

INI - SDG

Lenten Theme: "The Pulpit of the Cross"  
3<sup>rd</sup> Midweek Lenten Service  
March 3, 2010  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
Hecla, SD

Text: John 19:25-27  
Theme: A Sermon on Obedience

Dear fellow sinners, who have been redeemed, restored, and forgiven through Jesus precious blood, grace and peace to you in His name!

For our midweek Lenten services this year we have been focusing on the seven sayings of Jesus from the cross. Our theme has been "The Pulpit of the Cross." When we think of a pulpit we think of something such as what I am standing in right now - a place where the pastor delivers his sermon. What a strange word picture, then to call the cross of Jesus a pulpit! Yet it was from the cross that Jesus delivered some of the simplest, but most powerful sermons. So far we've considered Jesus' sermon on forgiveness which He delivered when He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Last Wednesday we considered Jesus' sermon on grace when He assured the condemned thief that he would be with Him in paradise that very day.

Tonight, though, Jesus directs our attention to the Fourth Commandment. We read in John 19:25-27 Jesus addressing the topic of honoring our father and mother.

***Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.***

These words are not the words of a mere man, but the words which God the Holy Spirit gave to the Apostle John to write down. Words given by the Spirit and through which the Spirit creates and sustains faith. Even so we ask that God would so strengthen us and set us apart for His holy purposes as we pray, "Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord, Your word is truth." Amen.

I think just about all of us are familiar with the Fourth Commandment. "***Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.***" Interesting that when God gave this commandment which deals with our parents, He didn't use the word "love," did He? He didn't say, "thou shalt LOVE thy father and thy mother." Instead He commands us to "honor" them. Certainly love is to be included, but honoring someone means more than just loving them.

To honor is to give a high degree of respect to. Jesus uses the word honor to describe His relationship with God the Father. Speaking of the work He did and the words He used, He said in doing so "***I HONOR My Father.***" (Jn 8:49) In addition Jesus says that the Father HONORS Him (Jn 8:54). Jesus also says, "***All should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He***

*who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.” (Jn 5:23)* Likewise in Scripture God speaks of the respect we are to have for our government leaders when He says, **“Honor the king.”** (2 Pt 2:17)

It is this same word which Jesus uses when addressing our relationship with our parents He says, **“Honor your father and mother.”** God has commanded us to have a high degree of respect for our parents. In Leviticus 19:3 He says, **“Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father.”** They are the parents God has given us and placed over us. They are His representatives in our home. As long as they do not tell us to do something which goes against His Word, we are to honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect. Therefore the LORD says in Proverbs 23, **“Listen to your father who begot you, And do not despise your mother when she is old.”** (Prov 23:22) That honor and respect is to remain as long as our parents are alive.

The Apostle Paul observes that the Fourth Commandment is the first commandment God gave with a promise. In Ephesians 6 we read, **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.** (Eph 6:1-3) God promises that life will be better when we as children honor our father and mother. We can see the fulfillment of this promise on many levels in the world around us. Isn't life a bit easier and more blessed when we honor our parents - regardless of our age?

While God does promise blessings in life for those who honor their parents, He also has strong words of judgment for those who do NOT honor their father and mother. Listen to what the LORD says in Leviticus 20:9, **“Everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him.”** For the nation of Israel, when someone broke the Fourth Commandment by cursing his father or mother, the penalty was the death sentence. Or consider what the LORD says in Proverbs 30, **“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.”** (Prov 30:17) Strong words of judgment against those that even MOCK his father or does not obey his mother.

So we see that the Lord does not look lightly on rebellion against parents. When a child curses, mocks, or scorns obedience to his father or mother he is really cursing, mocking, and scorning obedience against God who gave us our parents. This causes us to think about how we have treated our parents. The times we have either said out loud or thought in our head that we hated our parents. The times when we did not obey our parents the first time they asked us to do something. The times we mocked our parents because we thought they didn't know what they were talking about. We have transgressed this commandment countless times and in countless ways! We deserve that the ravens of the valley pick our eyes and the young eagles eat them.

But then we turn to Jesus and hear His third sermon from the cross. Amidst the anguish of His crucifixion we hear Jesus speaking and realize that even in death He did not cease to keep the Law of God perfectly. This includes the Fourth Commandment. As the oldest Son of Mary, it was His responsibility to care for His mother. But Jesus knows that His life was coming to an end and He would be returning to God the Father. That meant He would no longer be around to physically supply the support and care that was due to His mother as she grew older.

Seeing His mother Mary and the disciple whom He loved, that is John, standing by keeping vigil at His crucifixion, Jesus says to Mary about John, **“Woman, behold your son!”**

Mary was now to look on John as though he were her own son. Then Jesus said to John, **“Behold your mother!”** John now was to care for Mary as though she were his own mother. And John willingly obeyed this command of Jesus as we read, **“From that hour that disciple took her to his own home.”** Though in the throes of death, Jesus is clearly honoring His mother as God intended it as He did throughout His life.

But what of the promise God gave with this commandment? Remember how He says, **“that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”** Though Jesus kept the Fourth Commandment perfectly, the Father certainly does not seem keeping His promise in the case of His Son. Nothing is going well with Jesus and He will not live much longer on the earth. Instead Jesus seems to be receiving the very things those who curse their father and mother should be receiving. He is suffering horribly as He is dying a cursed death.

What is going on here? Everything seems to be backwards from what God has promised in His Word! Is God a liar? Is His Word full of half-truths? Not at all. What we find here is the blessed truth of the Gospel. Jesus here is serving as our Substitute. Here we see Jesus actively obeying the Fourth Commandment in our place. He is honoring His parent in ways we failed to. He is loving and respecting His mother for all the times that we rolled our eyes at our parents. He is providing for His mother for all the times we ignored our parents and their needs.

At the same time Jesus is doing this, He is also taking our punishment on Himself. It is the LORD who said, **“Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.”** (Deut 27:16) While we are the ones who have treated our father or mother with contempt and should be cursed, Jesus is suffering and dying on the cross to save us from that curse. **Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree").** (Gal 3:13)

There is a great exchange taking place here. Jesus was suffering because we broke the Fourth Commandment by becoming a curse for us. Our sin was taken from our account and credited to Jesus. Through faith in Jesus His righteousness and holiness in keeping the Fourth Commandment perfectly - and every commandment for that matter - is taken from Jesus' account and credited to us. Paul writes of this blessed exchange, **“(God) made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”** (2 Cor 5:21)

So in this third sermon from the pulpit of the cross, we hear and see Jesus as our Substitute. As our Substitute He was obeying the Fourth Commandment for us. He honored His mother even in death. As our Substitute He was also taking our punishment on Himself to redeem us from the curse of the law. Praise be to Jesus who was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Amen!