**Counting Down the 10 Commandments:**

**The 4th Commandment: Thou Shall Honor Thy Father and Mother**

Based on Matthew 26:36-46

Preached on March 25, 2015

Midweek Lent 5

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For our Midweek Lenten Sermons have been counting down the 10 Commandments. The Ten Commandments are God’s Law; and God’s Law tells us what we are supposed to do. **The Law is written on our hearts, and our consciences bear witness to the truth of these commandments**. And there are two responses to the knowledge of God and his law, one is to *suppress* it, the other is to *face* it and repent and flee to Christ for mercy and forgiveness, and He is eager to give it.

And so today, and throughout these Midweek Lenten services, we are going to repent. **But remember, repentance is not something you do, it’s something the Holy Spirit does, through the hearing of the Word of God and believing it.**

Today we are at the “crux”, the “cross” of the commandments. We are at the 4th Commandment, and by the “crux” I don’t mean it’s the most important or anything like that. I mean that it is a commandment where the two tables of the Law intersect. You might remember that Moses carried the commandments on two tablets of stone. The first table of the Law has to do with the command to “**Love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.”** Thou shall have no other Gods, Not misuse God’s Name, Remember the Sabbath, these all have exclusively to do with our love of God, a vertical relationship between you and God. The second table of the law describes an horizontal relationship between you and your neighbor. Thou shall not murder, commit adultery, steal, slander, covet…all these have exclusively to do with your love of your neighbor. Where the two tables, the two relational lines vertical and horizontal intersect is "the cross," the crux of the commandments, that has both to do with loving God and Loving your neighbor. You see the 4th commandment, Honor your Father and your Mother has to do with fearing and loving God by fearing and loving “God’s Representatives” on earth.

This is a hard pill to swallow today, but it good medicine. God gives authority to some people over other people on earth to act in his stead and by his command. This is clear in the command to honour your parents. Martin Luther once said that Parents are as “God” to their children. This does not mean that they are infallible, or sinless. It does mean, however, that parents have the authority to make Laws and Rules for their children, and that this authority comes from God. So children have a responsibility to obey their parents as the Lord. And parents you have the responsibility to remind your children that your authority to raise them comes from God himself, and if they disobey you, they are disobeying God.

The fourth commandment is about God-given authority, and God-expected submission to that Authority. Parents have God-given authority over their children, and God expects the children to submit to that authority. Pastors have authority over the parishioners; and God expects them to submit to that authority. Husbands have God-given authority over the wife, and God expects the wife to submit to that authority. God gives Bosses or (to use biblical language) "masters" authority over workers or servants/slaves; and God expects slaves to submit to their masters. The Government has authority over its citizens; and God expects citizens to submit to the government.

Now friends, I know, this teaching is a scandal to the world, and hard for us to conceive today. But that doesn’t change that its true and it’s in the Bible. 1 Corinthians 14:33 says God is a God of order, not of chaos. And order requires authority. And so God chooses who has the responsibility of authority and has the responsibility to submit.

And just to keep perspective, remember, being in a position of authority is no cake-walk. Certainly, you can have a husband who’s abusive; a boss who’s a bum; parents who are careless, and Pastors who are negligent, but it’s not as though they are getting away with anything. Jesus says in Mark 9:42, “Whoever causes one of these little ones, who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone where hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.” Hebrews 13:17 says, “**Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account**.” And to those who are called to watch over God’s people, God said in Ezekiel 33:8, “**If I say to the wicked, O wicked one you shall surely die, and you [watchmen, pastor] do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand**.”

The devil has convinced the world that this life is about "power," those who don’t have it seek it; and those who have it will do anything to keep it. That surely is true according to our sin, and those who are of their Father the devil. But those alive in Christ know that holding authority is no free lunch. **Authority over others in this sinful world means carrying endless responsibility for the well-being of others**. You are responsible and accountable. And for every failure you make that affects those whom you are responsible for--you O husband, boss, parent, ruler or pastor--you have to give an account to God for that. And if you use your authority in this life to serve yourself, indulge in the flesh, abuse the weak, and fatten yourself…it would have been better for you if you had never been born.

I don’t know if you experienced the same thing as me, but when I was a child, I wanted to have the freedom of my parents; now that I’m a parent, I find myself wishing I had the freedom of a child. When I was in the pew, hearing my pastor preach, I was anxious to be the pastor; now as a pastor I find myself wishing that I could just come to church every week and Hear the Word and receive.

The point being that we are never content with where we are at, and so in this world of sin, servants act like masters, and masters act like servants. Pastors act like laypeople and laypeople act like pastors. Husbands act like wives and wives act like husbands, because we’ve forgotten or suppressed the fact that God has established order on this earth. He has given authority to certain people whether they like it or not, and if they fail to use it, they are sinning. The government gives badges to police officers so they will use them, if they fail to do so they have to answer to the chief. The policeman doesn’t have to earn the respect of the citizen, the citizen owes it to the officer; and the officer must do right by the citizen or be liable to judgment.

And so regarding the 4th Commandment to honour your Father and your Mother, the catechism teaches, “**We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.**”

This is why the 4th commandment is the “cross” of the commandments. Obeying it involves obeying God by obeying your neighbor who represents him. They represent Him. When Jesus sends out his disciples to minister on his behalf he says in Luke 10:16, “**The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects Him who sent me.”** To reject Jesus’ messengers is the same as rejecting Him. And Ephesians 6:5-9, **5Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling,  with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord,  whether he is a bondservant or is free. 9Masters, do the same to them,  and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.” And** Ephesians 5:22, **“24Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, you can’t accept this teaching based on your own heart and your own reason. But that’s why faithful Christians, above all else, submit to the authority of God’s Word in the Holy Bible. If God’s Word says it, then God said it! And we are to submit, and if we fail, repent. And St. Paul is clear in Romans 13:1, “There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”

Rejecting authority has two names in the bible, “rebellion” and “lawlessness.” Rebellion and lawlessness are both a refusal to submit to authority. This is the nature of sin, that you are born with a rebellious heart that does not want to listen to anyone or anything besides itself. That’s what Satan, the first rebel, uses against you to tear you away from God’s Word. In the beginning, he appealed to Eve’s heart and mind to get her to turn away from the authority of what God said, “Thou shall not eat” to an inner authority of the heart and reason. And so she ate, and gave some to her husband who wrongfully *submitted* to her and ate, and the world was cursed with sin. Satan used rebellion to curse us in the beginning. He was the first to rebel; He was a murderer and a liar from the beginning (John 8:44), and he wants you to join his rebellion and his place prepared for him at the end. And the scriptures are clear he continues to do so until the end, when he sends the antichrist, the man of lawlessness, to deceive those who refuse to love the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:

**3***[g](http://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.4)*Let no one deceive you in any way. For [the last] day will not come, *[h](http://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.4)*unless the rebellion comes first, and *[i](http://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.4)*the man of lawlessness[*2*](http://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.4) is revealed, *[j](http://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.4)*the son of destruction,[*3*](http://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.4) **4**who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, *[k](http://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.4)*proclaiming himself to be God. …The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan *[r](http://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.4)*with all power and false signs and wonders, **10**and with all wicked deception for *[s](http://biblia.com/books/esv/2Th2.4)*those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

St. Paul tells us here that, before the end will be a notable rebellion. This rebellion is an apostasy from within the Church against God and his Truth. Paul says that rebellion is at work in the church, has been since its formation, and will persist until the end, when the antichrist, the man of lawlessness will come, spreading false teaching "in the name of Christ," but by the power of the original rebel, Satan. He comes to deceive to destroy to steal to encourage rebellion against authority.

Brothers and sisters, the 4th commandment warns us about the sin of rebellion, so that we are encouraged by God’s gift of authority through his representatives. We still have rebellious hearts, but we can know of our sinfulness, repent and be saved. And so, purge the rebellion from your heart regularly by considering this commandment. Consider your place in life, where God has called you to be. **Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered, rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deed. Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?** Then confess your sin, rebuke your rebellious heart and cheerfully go about your work and your day with joy, knowing that God never despises a repentant heart. God has work for all of us to do in this life, so obey your leaders, so that their work will be a joy, not a burden for that would be of no advantage to you (Hebrews 13:17). And leaders, do not be harsh or impatient with those under you, that you may not cause one of these little ones to stumble for sin.

And for the record, Ladies and Gentlemen, this dynamic of God’s well-ordered creation, this relationship of "authority and submission" is not some archaic and pointless thing. For the perfect model of authority is God, your heavenly Father, who invites you to call upon him in every trouble with all boldness and confidence in prayer asking him as dear children ask their dear father. And the perfect example of submission is Jesus Christ, who, though he was equal with God, submitted himself to his Fathers will, and obeyed his Father unto death, even death on a cross.

It’s easy to lose sight of the fact that Jesus was in every way like us, only without sin. That means that he did not use his divine powers to save himself, but became a man and a servant, and walked the road that we walk, only he did so perfectly. This means that he didn’t use his omniscience to understand his Father’s plan for him. Jesus knew that he had to suffer many things, be betrayed, delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day rise again, and he learned that as a man. He read the Old Testament day and night, committed it to his heart and his lips and learned from it what anyone whose paying attention would. He learned that “It is necessary that the Son of man must suffer many things, be betrayed, handed over, crucified and on the third day rise again." And so this is an important point to remember, when Jesus was in his humiliation, on his way to the cross, he knew that salvation had to be accomplished in this way, “It is written”, God’s Word said so. But he still didn’t know why it had to be that way.

He knew he was going to be betrayed, delivered into the hands of sinful men, die on the cross and on the third day rise again because he read the Scriptures and he knew them. What he didn’t know was ***why*** it was necessary that salvation be accomplished this way. He only knew that it was necessary because the Bible said so, because His Father said so, and Father knows best. And so Jesus submitted to the Father.

In the Garden at Gethsemane, on the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus began to be sorrowful and troubled. He knew the cross was coming, he knew because the Scriptures said so. And he knew the outcome…salvation for you his beloved. But he didn’t know why his Father planned it this way. It seemed to him as it seems to us, harsh, cruel, unbearable, why would the Father choose this plan of salvation? Why, why, why? Jesus felt that, the same way you felt when your husband made a decision that you didn’t understand, the same your children felt when they couldn’t understand why you said no to something that appeared to them reasonable and good; the same way you felt when your boss made this call instead of the other one you thought was right; the same way you feel when your leaders and rulers in the church and in the government make decisions that you don’t immediately understand. Jesus felt that too, only he had waiting for him on the other side of that fateful decision of the Father…a cross and the full punishment of hell waiting for him.

Jesus knew the scriptures said it was necessary, but he didn’t understand why. Which is why His soul was very sorrowful that night in the garden, and he fell on his face and prayed, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” Jesus didn’t nag his Father, or bombard him with an endless barrage of “why, why, why,” like your children do in their disobedience. Instead he came in full submission, acknowledging the Fathers authority, pleading for another way, but finally in faithful obedience saying, My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink this cup (of wrath on the cross), your will be done. And the lamb goes uncomplaining forth to the cross because he loves his father with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, and because he loves you as himself, and the place that lands anyone in a world of sin is the cross.

*A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
 The guilt of sinners bearing
And, laden with the sins of earth,
 None else the burden sharing;
Goes patient on, grows weak and faint,
To slaughter led without complaint,
 That spotless life to offer,
He bears the stripes, the wounds, the lies,
The mockery, and yet replies,
 “All this I gladly suffer.”*

("A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth" LSB Hymn #438)