

Text: 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.

Prayer of the Day:

O God, protector of all the faithful, you alone make holy. Show us your mercy and forgive our sins day by day. Guide us through our earthly lives that we do not lose the things you have prepared for us in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day:

Psalm 132:9

Alleluia. May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy. Alleluia.

Sermon Text:

As Lutherans, we vary rarely hear the quotations of Popes in worship. However, John Paul II is quoted in 1986 as having said, "*As the family, so goes the nation, and so goes the entire world.*" I would venture to say he wasn't the first to offer such an idea. For the thought is taken from none other than God Himself who would protect this institution above all other institutions. In fact, as we transition into the Second Table of the Law and begin to consider our neighbor, or the others living around us, God first would have us direct our attention to that institution with which He has blessed the world, the institution which is foundational to all peace and stability.

A couple of things interest me in a quick glance at this commandment. First, it is the second of two commandments that are written in the positive. Instead of telling us "You shall not", God chooses here to tell us what we should do. The first was before us last week, "*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.*" Today, "*Honor your father and your mother.*" Isn't it interesting that God would link His Word and the Family? Secondly, as Paul will later point out (Ephesians 6:1-3), it is the first commandment with a promise directly attached to it, "*so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.*" Finally, I've always found it interesting that of all the commandments, this one seems to be spoken to a specific group within the family of believers, children. Though I certainly understand that everyone is somebody's little boy or girl.

Kids, that means this commandment offers special opportunities just for you. That's right, even Children have vocations and God spells them out for us here. Honor, that's interesting too. God doesn't say love, but rather honor. Martin Luther writes, *For it is a much higher thing to honor than to love. Honor includes not only love, but also deference, humility, and modesty directed (so to speak) toward a majesty concealed within them. Honor requires us not only to address them affectionately and with high esteem, but above all to show by our actions, both of heart and body, that we respect them very highly, and that next to God we give them the very highest place. For anyone whom we are wholeheartedly to honor, we must truly regard as high and great.*¹

So how many parents are elbowing their kids in the ribs right now? It's interesting then that from this one authority comes all other authority. Father and Mother are the authorities God has placed in the home and from them all other earthly authority flows but it is authority nonetheless. We heard the Words of Hebrews 13 read from the lectern, *Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you.*

¹ Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). [*The Book of Concord: the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*](#) (p. 401). Fortress Press.

Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith (v7). Jesus told us in the Gospel, *Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's* (Matthew 22:21). Again, Luther would frequently speak about house fathers, and church fathers, and fathers of the nation. Oh to be sure, kids need that little poke in the ribs to remind them sometimes that parents are worthy of honor but I'm willing to venture that adults need those pokes as well, as we consider the authorities that God has placed over us. Again it was the writer of the book of Hebrews who penned the reminder, *Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you* (Hebrews 13: 17).

Is it any wonder? Is it any wonder that the storms are brewing in the world around us? Any wonder that things have become as topsy turvy as they are? The family torn asunder at the whim of every frivolity and fancy, destabilized even as it is redefined. And what of the honor? Is there any of it left in the conversations we have about the authorities placed over us and if not, then is it really all that shocking if kids are watching and learning how to treat authority, mom and dad included, from their greatest example of what adults should be?

Oh to be sure, moms and dads, as well as the authorities over us whether in church or in state need to act honorably. After all God did say, *that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful* (1 Corinthians 4:2). He even tells us that when they cross the line and demand sin, *we must obey God rather than men* (Acts 5:29). Yet even here, the Law of love applies even in our refusal to obey there can still be honor and if not, well should we be so shocked when the world around us, unable to find it among the people of God will not be able to find it anywhere else?

The Fourth Commandment has always been one that hits me squarely between the eyes. For here as everywhere, my sin is uncovered and laid bare before me. The mirror of God's Law has done its work. So isn't it wonderful to note that we have a Savior once again? Jesus Christ, born under Law to redeem us poor and sinful people crushed beneath its weight. He was the perfect Son to Mary and Joseph, even though Joseph wasn't His biological father mattered not. His heavenly Father had placed Him under his loving and guiding hand and He would honor and obey, love and cherish nonetheless. Even when those in the authority of the temple of God had gone astray, He would seek to teach them, draw them to repentance, urge them to see the sin of pride and arrogance which had overcome them, the twisted teaching which had consumed them that they might serve God once again as He had called them to do. When the nation would tax them into poverty and murder Him for fear of the reaction of the Sanhedrin, Jesus did not call for an uprising or nationwide revolution as the Sanhedrin had threatened to. He urged them to open their eyes and behold the truth. He stayed silent in accusation. He prayed for them.

And then, then He did the unthinkable and died for them. Though He could have seized their thrones and authority, He had no desire for that which was already His. He wanted them! He wanted you!! On the cross, His righteousness becomes your own and your sin paid for in full through His holy precious blood. All so that He could call you family and make you one of His very own. That we can rightfully and for so many reasons call our God, Father.

In love dear friends, in appreciation for this gift, what could we ever do? What would ever even begin to be enough to show God our complete awe at His saving grace? Today, He offers something that is as simple as it is world-changing.

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect.

Yep a **Firm Focus on the Family** for and from those who are His. Amen!