

Exodus 20:1-2, 12, Luke 2:41-52, Luke 8:19-21

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Preacher: Benjie Slaton

- [0 : 0 0] The following sermon is from Grace and Peace Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Grace and Peace is a new church that exists for the glory of God and the good of the northeast suburbs of Hamilton Place, Collegedale, and Ottawa.
- You can find help more by visiting gracepeacechurch.org. Good morning, Grace and Peace.
- Let's stand together as we read God's word this morning. We have three passages this morning, one from Exodus and two from Luke. So follow with me in your bulletin.
- Exodus 20. I and God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God has given you.
- And then Luke 2. Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.
- [1 : 1 6] His parents did not know it. But supposing him to be in the group, they went a day's journey. But then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances.
- And when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.
- And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, and they were astonished, and his mother said to him, Son, why have you treated us so?
- So, behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress. And he said to them, why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my father's house? And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.
- And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.
- [2 : 1 4] Luke 2. And then Luke 8. Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.
- But he answered them, My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it. You may be seated. Okay.
- Diving back into our look at the Ten Commandments this morning, by looking at what I just told the kids must be the most repeated command in households with small children, especially when parents are frustrated.
- Honor your dad, I told you. That might or might not have come out of my mouth at some point. But here's the thing that you have to see first to understand this.
- And I hinted at this with our children. It's this. This command is not addressed to children. Look at the Ten Commandments.

- [3 : 23] Every single one of the Ten Commandments is addressed to adults. Now, it applies to children. Each one applies to children, but it is not addressed to them.
- This is not the one command that you just give to your kids. This is the command for you and for me. Now, kids who are in here, don't mishear me.
- This does not mean that you don't have to obey the command to honor your father and mother. Actually, what it means is your parents have to honor their father and mother just as much as you do.
- That's what they're expected to do. And so this commandment is interesting because what it does is it's taking the idea that we owe honor to God himself.
- And because of that, we are to give the same kind of honor to our parents and to all. It extends to all other earthly authorities that we run into.
- [4 : 22] This is actually an incredibly expansive command. We talked last week about the Jubilee being an expansion on the Sabbath command. And this is the same kind of thing.
- It takes one set of relationships and it blows it out to the entire society. And that's what's going on here. But how can we actually do that? I want to look at three pieces of this to kind of get our hands around this command.
- The first one is I want to look at God's vision for the command. The second one is the problem with that vision. And the third one is God's solution for it. So the vision.
- The vision of life that this command sets for us is really kind of amazing and beautiful. This is the only command, as I said, that has a promise attached to it. Verse 12.
- If I can get to it in here. Verse 12. Honor your father and your mother. That your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving to you. That your days may be long in the land.
- [5 : 25] The promise that God is giving is of a stable, fundamentally good, healthy, flourishing society. Not only is he promising that things will go well, but he's saying it's going to go well in the particular land where I'm about to take you.
- In the land that I'm giving to you. God was saying to them, I'm actually taking you to a place where you can live out this beautiful society. Apparently, God thinks that a good society, the good life, is founded on a place where this kind of familial honor is widespread.
- I want to put a point on this, just so we don't miss it. God's vision of the good life appears to be a place where there are intact families.
- Where children are well raised. Where they become worshipers of God and they become the people of his church. Where they live with honor and love for other people.
- In fact, for all of the people who have authority over them. Now, that seems a little bit idealistic. But the Ten Commandments were always intended to be God's way to lead people to wisdom, to a life well lived.
- [6 : 44] All Ten Commandments are about you living a life that is full of wisdom and life. That's God's vision and it's beautiful. But before it can spread to the entire society, it has to start in one individual family.
- With one set of parents. Honoring our parents. Why is that? Well, because the home is the testing place for our faith.
- If you can't learn to honor your own parents, how in the world are you going to live a life of honor and love in a wider world? If you can't submit to your own earthly parents, how can you submit to the other authorities that God has placed upon us?
- If you can't honor your own parents, how in the world can you think about honoring God? Peter Lighthouse is a theologian and he suggests five ways to practically think about this.

He makes the argument that there's an inner relationship between honoring God and honoring our parents. That it's the same impulse. The same impulse that we have to honor God is the way that we honor our parents.

[7 : 52] And likewise, to honor our parents is to honor God. There's a deep inner relationship and he suggests five ways that we honor our parents in the same way that we honor God.

It's really interesting. How do you honor God? Well, you praise God. You know? We do the same with our parents. Here's a question. Do you speak well of your parents when they're not around?

Behind their back? Do you criticize or grumble or pretend that you just know better than them? Do you use your words to praise your parents?

Second one. Do you serve your parents in the way that you serve God? Do you exhibit a deference to your parents and really to older people in general? The Bible talks about standing for the gray head, for the old man.

I would like to have a gray head. I have nothing on my head. I have a gray beard. Does that work? I don't know. Maybe. Do you respond?

[8 : 59] Do you defer in your service to those who are older than you and especially to your parents? Third question he asks is, you know, we're called to listen to God.

Do you listen to your parents? Do you give them the weight and respect and consideration to their opinions? To your parents and your elders?

Do you? Let me just put this real plain. Do you listen to their stories? Fourth. We trust God.

We are to trust our parents. And we just talked to teenagers for a minute. Teenagers, do you trust that your parents' decisions are actually good for you?

That their limits are intended to help you? Do you honor your parents when you tell them something you desire and they give you what they think you need?

[9 : 55] And you receive that with a glad heart rather than complaining about what you didn't get. Fifth. We submit to God's discipline because God shows us that he loves us by his discipline.

And it's right to ask children, are you submitting? Do you honor your parents when they say no to you and correct you? See, there's a beautiful vision here of what life ought to look like.

And let me just stop and say with our particular church, look, I see you guys. I watch the way that some of you come from families that have been completely blown apart.

And you are doing your level best today to reconstruct, to reconstruct from the wreckage of your families of origin, you're trying to do something better for you.

I see that. That's good. I see those of you who have cared for your elderly parents and have sacrificed a ton, time and energy, money, convenience to care for them.

[11 : 06] And it's really beautiful. And I think you need to know that God honors the way that you have honored them. But I also see the way that we talk, the way that we lack trust, the hurts that we carry, the adolescent hardness that we sometimes have.

The beautiful vision seems really far out of reach for us. And that's the problem, isn't it? The beautiful vision is really out of reach. There's this fable from the Brothers Grimm.

You might remember them from your librarian in elementary school who probably read something like that. And it goes like this. It's pretty short, but I'm going to read it. There was once a very old man whose eyes had become dim, his ears dull of hearing, his knees trembled, and when he sat at the table, he could hardly hold the spoon.

And he spilt his soup on the tablecloth, or he let it dribble out of his mouth and down his shirt. His son and his son's wife were disgusted at this.

So the old grandfather was moved to sit in the corner behind the stove. And they gave him his food instead of a nice bowl, a clay bowl. And he would look towards the table with eyes full of tears.

[12 : 29] Once, his trembling hands could not hold the bowl, and it fell to the ground and broke. His young wife scolded him, but he said nothing and only sighed.

After this, they bought him a wooden bowl for a few pennies, out of which he had to eat because it wouldn't break. And once they were sitting like this, when the little four-year-old grandson began to gather together a block of wood on the ground.

What are you doing? asked the father. I'm making a little trough, answered the child, for father and mother to eat out of when I am big. The man and his wife looked at each other and began to cry.

Then they took the old grandfather to the table and henceforth always let him eat with them and said nothing if he spilt a little of anything. You know, there is a problem with this vision.

And the problem of the vision that this commandment lays out is that it's absolutely, completely unrealistic. On the one hand. It feels completely contrary to everything that our impulse has us dealing with.

[13 : 42] Our lives seem so different. You might think, well, you know, maybe that happens for some of those perfect families, but it doesn't happen in my family. And so I want to dig into a few of these.

I just use this image, like digging the knife in. That's probably not what I mean, but it may turn out that way. I want to dig into some of the problems that come up for us that inhibit us from honoring this kind of vision that God has for us.

The first one is just the modern world we live in. We don't live in the agrarian society of Israel. You know, we don't live in a world where our kids stay close to home and we work out of the home and we have multi-generational families all around.

We live in a modern, urban, technologically driven world where, frankly, most of our families don't have even one meal together at home. We're going so many different places with demands.

We're constantly on the go. We've got to make enough money just to keep up with inflation. Morality is increasingly being taught by the schools and not by parents.

[14 : 51] You know, the goal of this fifth commandment is not to go back to some sort of like happier time. You know, the goal of the commandment is not to move backwards. The commandment is actually to move forward.

This command is evergreen. This command is for every single stage of your life from being a small child to being a teenager to being a young adult to being an adult yourself, a parent yourself, to being older and caring for your parents.

It's for every stage of life and it is for every single time in history. The modern life, we tend to think, doesn't make sense for this kind of honor for us to give to our parents.

Second problem is there's just youthfulness. You know, part of the reason we struggle to honor parents and elders in general is that we just kind of idolize youth culture and being young.

We want to dress young, look young, speak young, act young. You don't think it's true? I just want to ask you how many of you are on TikTok and have, you know, done a TikTok dance at your house?

[15 : 59] Maybe not all of you, but a lot of you. I have not. I just want to say that. But in the Bible's view, wisdom comes with age.

Age and experience are honored, even if they might be a little wrinkly. We don't, we choose beauty and strength and cool over wisdom and experience.

And that's the way that a culture goes to death. Youthfulness is killing us. The third problem is control.

I think it's tempting to believe that we are in absolute control over our lives and that because of that, giving someone else some sort of honor is somehow optional.

You know, we don't have to do that unless they deserve it. But the family is the best reminder that you are actually not in control of your own life. You did not choose those people.

[17 : 02] Every day, when you look at yourself in the mirror, there is one piece of evidence that you cannot get past and that is your belly button. Every day that you look at your belly button, it is a stark reminder that you got a mama and that she deserves to be honored for no other reason than she is your mother.

One author has said that unchosen relationships are the most weighty. Unchosen relationships are the most weighty. Control.

We don't have control. The fourth problem is a crisis of authority. You know, we want to believe that we live in this totally flat world where honor is only due to the people who deserve it.

You know? Especially, someone with authority is automatically suspicious. Especially, the idea that why would we honor somebody just because they're old?

Have they done something to earn my respect? You know, a teacher, just because they're a teacher? Does that mean that I have to honor them even though I don't think they're a very good teacher?

[18 : 17] Well, according to this, yeah, you do. You know, now, sure, there are bad teachers, there are tyrant fathers, there are foolish mothers, but that doesn't discount the right and the good authority that God has given to parents and other authorities in which He intends you to honor, whether that be parents or teachers or elected officials or police officers or your boss.

Even when they don't deserve it, you cannot discount the authority that God has placed into the world just because you have been hurt by it before. Now, that doesn't mean we're not wise and discerning about it.

We'll get to that in a second, but it does mean that you can't ignore it. Fifth, failure. Failure.

We need to acknowledge, I just, we just need to acknowledge that this can be a really painful subject because frankly, some of your parents really hurt you or failed you or perhaps you have failed your children in really ways that you feel really guilty about.

There's a lot of really deep pain here. I put a couple of articles by Jen Wilkin who I've quoted a number of times in this series on our website that you can just click that link in the bulletin and find those.

[19 : 38] You know, some of you come from families that are so far from the vision here. You know, your family doesn't look anything like what you would find here and you wonder like, can I be a part of God's blessing when my family is so different?

You know, can my family work like this? You know, some of you have mistakes that you've made that you just can't take back anymore. For some of you the distance just seems insurmountable but this, that's the thing about this command.

It's not qualified by the merits of your parents. It doesn't say if your parents are pretty good at what they do then you should honor them. It puts the onus on you to first honor them whether or not they have deserved it.

That's brutal. And that's where the problem is. because none of our parents deserve it. And if you're a parent you don't deserve it either.

Because our sin sticks to us so closely. You know, there's just so much sin. Parents sin.

[20 : 54] I sin. You sin. We sin as a culture. And the idea that there could be real honor among sinners like us just seems so utterly impossible.

Now, I do want to say there is something realistic about this because this command does not tell you you know, it doesn't tell you you have to you have to do everything that your parents want you to do.

That's not what it says. It does not say on Mother's Day go buy the sappiest card that your mother will love but is absolutely not true. It does say to honor her even if you don't have those sappy feelings about her.

It is realistic in that sense. It's not telling you to just do whatever they say. It's telling you to give honor which is different and frankly much harder.

See, your call is to honor the actual parent that you have not the idealized version of the father or mother that you wish you had. your call is to honor who they are.

[22 : 04] See, we have this beautiful vision that God has given us but it seems like it's this like, you know, this beautiful like classic ship you know, some sort of like antique wooden vessel that's got sails and everything that you might put in a little you know, bottle or something and it's this ship that just comes crashing into the rocks on the outside of some sort of island.

It's just destroyed by our sin. It seems so unrealistic. How in the world can we possibly live a life of beauty when our sin is so profoundly broken?

What's the solution? Well, I think in the passages that John Mark read earlier it gives a really provocative look at the way Jesus himself obeyed these commands.

You see Jesus doing a lot of different kinds of things. On the one hand he honored and obeyed his parents when he was a child in Jerusalem. Right? They left him and he corrected them.

He said, you know, shouldn't you have expected I was going to be at my father's house? I'm sure old Joseph was like, what are you talking about? You know, we're going back to my house.

[23 : 12] He's like, no, no, no, no. I want to be at my father's house. You know, he, but then did you notice the very end of that passage? It says in verse 15, which I don't have pulled up in my Bible.

Let's see. I think it's verse 15. No, 51. No. Yeah, 51. He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them.

And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. She noticed. Huh. He wants to be in the temple. There's something going on with him and yet he's submitting to me.

But then we read later that when he's an adult and they come to him and they say, you know, your mother and your brothers are asking for you.

And he says, who are my mother and my brothers? Aren't they the people who hear God's word and obey it? He's finding that he has a truer identification with people that supersedes his earthly family.

[24 : 18] There's something really important about that for us. And I don't want to take the whole time to talk about this, but in Jesus he's setting for us a reality that there can be a family that supersedes our earthly family of origin.

We could say this, that the church has the possibility to become the family you never had. To become the family of origin that isn't saddled by the problems of your family of origin.

religion. The church has the possibility to do that, and that's actually an aspect of this commandment. Because you learn to follow this commandment by the way that you learn in the church.

We have authority. You know, the Roman Catholic Church calls the priest's father, which I actually have some theological problems with, but for illustration purposes it proves the point that there is, there's an authority structure.

Your elders are called to exercise authority, and yet do so in a way that reflects Christ, a beautiful authority. So there is the possibility that the church becomes a place where this begins to get worked out in us.

[25 : 32] But there's something deeper about Jesus here. In fact, if we had read at the end of the Gospel of John, when Jesus is on the cross, and John's Gospel is the only one that records this because John wrote it, it records Jesus in his final hours on the cross looking at his mother, knowing he's dying, and entrusting his mother's care to John, his best friend.

Saying, take care of her. He's honoring his mother even at the moment that he is accomplishing the will of his heavenly father. These things are mixed in him.

On the one hand, he is the perfect son, and yet he's the perfect son of his heavenly father. That's what's so unique and wonderful about Jesus. He accomplished in his life everything that we haven't been able to accomplish.

You know, his family dealt with the same kinds of things that your family might deal with. Do you ever wonder why Joseph, his dad, wasn't at the cross? You know, where's Joseph?

He just like drops out of the scene after Jesus is a young boy. We don't know what happened to him. Maybe he died prematurely. You know, maybe he turned 40 and he bought a classic car and took off.

[26 : 51] I don't know. I doubt it, but, you know, he's not there. Jesus' family life was not perfect, and yet he, in the midst of it, was perfect.

He lived for this beautiful vision that God is putting forward, and when we say, oftentimes we say things like, Jesus fulfilled the law. What we mean is just this, that in his life Jesus was the perfect child.

He was the perfect citizen. He was the perfect parent, we could say, even though he did not have children of his own. Jesus was the honoring son or daughter that you and I have failed to be.

Jesus became the good parent that you and I have failed to be in the way that he cared for and gathered up his people. He is the gentlest yet most protective father that we needed and didn't get.

He is the nurturing yet the unneedy mother that we don't have. Jesus fulfilled everything that we cannot, even in the realm of his family life. And the reason he did this was to bring you into this new world.

[28 : 10] Jesus has accomplished the vision that you couldn't accomplish because of your sin in order to establish a way for you to begin to live in that vision.

This is what we call the good news of the gospel. Jesus has accomplished something that you could never accomplish so that you could receive what you don't deserve. This is what the cross, this is what's happening at the cross of Jesus.

He is fulfilling his mission, fulfilling in all obedience. He is the one who did not deserve to die because he fulfilled the law perfectly and yet he took your sin upon himself and now he gives you his righteousness, his goodness.

He welcomes you into his, this beautiful vision for life by his grace. This is what it means. When we say that we have faith in Christ, that's what it means, is we take his perfection to be our own.

And we give him the sin that is so sticky for us. In 1936, Ernest Hemingway wrote this famous short story.

[29 : 27] And the story revolves around this father and his teenage son, Paco. It's set in Spain. Paco was kind of a pretty common name in Spain at the time and so it made sense.

And Paco was this teenage son. He had big visions for himself. He wanted to be a matador, of course, in Spain in the 30s. Ernest Hemingway writing about it because that's what Ernest Hemingway wanted.

He wanted to be a matador and he wanted to escape his dad's control. And so Paco runs away from his kind of provincial town and he runs to Spain, the capital, or to Madrid, the capital of Spain.

And so his father, over time, is desperate to reconcile with his son. And so he follows him to Madrid and he puts this ad in the local newspaper with a simple phrase.

Here's what the ad read. On the front page of the newspaper in Madrid, Dear Paco, meet me in front of the Madrid newspaper office tomorrow at noon. All is forgiven.

[30 : 28] I love you. Here's what Hemingway wrote to close the story. The next day at noon in front of the newspaper office, there were 800 Pacos all seeking forgiveness.

What Jesus is offering is something that we all desperately want, is to be made right again. See, the commandment, without seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of the command, is just another law that will destroy you.

It will show you how far you have to go. It will show you the beautiful vision of what you want and it will show you how far you have yet to go to accomplish it. But when we see Jesus as the one who has entered in and fulfilled this commandment, as He's fulfilled them all, we begin to have the hope that all could be reconciled.

That there could be one who overcomes our sin with His own obedience. That there could be one who is not disregarding the law, but who is making the law possible.

We can become like Paco. We can find that forgiveness and reconciliation. Now, here's the thing. Becoming a Christian and turning to Jesus is not going to fix all the problems in your family.

[31 : 57] It's not going to fix all the problems in society. Your family that blew apart, it's not going to make it all come back together again. Maybe not ever in this life. But, to turn to Christ, in particular with this command, puts a stake in the ground that says, I actually believe that because of what Jesus has done, there is the possibility for a small piece of this beautiful vision to be made real in my life.

I may not be able to fix everything, but you know what I can do? I can honor my parents. I can treat them with the kind of grace and mercy that God has treated me with.

I can love them even though they don't deserve it. I could probably go on, but I'm going to stop there.

I find this to be one of the hardest commands. One, because I don't honor my parents very well. And two, because I think I ought to be honored more than I deserve by my kids.

And so it does this double whammy of not measuring up. And what I need is Jesus to enter in and to say, I will be for you what you could never be.

[33 : 37] And to free me then to begin to obey in what little ways I'm able to do. As we turn away from this, we're going to actually turn to our confession of sin, which is oriented around this.

And I want to give you a time just to pray. And then we'll turn into our time of prayer. But I'd like for you to turn the page to the confession of sin. And let me just read through this with you.

If you are not, if you don't come from a tradition where you typically confess your sins, I want to encourage you that this is one of the particular ways that we can apply the truth of God's word to ourself.

Is we can stop in this moment, not look past this, but to deepen and to pray that God will apply these things to our hearts.

So would you in an attitude of prayer confess your sins with me, saying together, O good and loving God, you call us to honor, love, and revere not just our parents, but all whom you have placed in our lives with your authority.

[34 : 47] Yet, we rarely honor to those deserving of honor. Instead, we fight and fail to love as you have loved us. When we have authority, we misuse and abuse it.

Worse, we reject your authority and seek to live our lives our way. We follow ourselves, not your son, Jesus. Forgive us and renew us.

Send us your grace and mercy and enable us to share it with others, even with those in authority over us. Through Christ we pray.

Amen. Let me give you just a second to reflect on this confession and also on the things that I've said and let you confess your sins to the Lord on your own. And I'll bring us back together with prayer.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[35 : 48] Lord, our words do not honor.

Our judgmental thoughts don't honor. We hold our parents to standards that we would never want anyone else to hold us to. Some of us are still holding on to wounds from their parents that we can't let go of.

Some of us need to lean into forgiveness. Some of us need to simply submit to them. some of us need to some of us need to simply pick up the phone.

Father, all of us need to grow and to see our care for our parents as our honoring of our parents as honoring you. And yet, Lord, what we see is that you are the one who brings forgiveness and grace.

And so I pray for all of those who turn to you in repentance, Lord, that you might grant them forgiveness, renewal, and grace through Christ Jesus our Lord.

[37 : 25] Amen. Hear these words of grace for you. The Lord, our God, is merciful and gracious. He is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will He repay, nor will He keep His anger forever.

He does not deal with us according to our sins or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love towards those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove His transgressions from us.

Amen. Amen.