

I.N.I.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
July 14, 2019
Exodus 20:12

In Christ Jesus, Who perfectly kept all of the commandments for us, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Up until now our commandment study has been centered on our duty toward God. The first three commandments Jesus summed up in one sentence: "**LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.**" The first three commandments demand from us perfect obedient love toward God.

Now beginning with the Fourth Commandment God lists His requirements of us toward our fellow human beings. Jesus summed up this second portion of His Father's commands with these words: '**LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**'

The first command that God lists for us in regard to loving our fellow man is the love to parents. However, the Lord God does not say that we should love our parents as we are to love all people, He says we are to "honor our father and mother." From our study this morning we shall see that the Lord through this commandment demands of us

I: THAT WE HONOR OUR PARENTS BY BLOOD

II: THAT WE HONOR OUR PARENTS BY OFFICE.

There are thousands of psychiatrists, psychologists, doctors, family practitioners, and social workers who have their methods, their plans, their systems and procedures as to how we should raise our children. From the old Dr. Benjamin Spock and Dr. Joyce Brothers to the modern day gurus Dr. Phil and Oprah Winfrey we receive expert opinions on how we are to treat and discipline our children. Book stores are filled with books telling us how to be better parents, how to deal with our children, how to discipline and love them. Many of these books are good but many are also based on the humanistic point of view that our children are morally good or at least morally neutral and that we need to just pull that goodness out of them. Many have the wrong basis from which they start. They look to themselves and to their own studies for the answers and they start with the clean slate theory.

We of course know that it is to God's Word that we need to turn for advice, counsel and guidance in our child raising and we also know very well that our children are conceived and born in sin and that **THE IMAGINATION OF MAN'S HEART IS EVIL FROM HIS YOUTH** and that **OUT OF THE HEART PROCEED EVIL THOUGHTS, MURDERS, ADULTERIES, FORNICATIONS, THEFTS, FALSE WITNESS, BLASPHEMIES.** Therefore we are aware of our children's natural tendency to do wrong, to try to get away with disobedience, to misbehave.

Now it is true that God's Word does not give us direct answers to many of our problems in child raising—like "what should I do if my child won't eat?" Nowhere in the Bible is there a direct answer to that question, yet there is a method, there is a technique, there is a system and a procedure that the Lord gives in His Word that will answer all of the questions we have concerning not only raising our children but in all areas of our lives. "Learn from Me," Jesus says. "Turn to Me and My Word." "**TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE WAY HE SHOULD GO AND WHEN HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT DEPART FROM IT.**" Jesus said "**LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME, AND DO NOT FORBID THEM; FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.**"

In His Fourth Commandment the Lord teaches us and our children how we are to live in regard to our parents. He commands us: "**HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER.**

It is interesting that the Lord did not simply say, "Love your parents," but He intentionally says "Honor your parents." This means love them, obey them, humble yourself under them, serve them, revere, esteem and respect them above everyone else.

The Lord looks upon His Fourth Commandment as such an important commandment that He puts it first in His Second Table of the Law and even lists some of the blessings along with the command itself: **THAT YOUR DAYS MAY BE LONG UPON THE LAND WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD IS GIVING YOU.**

What does this blessing mean? It means that through our Christian parents God gives us the blessings of home, shelter, food, clothes, protection, love, education and guidance for our life, and above all He gives us through them the Word of God from which we learn about our Savior from sin.

Why are we to honor our parents? Why are they so important to us? The Lord God says that they are His representatives. The Lord speaks, rules and provides through them. He says in His Word: **CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN THE LORD, FOR THIS IS RIGHT...FOR THERE IS NO AUTHORITY EXCEPT FROM GOD, AND THE AUTHORITIES THAT EXIST ARE APPOINTED BY GOD...CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN ALL THINGS, FOR THIS IS WELL PLEASING TO THE LORD...OBEY THOSE WHO RULE OVER YOU, AND BE SUBMISSIVE, FOR THEY WATCH OUT FOR YOUR SOULS, AS THOSE WHO MUST GIVE ACCOUNT. LET THEM DO SO WITH JOY AND NOT WITH GRIEF, FOR THAT WOULD BE UNPROFITABLE FOR YOU...LISTEN TO YOUR FATHER, WHO GAVE YOU LIFE, AND DO NOT DESPISE YOUR MOTHER WHEN SHE IS OLD.**

The Lord also lists the dangers of not obeying this commandment by not honoring and obeying our parents. In Prov. 30:17 we read: **THE EYE THAT MOCKS HIS FATHER, AND SCORNS OBEDIENCE TO HIS MOTHER, THE RAVENS OF THE VALLEY WILL PICK IT OUT, AND THE YOUNG EAGLES WILL EAT IT.** A very gruesome picture of what the Lord says should happen to children who are disobedient and disrespectful to their parents. In the Old Testament there was a law that if a son would not obey his father, even when the priest was called in to help, that child was to be taken out of the city and stoned to death, for his disobedience was not only against his parents, but against God Himself.

We as children should look upon our parent's rule over us as God's rule. We are not to despise it or disobey it. Even if we cannot understand it we should submit to it. The Lord says, "**in all things,**" for they are My representatives.

Martin Luther also adds in his meaning to this commandment the words "**that we do not despise nor anger our parents.**" How often don't we do this? Sometimes unintentionally, but many times on purpose, because we are mad. We refuse to listen to them when they tell us to do our chores—make our beds, clean our rooms, pick up around the house, do our homework; or we make them angry by complaining about doing these things or by having to be told over and over again to do them before we finally get around to it. We fight with our brothers and sisters and cause our parents grief and sadness. It is not a little thing if we disregard our parent's advice, if we despise our parent's commands, if we sass back to them, speak rudely to them or challenge their authority over us, if we reject or do not appreciate our parents love, affection, counsel and help. For then we are disregarding, despising, disobeying and refusing to listen to and be comforted by God.

So when does this Fourth Commandment end its hold, its rule over us? Is it when we turn 18, or when we leave the home? No, it continues throughout our entire life, not in the same way as when we were young and living under our parents rule, but the command to honor still applies. Luther writes, "**By means of your actions, both physical and financial, you are to show them honor by serving them, helping them, and providing for them when they are old, or sick, infirm, or poor.**"

Even as rebelling against and not obeying parents is so prevalent a sin in this world, so is the sin of older children not helping and honoring their elderly parents. So many young adults are so caught up in their lives, in their own families that they forget to see their elderly parent's needs or do not help them out when they are unable to take care of themselves. Our parents spent the majority of their early lives giving of their time, sweat and tears for us. Our fathers work hard for us to have food and drink, clothes and a home to live in, our mothers work hard sometimes both in the home and outside of the home to help make ends meet—always being sure that we had meals to eat, clean clothes to wear and a suitable home to live in. Day after day they looked after our welfare taking care of us when we were sick, teaching us as we grew up; training us as we matured; loving and forgiving us when we sinned. Indeed we owe them more love and honor than a lifetime could ever bring about.

But this commandment also applies to all of us who are under the authority of someone else. We can divide these powers into four areas: Home, church, government, and work place/school. All of these powers and the people who hold these powers are God's representatives whom God uses to bring us God's Word and the spiritual blessings we need (church); to protect us, to provide public services for us, and keep law and order (government); to discipline us, to teach us; and to provide an opportunity for us to earn a living (school/work place).

Martin Luther in his writings on the Fourth Commandment makes a big point of the fact that this commandment does not only apply to those who are under authority—children, Christians, citizens, students, workers—but this commandment also applies to those who are in authority—parents, pastors, teachers, government authorities, bosses.

The Lord has given us parents our children as great blessings in this life. They are joys that fill the void in our lives, they are gifts from God. But God expects us to treat these gifts with love. Even as there are duties for children there are also duties laid upon us parents. We are to meet the physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of our children.

We as parents are to attend to our children's physical needs of food, clothing, home, medicine, recreation. The Lord says: **BUT IF ANYONE DOES NOT PROVIDE FOR HIS OWN, AND ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE OF HIS HOUSEHOLD, HE HAS DENIED THE FAITH AND IS WORSE THAN AN UNBELIEVER.**

We as parents are also to provide for our children's mental and social needs—teaching them their ABC's, sending them to school, making sure they do their homework, training them in social graces, helping them get along with other people, leading them to think in terms of other people's needs and not only of their own, serving others and not themselves.

But most importantly we as parents are to be involved in meeting their spiritual needs. The Lord says: **BRING THEM UP IN THE TRAINING AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD . . ." AND THESE WORDS WHICH I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE IN YOUR HEART. "YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE UP.** If we do not teach our children when they are young the truths of God's kingdom—the story of Jesus' great love for them about His birth, His life, His suffering, death and resurrection—then we are failures as parents, yes failures even if we give to our children everything else they need in this world. When a mother told her pastor that she would not give her child religious instruction until he was old enough to decide for himself—because she did not want to force her religion on him; the pastor replied, "Ma'am, if you do not teach him, the devil certainly will."

Once again we see in this commandment our failures—failures by us to honor, serve, and obey our parents, to honor, serve, and obey our government and its laws, to honor, serve, and obey our teachers and bosses. In these failures we also see our failure to honor, serve, and obey God whom these people represent. We also see our failures in not always being responsible representatives of God as parents, teachers, bosses, and as pastor.

We all need to bring these many, many failures before our Lord and lay them at His feet. For Christ kept this Commandment perfectly for us, obeying His parents and the government at all times and above all obeying His heavenly Father by coming to be our substitute. He has taken all of our failures to the cross and nailed them there paying for their guilt and punishment. He has washed us from our spots and stains as children and as parents and the Father has declared us to be righteous in His sight. In so doing He has given us the blessings—not of a long life here on this earth—but of an eternity with Him in heaven.

May our thanksgiving, for all that our loving God has done for us, be seen in our giving honor, love, service and obedience to our parents and all of those in authority and in our bringing to our children this "Good News" that gives them eternal blessings.

Amen.