seems to empower us in forgiving others. Why? Because the scriptures say: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9).

So, is there anything that is holding you down in sickness? Anything from the past, from your growing-up years and adult life that needs healing? Anything that you have done that have hurt your parents or others in your family through rebellion, disrespect, insensitivity, rejection, ungratefulness...? Confess them to God and to one another, seek God's forgiveness and your loved ones' as well.

Emotional hurt during the growing-up years is inevitable. Just like a physical injury, emotional pain must be treated in order to heal. We may be tempted to say, "Forget it; it happened a long time ago. Let bygones be bygones."

True, the experience may be past, but the pain of resentment, fear, or anger may still be an unhealed issue of the present. Consider, for example, the Christian single adult who repeatedly ends dating relationships because of a fear of relational intimacy. There is often a connection between such a fear of intimacy and the childhood trauma of parental divorce. But it is better to seek God's comfort in his healing.

Unresolved pain from our family of origin can exhibit and express itself in many unhealthy ways in our lives. Part of the healing process that facilitates greater "honoring" in relationships involves ministering comfort when deep hurts from the past are exposed, and brought to God, and allow God to direct us through forgiveness and reconciliation, seek honoring each other.

For when we do, we honor a greater commandment, actually the summary of all the commandment, the commandment of love, and that love is seen in forgiveness.

So, forgiving others, no matter how significantly they have hurt us, is a direct command from God. And He never tells us to do something without also empowering us to obey the command. Just as He provides the healing power of comfort for your hurts, He will also provide the liberating power of forgiveness toward those who hurt you.

Forgiveness is a beautiful gift from the God who has our best interests at heart. To refuse God's gift is to remain in bondage to the pain of the past. God wants us to

forgive so we can put away our anger and experience the full healing that comes from His comfort.

God's word tells us: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31–32).

Forgiving others is choosing to share with others the unmerited gift of God's forgiveness as we have received it from Him. In reality, the forgiveness we share is not really ours; it is his. Will you share with your parents, siblings, and others some of the forgiveness God has shared with you?

When we forgive each other we then begin to honor well. Honor you Father and Mother, the fourth commandment tells us, "... that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you." (Deuteronomy 5:16). "...this is the first commandment with a promise." (Ephesians. 6:2).

Having confessed our sins against our parents for the pain we caused them, and having forgiven them for any pain they caused us, we continue expressing our love for them and honor them. "Honor your father and your mother," God commands (Exodus 20:12). We owe honor to our parents simply because they are our parents, regardless of how well or consistently they have fulfilled their God-assigned vocations or responsibilities, to us. We allow His Spirit to minister His great love as we honor a parent's worth and value apart from their performance. It's this very love that we first received as Christ demonstrated His love "...while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8).

But how do we honor them? We honor them when we acknowledge their strengths, their wisdom, and their character qualities in loving and consistent ways. Yet, we also honor them when we come to accept them as "real" people with weaknesses as well as strengths.

And you honor your father as you celebrate and share pleasant memories. And you become a model father for your children now, or to come. But in order for you to become a model father, living consistently in tune with God's heart through His Word, prompts new patterns of loving behavior in our relationships with those nearest to us. It is not in our old nature to put others first and focus on meeting their needs in order to experience an intimate relationship. But God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit empower us to break unhealthy patterns and create new, godly patterns of behavior that are genuine expressions of Great Commandment love, and besides God's word we do also have the strengthening gift of the Sacraments that feed and strengthen our faith, here and now.

Now, here is another truth from Scriptures that honoring our fathers brings a legacy for the next generations.

The Psalmist writes: "He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, ⁶ that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, ⁷ so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments." (Psalm 78:5–7).

It is said that our Children are messengers for a future we would probably not see. But the beauty of teaching them to honor others, especially parents will be carried to the next generation. Not just remembered but actually will be done.

And most importantly, teaching them to put their hope and trust in God, not forgetting his works will forge a culture that honors parents, that honors human beings at the core.

Happy Father's day! It is a good day to remind us of our vocation that God has given as parents, as fathers.

May you be honored, and may you honor your father as well. And may you gladly establish the tradition of honoring your fathers, if you haven't don't have one yet. It is God's commandment to honor our parents. It is God's desire after all, he is the one who give us the example, he is the one who loved us first and shows us how to.

His love, his great love has come to us through his Son Jesus Christ, our saviour and Lord, who gave his life for all of us. His fatherly love, love that forgives, saves and gives life. Love that enables to love others, especially our parents.

In his name amen.