



## IT'S ALL ABOUT VALUE!

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As we continue our series on “In search of the Good Life,” and as I was preparing this week, I had a strong identification with the 49ers. Now I don’t mean the football team; I mean the *real* 49ers; those hard-working men of 1849 who rushed to California to make a difference in their life, a difference in their families. Those folks that rushed out there and used instruments like a pick axe, digging in the ground, and what were they looking for? Gold! An unbelievable thing happened in our country—people could dig wealth from the ground! But then a problem arose: pyrite. Anybody know what the name of that is? Fools gold! We’ve got a picture of it up here. Oh, look at it. Shimmers and shines. Looks just like the real stuff. But those poor men had to develop a discerning eye to tell the difference between a worthless mineral and this. Now this gold makes you happy, doesn’t it? You can leave a load of *that* at my house. See, the difficulty they had, those 49ers, was how do you discern what has value and what is meaningless?

I think our times, our society, does the same thing and it has for every generation; the blurring of significance, the changing of value. Have you seen it in your life? I’ve seen it in mine. Have you seen it in your society? I’ve seen it in mine, and yet, in this series, God states very, very specifically what base line values he wants his people to have. In the first four of the commandments, it was a vertical relationship with God. It’s how do we deal with our God. Beginning this week and the next two after it, the next six commandments deal with a horizontal relationship of man with man. In fact, one time they asked Jesus what’s the greatest commandment, he said love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. Those are the first four commands, and then he says love your neighbor as yourself and that’s the next six commands. Today we will examine number five and number six to see what God says should have value in our life. You see, it’s all about value. Won’t you pray with me?

Father, we thank you for your word and the joy of your word, the power of your word and I ask by the power of your Holy Spirit that you bring your word to life. I ask that you give me, a mere mortal man, words worth hearing and ask that you would just speak to us in these moments. That we may see and know and understand what is significant, what has value. This day, Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be acceptable unto you. We pray. Amen.

Our text for today is Exodus 20:12-13. Verse 12 says “Honor your father and your mother so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God has given you”, and number 13 says “You shall not murder”. Now, it’s very interesting to deal with those and I wanted to draw that analogy of value to your attention. The first is, how do you honor your parents? What does it mean to honor them? It means to prize them, to respect them, to care for them and, in the process I have to explain something that most of you don’t need to know. But, there are no such things as perfect parents. Anybody recognize that in their life? But that is one of the reasons that God says this is the truth, that authority, or the respect of authority, begins in the home. It has broken my heart in my lifetime to see a disintegration of respect for authority. Ever notice that? Used to be public officials, teachers, pastors, priests, policemen, judges, were held with great respect, but the authority has been underridden, undercut in our society, and I believe that it starts in the home. One of the reasons God says honor your parents is because that is the beginning level of understanding of authority and respect and it is also a truth that your relationship with your parents will effect most of the rest of the relationships the rest of your life. But, what does it mean to ‘honor’ your parents?

I think that honor, or the definition, or the application of that honor changes with time. Most of us understand that for children, the concept of honoring your parents simply means obedience, but now your parents are a little older and they’ve been down the road a little more. It may not seem like they understand your world or it may not seem that they care for you. It seems like all of these rules and regulations just take all the fun out of life! But, it’s because they love you that they try to put boundaries around you to protect you and keep you safe. That you can grow and learn. And the best way to honor your folks is to obey them. You move into those ages of youth. I think one of the ways you honor your folks, honor your parents, is by accepting them. Understand that their not perfect, but they are the ones God used to bring you into the world. That they’re doing the best they can. Has anyone noticed there is no such thing as parent school? You can not get a PHD in parenting. I don’t know where that comes from. In my own study I couldn’t find parent elementary school. I

didn't know what to do. Most fathers, when that baby is born, they mumble, 'I don't know what to do with this!' It's a process of trial and error, and for youth, it's accepting their parents and their frailty *and* their authority.

I think for youth acceptance also means that they *listen*. Ever spoke to a teenager and watch them roll their eyes back in their head, and thought to yourself, 'I can fix that; I can make them roll *all* the way around.' To honor your parents means to listen as they speak; to value their words, to accept them into your heart. There's an acceptance level, and there's also an appreciation that happens in that youthful timeframe. It means to appreciate their efforts. Parents are doing the *best they can* and it means to appreciate their sacrifice. You know what the definition of a father is? That's a man with a wallet that now has pictures where money once was. And I don't know of any greater sacrificing role in life than that of a mother who sacrifices her time, energy, efforts, and tears. Who sacrifices her own well-being at times to tenderly and lovingly care for that child. But then, what does it mean to honor your parents as adults?

I want to say, the first thing is, you need to continue to affirm them. You need to stay in touch. I call my father every Sunday afternoon. He lives in Chicago so I usually laugh about the weather but I call him and ask him how he's doing and he tells me about his doctors and how cold it is in Chicago and I affirm him. I understand his significance in my life and I tell him that I appreciate him. I send my dad gifts even outside of birthday and father's day, I send him my dad cards. You ever consider send your parents flowers *before* they die, so they can read the little card? And just tell them you love them; affirm them in all of life, and listen to their counsel. Ask them 'What do you think about this?' It doesn't mean you necessarily need to take it into your life, but, let them know that you still value their position. It's amazing to me that in the United States, and, in fact, most of western culture, the older a person gets, they don't carry the esteem that they do in the rest of the world. You've been to China. The oldest person in the community or in the town is the one with the highest respect. Most of the rest of the world is that way, but it seems that, for us, significance diminishes when productivity diminishes. But we need to recognize the great value of wisdom and experience and even as adults we need to affirm this with our parents.

Probably the greatest moment of affirmation happened when Jesus was on the cross and in his dying last breaths, he looked out in the crowd and saw his mother and not wanting her to be helpless in the world, he assigned his disciple John to care for her for the rest of her life. In his last seven phrases from the cross, one of them was spent to make sure that his mama was cared for the rest of her life. And, finally, how do you honor your parents as adults? *We forgive* them.

You may or may not know that my father was an alcoholic my entire life growing up. My father and I had some moments of intense fellowship. It wasn't just yelling and screaming; sometimes we would actually break into fist-to-cuffs. There was sometimes cops were called to our house, one time to break up a fight between my father and me. We didn't quite understand each other, if you know what I mean. When I went to college, I came to the awareness that my father dropped out of school in sixth grade so he could get a job...because *his* father was an alcoholic. He had never learned what it meant to be a father because he didn't have one himself, and I realized it was my job to forgive him the things that I held against him. The difficulties and the misunderstandings, the shouting matches. I taught my father how to hug. I decided one day I'm going to hug you no matter what you do back and for the first few times it was like hugging a tree. I taught my father how to say 'I love you,' which I never heard until after I had children, but now he says it every time we talk on the phone. He never ends a conversation without saying 'I love you' and I tell him the same thing back. See, I honor my father by forgiving him his shortcomings.

For some of you sitting here today that was a hard message. Some of you came through a hard place in life. Your parents fell short; they hurt you, they deceived you. You feel that there's animosity between the two of you and then you say, 'Preacher, you're telling me I'm supposed to honor them?' and the answer is, absolutely *yes*. I'm not asking you to gloss over the issues. I'm not asking you to deny the pain. I'm not asking you to repress or make excuses for your parents; I'm just saying that we need to process the pain and be faithful to scripture and honor our parents. Some of us can't communicate anymore because our parents are gone, but, you can still thank God for them. You can still forgive them. You can still honor them with respect.

And the second of the commandments for today is, 'Thou shall not murder.' Well, let me tell you what that *doesn't* mean. It doesn't mean that you can not kill animals. It doesn't mean that you can not defend your home. It does not mean that we need to abolish capital punishment. It does not mean that we need to prohibit every war that has ever been on the face of the earth. It doesn't mean that if something happens and there's an actual death, that's murder. None of those phrases, none of those terms, are considered in this Hebrew word call murder. What he's talking about is intentional murder; the taking of another life either through passion or revenge. It means there should be no pre-meditated taking of another life and there should be no taking of a life as an act of revenge.

Now, most out there feel pretty good. There's not many murderers in the crowd today. God began the process telling us what's supposed to be our actions of our life, but Jesus went even deeper with *attitudes* of our life. You see, Jesus went on to say, it's not just murder. In Matthew 5:21, Jesus, speaking on the Sermon on the Mount, said, "You have heard it said in those ancient times, you shall not murder and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. but I say to you that if you are

angry with a brother or sister, you'll be liable of judgment and if you insult a brother or sister, you'll be liable to the counsel and if you say 'you fool', you'll be liable to hell fire." Now that's a little more inclusive. You ever drive in Florida and the person in front of you has their left turn signal on perpetually and then turns right, and you thank Jesus for them. You ever have someone cut you off in traffic and, unfortunately perhaps, the first words out of your mouth are not those of excitement and forgiveness? The other day I'm at Super Wal-Mart, I've got my little basket on my arm. I've got a bunch of bananas and about three other things; I'm standing in line with about 12 people waiting to check out. There is a woman who's got a cart over here that weighs about 418 pounds and the light on this cash register goes on. The woman overcame the law of momentum. Literally knocked me out of the way as she headed for that little light and my thoughts were less than holy at the moment. I've got to tell you, there's times when other people have done things that make me angry. There's times when I've said things I probably should not have said. There's times in my life that I thought less about the significance of who those people were meant to be, and, I have to confess, both to you and to God, because, who do I think I am, that I have a right to put myself above them. Another question, who do you think *you* are that you're better than someone else, just because they impeded upon your world?

I've learned a new phrase and I use it quite often. When something like that happens to me now I simply say 'God loves you too.' They may not know it yet, but God does love them. They are part of the created, for they are created in God's image. Try that with me. Why don't you say it with me? One, two, three: "God loves you too!" That was terrible. Let's try it again; *really* mean it! "God loves you too" Try that the next time you're in the car. Try that the next time you're in the super market. Try that the next time someone does something that irritates you or you feel like your feelings have been stepped on or your toes and realize that they are made in the image of God, and we are called to love them. Where do I get that from? That comes from Philippines. Philippines 2 it says this, 2:3 "Do nothing out of selfishness ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Let each one of us not only to our own interest but to the interest of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus".

Isn't that what it's really all about? Aren't both of these commands really about the understanding of the value of people? First, those that we spent the most intimate moments of our life with, our parents, and then to not have an attitude of contempt toward other creatures of God, i.e. your neighbor. We don't have to murder people to have contempt, to have less value of life. All we need to do is consider ourselves better than they and we are liable for judgment. God loves you too. God calls you to honor parents. God says, don't be fooled by that pyrite that you see in the world around you, by an attitude of supremacy, by a feeling of superiority. Don't value as the world values; take the value of God. Won't you pray?

Lord, we do thank you and praise you. That you had given us a standard that is perfect. You have taught us, you have spoken to us, you have paid the price for our lives, and you have called us to be an example to the world of how to value people; how to love our neighbors. Give us the strength and courage. We pray in your name. Amen.

Go from this place knowing what's important, for God's word has set the value. Relationships with parents and with others. Go and make a difference in our world. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

*If you would like to talk with someone about this message or your spiritual life, or to have someone pray with you, the pastors and elders of the church would welcome your call.*

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## Eastminster Presbyterian Church

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