

Honor the LORD

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[0:00] It's solid, let's record it. What I thought I'd do tonight is that I would start with asking a question of you, and then I'll get into the scripture.

And so the question really is, what does it mean to honor the Lord to you personally? Okay. I think that's written somewhere.

That sounds familiar. That's a good word. Okay, that's two people.

I think when I talk to other people in some way about the Lord, I'm honoring the Lord. I think you are too.

Yeah. I don't want to make this into a kindergarten class, but what are some other ways we honor the Lord? We worship him.

[1:29] We worship. And we worship him. Respect him. Very good. We worship him. I just follow the 10 commandments. Okay, so that leads to where I wanted to head, and that is, in the Jewish tradition, what did it mean to follow the Lord?

It was to keep the commandments, right? And so what I'd like to do is look at two short passages in the Gospel of Mark and one longer passage in the Gospel of Luke.

And the first two of Luke is the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler. Although in the Gospel of Mark, he's not called the rich young ruler.

He's called a man. But if you look at the same story in the other Gospels, you can piece that together. So let's start in Matthew 10 at the 17th verse.

I'd ask someone to read, but I think that would not be good for Raymond's... Are you going to edit this?

[2:33] I have no way of doing it. So folks who hear this, there are a lot of nice people who answered the question I asked, and you won't have any idea what they said. But they were all good answers.

But right now I'm going to read from Mark chapter 10, begin with the 17th verse. And as Jesus was setting out on your journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus said to him, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal.

Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud. Honor your father and your mother. And he said to him, Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth. And Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him, You lack one thing.

Go, sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me. Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.

[3:39] Jesus loved this man. You heard that, didn't you?

I mean, he was a good person. Jesus named commandments 5 through 10. Not exactly in the same order as we would find in Exodus or Deuteronomy.

But those are the commandments that he named. And this guy, young man from the other Gospels, said that he's done these things.

But Jesus perceives that something was keeping him from eternal life. And what was that? His stuff. Of course, that could never happen in America. Right. Okay. But Jesus is saying, if you want to honor God, keep God's commandments, right?

[4:45] The Hebrew scriptures say that if you'll keep God's commandments, you'll live.

Deuteronomy 30, verses 15 to 16. God speaking through Moses says, If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply and the Lord your God will bless you.

This is the way to inherit eternal life, right? Keep the commandments. At least that was the Jewish understanding. But do you see any problem with this way? We can't keep them.

No. No. As good as this person thought he was, you know, honestly, he couldn't have kept them perfectly.

He still had his old nature, what we know as an old nature as Christians. And Jesus showed him that. How could that guy have inherited eternal life?

I believe. If he followed Jesus, he could have inherited eternal life, right?

[6:12] Well, you saw how disheartened the man was when Jesus laid down this proposition. He went away full of sorrow. He wasn't willing to put aside everything that he had to follow Jesus.

Well, let's look at number two. And he's in Mark chapter 12. And we're going to start at verse 28. To set the context for this, the Sadducees have been asking about the resurrection and they were arguing.

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another. And seeing that he answered them well, that is, Jesus, he asked him, which commandment is the most important of all?

Jesus answered, the most important is here, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength.

The second is this. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. And the scribes said to him, you are right, teacher. You have truly said that he is one and there is no other beside him.

[7:29] And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all holbert offerings and sacrifices.

And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, you are not far from the kingdom of God. And after that, no one dared ask him any more questions.

Well, we've moved from a rich young man or a rich young ruler to a scribe. One of your people, Raymond. Oh, yeah.

It was a dump on the world. A scribe was an interpreter of the law. He was an expert in God's law. He was a biblical scholar, respected in authority. And he comes to Jesus and you noticed he was very respectful.

[8:35] At one point in their conversation, he says, teacher. That's maybe not today, but back then that was a respectful thing to say. And he observed that in this dispute with the Sadducees, Jesus had given some really good answers.

And so he has a question for Jesus. What's the most important commandment? Of course, the most important commandment is to love God.

That's what those first commandments tell us to do. The second commandment is to love your neighbors yourself, which that had been put together in Jewish tradition.

Those those two commandments. But, you know, Jesus takes the law. 613 of them. And he compresses it to just two.

From 613 to 10. 10 commandments, by the way, those are categories. Each one has something to say about a particular category.

[9:49] Adultery is about sexuality. Theft. Pretty clear, right? Coveting. But these are categories. And you could put the 613 commandments more or less under these.

I mean, some of the. I'm reading in Leviticus right now in my devotional time. And it doesn't make a whole lot of sense at points.

I have to admit. At least to me. A biblical scholar like Bishop Bennett is no problem. But yeah, for Bishop Bennett. But Jesus takes the.

The 613 commandments. And puts them down into these two commandments. And. The scribe acknowledges. The wisdom of Jesus' answer.

He says that. To live these two commandments is greater than the Jewish sacrificial system. And so from a Jewish standpoint.

[10:53] The answer always comes back to the same place. To honor God. Is to keep the commandments. But again, we.

Whether it's. Ten commandments or. Two commandments. We. Have the same problem. Jesus said.

Be perfect. Therefore is your father. And. Your heavenly father is perfect. Matthew 5. 48. And perfect. Really means mature. Mature.

In your belief. But. It still doesn't. I mean. Mature just seems a little softer than. Than perfect.

Right. But. Still. Huh? Sorry. No one's perfect. No one's perfect. Except for God.

[11:48] That's right. No one is perfect but God. But then when you. Look at what Jesus said. Love the Lord your God. With all your heart. Soul. Mind. And strength. All of it. Total devotion.

That's hard. In fact. That's downright impossible. Because. We. We have this. Sin. Nature. Within us. That. Makes us want to do what we want to do.

Right. Not what God wants us to do. God wants our undivided attention. He wants the devotion of our entire being. But we don't measure up.

None of us. And so. I take great comfort. In a third story.

The one in. The gospel of Luke. It's in. Luke chapter 10. Starting at verse 25. Excuse me.

[12:52] Let me see. I might have written that down wrong. Luke. Yep. I did write. It's. It's. Excuse me. Luke 7. Starting at verse 36. Oh.

I know. Never mind. That's just. Never mind. Tony wasn't following his notes. But that's okay. So this is a longer passage.

It's about a dinner. Jesus is invited to at a Pharisee's house. We're told in the middle of it. The Pharisee's name is Simon. We don't know where this happened.

It could have been in Capernaum. It could have been in Nain. Those are two places that Jesus was in the gospel of Luke. But we know that the gospel writers sometimes put these things together for reasons other than just strict chronology.

So we don't really know where Jesus was. But starting at verse 36. One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.

[14:00] And behold, a woman of the city who was a sinner. When she learned that he was reclining at a table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment. And standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.

And kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him.

For she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he answered, Say it, teacher. A certain money lender had two debtors.

One owed 500 denarii and the other 50. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon answered, The one I suppose for whom he canceled the larger debt.

And he said to him, You have judged rightly. Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

[15:12] You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven. For she loved much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little. And he said to her, Your sins are forgiven.

Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, Who is this who even forgives sins? And he said to the woman, Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

That's a beautiful story, isn't it? And if you think about Israel, when there was a great banquet in ancient times, people would wander in.

And she heard that Jesus was going to be at this house, and she wandered in. And she did a wonderful thing. This woman is described as a woman of the city.

[16:25] Now that could sound a bit ambivalent, but then Luke adds a sinner. And of course, that's what the Pharisee understood.

But he acts as if Jesus didn't understand that. This woman of the city, she's just not, you know, dripping down little raindrops.

And this is a flood of tears. They're washing Jesus' feet. And then she bends down, and she anoints his feet with oil. Well, just to cut to the chase a little bit, a sinner in this context means that she was probably a prostitute.

And for the Pharisees, her touching Jesus' feet would make him unclean. But that's not the way Jesus saw it, and that's not the way he acted.

Jesus told a parable that I think the Pharisee probably understood.

[17 : 46] Here's a debt of 500 denarii, and here's a debt of 50 denarii. Even Pharisees could do simple math, I'm quite sure. This person with 500 denarii, that's 10 times the 50 denarii.

And yet the moneylender forgave them both. And so when Jesus asks them the question, now which of them will love him more?

The answer is pretty obvious, isn't it? And so we may not be able to keep the entire Ten Commandments, we don't do all that well with just the two Great Commandments, truthfully. But this story tells us that Jesus' forgiveness is there for us. This parable makes it clear, as do Jesus' words at the very end of this.

He says to the woman, your sins are forgiven. And then he says, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. The kindness, mercy, and generosity of the moneylender's course.

[19 : 12] Like the kindness, generosity, and mercy that God has for each of us. The forgiveness of sins. I mean, there are probably some people in here that far outshine me in the righteousness department.

And there might be other people here that far outshine me in the sinning department. I don't know. But it doesn't really matter. It matters in the sense that in Christ, our sins are forgiven.

This woman was not a righteous woman. But she loved Jesus. You suppose people ever wander into our churches and they're not very righteous people, but they're drawn by Jesus.

I mean, Jesus did say, you know, if I'm lifted up, I will draw all people to myself, right? And if we can love our neighbor as ourselves when these folks come in, what will they find?

Well, I would submit that they find abundant redemption. I think that's what this story is about.

Abundant redemption. I looked that up on Google because Google has a lot more great ideas than I do.

[20 : 35] This notorious sinner does this crazy, generous act to Jesus. and what she receives for it is abundant redemption.

Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace. the kindness, mercy, and generosity of the moneylender was bestowed on both.

But this forgiveness of debt that God gives us is based on his love, his grace, his forgiveness, his mercy.

And our response is very simple. We open our arms wide and we receive from God's bounty. The kicker for me is verse 47 in this verse.

Her sins which are many are forgiven for she loved much. And he who forgives little loves little. And so that really speaks to me about our relationships with one another.

[22 : 00] If churches can't be houses of forgiveness, we're not really honoring our master, are we? And so this woman by an act of devotion shows that she honors Jesus.

Jesus absolves her of her sins. And the people that are listening, did you notice their response? Who is this who even forgives sins?

Well, it's only the Savior of the world, that's all. It's the same kind of response when we're in the boat, right? And Jesus calms the storm. Who is this who makes the waves and the wind cease?

Well, it's the God of the universe. that's in chapter 8 of Mark, by the way. That's just right across the page. The rich and ruler and the scribe came to Jesus with questions.

The woman of the city, a sinner, came to Jesus with something much different. For the rich and ruler and the scribe, it was on an intellectual level, wasn't it?

[23 : 16] You know, what must I do to inherit eternal life? What's the greatest commandment? But the woman shows her, shows her heart, really, I think.

There was a church of England bishop named Charles Ellicott. He was bishop of Gloucester and Bristol. And he suggests a range of emotions just swirling within this woman as she stood behind Jesus, as she wet his feet with her tears, as she bent down to anoint him with the oil, the ointment. He looks at this story and says, in her easy shame and penitence, gratitude and joy, love. Her shower of tears on the feet of Jesus was a release of emotion.

And so we have three very different people. Two face to face with Jesus, one at his back. Two came from meeting of the minds, one came to express love.

