

A Mother's Honour

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[0 : 00] Good morning, church. The scripture reading for today is taken from Matthew chapter 15, verses 1 through 9.!

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat. He answered them, And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, Honor your father and your mother, and whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.

But you say, If anyone tells his father or his mother, What you would have gained from me is given to God, he need not honor his father.

So for the sake of your tradition, you have made void the word of God. You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

[1 : 12] In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. Amen. Good morning.

Thank you, Joan. I want to join Lyndon in wishing all the mothers a very, very happy Mother's Day. There is a very bad old joke about mothers. My mother is here this morning, so I can't resist saying it. It's just one sentence that goes, If it wasn't for my mother, I would really not be here today. It's bad, but if you think of it on many levels, it's so true. We really do, O mothers, our own and others, a special debt of gratitude.

You're so right, Lyndon. Women are special, and who knows where women get the strength to do what they do on a daily basis.

[2 : 17] It's truly a gift from God. So, growing up, I had some fond memories of my childhood, and some of those memories included the games that we played.

So there's one game in particular that you would call Catch, and it starts off with a rhyme, and then a mother would chase some rude and disobedient children around, trying to catch them.

So, I'm going to recite this rhyme that we used to start off the game with, and if you know it, and if you're my age or older, you probably know it, you can help me.

It goes like this. Maturing, maturing, you hear me calling you? Why you don't come? I can send my dog at you.

I can send my cat at you. Who learned you their manners? Who learned you their manners? And then the game would begin. If you are visiting with us, you might not know this, but I think just from that brief recital, you would know that this rhyme is an extreme example.

[3 : 38] It's the height of disrespect and dishonor from a child. It shows utter contempt for a mother.

It shows disrespect for her. But the passage that we just read, that Joan read for us, it points out that dishonor can sometimes be in a much more subtle fashion.

dishonoring our mother and dishonoring father sometimes is very subtle. In fact, even what appears to be honoring mother and father can also be dishonoring mother and father.

But it's just as dangerous as overt and blatant disrespect. So as we celebrate our mothers on this Mother's Day, let's consider this passage that we have come to.

And let's begin by looking to the Lord in prayer. Pray with me, please. Lord, I stand before you knowing that I am inadequate to handle your word.

[4 : 54] Lord, we pray that you would be gracious to me, that you would touch my mind, my mouth, touch my entire being.

Lord, may this message not be from me, but be your message. We pray, Lord, that your spirit will truly be the teacher, that you would move however you choose to move.

And may your will be done through your word. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. So as we go through the passage this morning, I trust that you will see that is our clinging to the word of God, not man-made practices that leads us to truly honor our mothers.

I hope to demonstrate this through two very brief points. They are traditions and then commandments. So let's first look at traditions.

So when we see the Pharisees and the scribes approach Jesus in Matthew 15, right away we should see a contrast between what they propose to Jesus and what Jesus actually upholds.

[6 : 18] We see a clash between their tradition on the one hand and what Jesus upholds, the commandments of God on the other hand.

So if we look at verse 2, this is their question. Why do your disciples break the traditions of the elders?

And of course the elders are the men. I don't believe the Pharisees realized it, but underlying their question is an inordinate respect for men and a disregard for God's word.

We can see that they are actually elevating men above God in this instance. It seems that they are more sensitive to the possibility of offending the elders over the possibility of disobedience to God.

And it would be wise to always be aware of what are man-made traditions versus what are the commandments of God. That's not to say that they are not biblical traditions or that they are not traditions that honor God even if they are not expressly commanded by God.

[7 : 57] But it would serve us well to always keep in view what is commanded and understand what is not commanded. And it would serve us well to constantly evaluate how what we practice aligns with biblical teachings.

So I believe we all want to honor our mothers. I hope that we can see that the practices of gift-giving, on Mother's Day, the practices of spending extended time with our mother, they're not explicitly commanded, but they are traditions that we have adopted.

And that's not a judgment to say it is bad or it is good. I think as we go further, we will get a better view of these practices in light of God's word.

These are not bad things. I don't want to give the impression that they are evil. But I only want to point out that Mother's Day and their practices are not explicitly commanded.

And I want to elaborate more on this in my second point, which is the commandments. So when the Pharisees and scribes pose their question to Jesus, he doesn't skip a beat.

[9 : 19] He doesn't waste time even answering their question. Instead, he gets to what is truly important. It's the contrast between their tradition and God's commandment.

In verse 3, he answered them, And why do you break the commandments of God for the sake of your tradition? Look at how he lays out that contrast very clearly.

He's speaking about God's commandments in one hand and the tradition of men on the other hand.

So to be clear, what's happening here is the Pharisees have come to try and trap Jesus.

They intended this question to prove that Jesus was not qualified as a rabbi because he was not following the Jewish traditions.

But what happened was Jesus actually ended up showing them that their practices were never even commanded by God. And even though they acted as though they were, they were far off from true worship.

[10 : 35] So over the centuries that since the law was given to Moses by God, Jewish religious leaders had added many, many practices and added many, many rules to the Ten Commandments.

And this washing of the hands was one of these rules. You were to wash your hands in utensils before eating. And here Jesus uses the Fifth Commandment to demonstrate how they were elevating their own practices above the true commands of God.

So I want us to take a closer look at the commandments of God in general and then specifically the Ten Commandments so we would have a better understanding of why we ought to keep God's instructions prioritized in our lives rather than man-made traditions.

So this command to honor father and mother is not given in isolation. It's given along with nine other commandments and they have come to be called the Ten Commandments.

So the first thing I want to point out is that the sentiment that we should have towards God's commandments.

[12:07] I'm not going to take a poll here but I think generally most people think the Ten Commandments are oppressive they're restrictive sometimes you feel as though they're meant to keep us from good things to keep us from having any fun and keeps us from enjoying life.

That might be a general sentiment towards the commandments of God but I want to suggest that the Ten Commandments and the commandments of God in general really are the opposite. The commandments help us to enjoy life as it truly ought to be enjoyed. Here's what theologian and author Kevin DeYoung says about the commandments.

We too often think of the Ten Commandments as constraining us as if God's ways will keep us in servitude and from realizing our dreams and reaching our potential.

We forget that God means to give us abundant life as in John 10.10 and true freedom as in John 8.32. His laws 1 John 5 and 3 tells us are not brittles son.

[13:34] God isn't trying to crush us with red tape and regulations. The Ten Commandments aren't prison bars for traffic laws. And to further illustrate the point just imagine how pleasant it would be to drive a Nassau if everyone followed the rules of the road.

Just imagine if you didn't have to wait until someone with a red light decided it was time to let you go when you're sitting at the green light. Or ever since they changed this law when you can turn left on red.

People just turn without knowing whether they have the right of way or not. And I've seen many accidents. It's true chaos sometimes driving on the streets of Nassau.

But now imagine if we all followed simple traffic rules and imagine how pleasant it would be to drive. My children often drive with me. They can tell you I am not a happy driver. I'm working on it. I'm working on it.

[14:46] But truly it's chaos. But what the commandments do when we properly understand them and follow them is give us order and give us guardrails so we don't wreck our lives and others.

All right. Well, that's how we ought to view God's commandments. They intended to keep us from crashing or driving ourselves into a ditch.

So the second thing I want you to realize about the Ten Commandments is that there's a structure to them. And the structure creates two levels. While all the commandments are important, let's understand how they are ordered.

the first four commandments deal with our relationship with God. And then the last six with how we are to relate to other people.

In the first four, God starts out by emphasizing our relationship with Him. And so we understand that we should have no other God before Him. We should have no idols.

[15:58] We should not use His name in vain. and we should not forsake times of worshiping Him. And so after relationship with God, we look at the relationship with one another.

And then we have to pay special attention to the fact that the very first commandment in this section, the section of how we deal with one another, it centers around our relationship with our father and our mother.

mother. So in that, God prioritizes father and mother above other people we have relationships with. He says that we are to honor father and mother. And I think all of us, even the smallest one in here, among the smallest ones, we understand what it is to honor.

It's to respect. It is to hold in high regard and to revere our parents. So it's no coincidence that God starts with our attitude toward our parents and how we treat our parents as soon as he begins to instruct us how we are to live with one another.

[17:17] He begins with them because this relationship with parents is a special and a sacred relationship. relationship. And they are our most significant relationship, especially as we are young children.

So we are to respect them greatly. And if our demeanor towards God and our demeanor towards our parents are properly aligned, then we have a good chance of living peaceably with others who we encounter.

and Christ points out that God places such a premium on respect for our parents that in the Old Testament, God actually pronounces the sentence of death on those who revile or strike their parents.

So we see this in Exodus 21 verses 15 and Exodus 21 verse 17. and underscores how serious it is that we treat our parents with honor.

Exodus 21 and 17 says, whoever curses his father and his mother or his mother shall be put to death. Again, God places a premium on honoring father and mother.

[18 : 46] And here's what Matthew Henry says in his commentary on Exodus 21 and 17.

Blasphemy against God and imprecations upon parents were the only two sins of the tongue which the law expressly required to be punished with death.

In later times, analogy was held to require that cursing the ruler of the people would be visited with the same penalty. the severity of the sentence indicates that in God's sight, such sins are of the deepest dye.

So there's a debate over whether Christ in Matthew 15 was upholding capital punishment and in particular for this sin. But if we lay aside the debate, what we can say for sure in this passage is that Christ was upholding the solemnity, the solemnness of a relationship between parent and child. He was affirming that parents are to be honored and a high premium is to be placed on that. So as we said before, the commandments, including the commandment to honor the father and mother are for our protection.

So there are guardrails that prevent us from wrecking. Let's not forget also that there's a flip side to the commandment. God's word says that those who honor father and mother have the promise that things will go well with them in life.

[20 : 35] So if you've lived long enough, and I certainly have, you'll probably be able to think of instances where you've seen people who have dishonored father and mother and be able to say that truly things did not go well with them in life.

But sometimes, as I mentioned earlier, dishonoring our parents is subtle. And this is what Jesus is pointing out to the Pharisees in Matthew 15 and 5.

Jesus refers to this practice that the Pharisees adopted of dedicating their money and their resources to the temple. And they were using it as an excuse not to care for their mother and their father in their old age.

So the Pharisees had created a loophole in the law that allowed them to not care for their father and their mother as God has commanded.

They were using God as an excuse not to obey God. And they were using God as an excuse to get out of taking care of their parents.

[21 : 56] Now, I'm not sure it can get any lower than that. To use God as an excuse not to obey God. So Jesus exposes their evil.

Even though they were trying to present their sin as something righteous, Jesus exposes it for what it is. It was sin. So even though their actions were dressed up as something righteous, they were sinning because they were not honoring father and mother.

they were not following that commandment. They were doing the opposite. They were actually dishonoring their parents. And Jesus' conclusion about them is found in verses 7 to 9.

this is what he says, you hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, this people honors me with their lips, for their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me, teaching us doctrines, the commandments of men. So Jesus concluded that their talk about righteousness was just that, just talk.

[23 : 23] And we all can relate to this, as the Bahamian saying goes, mouth can say anything. But the old people say, your actions will buy the land.

So despite their claims of being righteous, their hearts were not righteous. their hearts were set on other things.

Their hearts were pride. They were set on wealth. They were set on their own greed. They were set on their own ambitions. But it was definitely not set on doing the will of God.

Their hearts were not even close to God. Jesus says their hearts were far from God. And so here Jesus gives the key.

he gives the answer to safeguarding ourselves from the tradition of men and the answer to walking within the bounds of Scripture.

[24 : 27] He reveals that it's about our hearts. Our hearts ought to be bent towards God. God. It is then that we will have love in our hearts for our parents.

It is then that we will have love in our hearts for others and good works will flow from it. And this is the amazing result of the new covenant over which Christ presides.

this new covenant is not based on the rigid laws that we see in the Old Testament. It's not based on following laws that people feel that will keep them from enjoying life.

It's not based on punishment for disobedience. but it is based on the grace of God that truly changes us.

That truly makes us new creations. And it causes us not to feel burdened by the law. Instead we feel joy in keeping God's commandments.

[25 : 51] Here's what it says in Hebrews 8 verses 7 to 12 and starts off talking about the old covenant. For if that first covenant had been faultless there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

For he finds fault with them when he says, Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant.

And so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord, for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

And they shall not teach each one to his neighbor and each one to his brother saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest.

[27 : 11] For I will be merciful toward their iniquities and I will remember their sin no more. what we see here is that we need God's changing power to work in our lives.

We need the Lord even to honor our parents, something that we should naturally want to do, but we need the Lord to actually do it. So I imagine today that millions of people around the world will do special things with their mothers.

I imagine that there will be a lot of lunches, there will be a lot of gifts, but is it, as Jesus said at the end of the passage we read, is it just lip service?

And the thing is, if we reserve our care and concern for our mother for just this day, if it's limited to just this day, then maybe it is just lip service.

Maybe we're just following a tradition that we have adopted. Maybe there are some people who feel that if they have given attention to their mother on Mother's Day, they have fulfilled some obligation, and they don't have to do it again until maybe next year.

[28 : 38] But if our hearts are yielded to God, we will show care for our mothers beyond this date, and we will truly honor our mothers biblically.

And in doing that, when we honor our mothers biblically, we honor God because we are following His commands. But the only way we have God's heart in us is if He Himself changes our hardened hearts, if He regenerates us, if He causes us to worship Him in our speech and our actions.

That's including the way we honor our mothers. So may that be where we all find ourselves today.

And we find ourselves honoring God through keeping the command to truly honor our mothers.

Let's pray. Father, we thank You for the gift You have given us in our mothers.

We pray, Lord, for their strength. We pray, Lord, that You would uphold them, that You would keep them. We pray, Lord, that You would operate in the lives of our mothers so that they are able to withstand pressures of the world.

[30 : 13] They're able to care for families, for children, as You would have them to do. And we pray, Lord, that You would cause them to teach in their homes Your Word and Your commands.

And, Father, as children, may You cause us to truly honor mothers, not just on a special occasion, but we pray, Lord, that You would give us the heart to honor, that You would change our lives by touching hearts, by giving us a new spirit, by making us new creations.

Father, we know that You are owed glory, You are owed honor for this, because it's not of ourselves, our natural selves, that we are able to do this.

And we pray, Lord, that as You work through us, and we show the world Your glory, through our treatment, our concern for mothers, that You would make Your name great.

So we pray for this, Lord, in the name of Your precious Son. Amen. Amen. Amen.