

A sermon preached by Dr David Jones in St Mary's Church, Market Drayton on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2016 at 10.30am

Bible Readings: Hebrews 12 v1-13 Ephesians 6 v1-4

COMMANDMENT 5 "Honour your Father & Mother""

Continue series on 10 Commandments, using J. John's book "God's Top Ten" or "Ten, Living The Ten Commandments in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". Looking at Commandments backwards,

First 5 commandments we have looked at are "Do Nots": Covet, lie, steal, commit adultery, murder.

Now different - positive - what we should do, and first commandment with promise (Eph. 6:1)

Today: "*Honour your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you*".

As intro., three things important to say:

1. The family today is very very different from that when the commandment was written. In fact, it is very different to what it was 70 years ago (immediately post war). Then large family unit living close together. Now families much more dispersed, under greater pressure and more family breakdowns. However, the family is still the foundation of a stable society and very important.
2. The command is to honour (not obey) although obeying may be part of honouring. To honour is to respect, reverence, trust, esteem, praise, adore, obey, care about, give consideration to, show gratitude. These are the ingredients of good family relations.
3. Wider scope of this must deal with not only the attitude of child to parent but of parent to child.

Difficult topic to consider since we all know how imperfect our families are, so important you understand I speak not to you, but as one of you.

Interesting that the Bible does not pretend that the families it portrays are perfect, far from it.

One of the families we read most about in the Old Testament is that of **Jacob** and if ever there was a **flawed** and **dysfunctional** family, that was it. However, from story of Jacob and his son Joseph can realise that God is able to fulfil His purposes even through flawed families.

(No time to tell fascinating story of Jacob and Joseph, if you don't know it, some homework, read about it in **Genesis 27 - 50**.)

Mainly congregation of parents rather than children. **Two questions:**

To parents: How do we gain the honour of our children?

To Children: How do we honour our parents?

Difficulties of families.

Generation gap. Children live in different world to one we, as parents, grew up in.

Under much more stress, sexual development at younger age, differences in communication (smart phones etc.), music, dress, hair styles, attitudes. Are these words familiar: "*The world is passing through troubled times. Young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no respect for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint. They talk as if they know everything, and treat our wisdom as stupidity. As for girls, they are forward, immodest and unwomanly in speech and behaviour*". When do you think they were written? Recently? A few decades ago? *Actually, in 1274 by Peter the Hermit!* So not a new problem and the problems, don't get less as children grow up - *(Peterchurch)*.

Let's consider some of the issues of today.

Time: Pressures of today. More common now that both parents or single parents have to work in order to be able to buy a home and support a family. Often means that dad is away and/or mum is not at home for the children. How often does the whole family sit around the table for a meal when there is no TV or mobile phones to interrupt the conversation? Important to remember that family time is important. Children grow up quickly and lost times can never be recovered. In later life many regret that they did not spend more time with their children. Throughout Bible shown that for God the family, who He made, is important and, therefore, for us, family must have priority. For children, important to realise that what you do is important to your parents. They want to know what you are up to - not to interfere, but simply they want to be included in your life. They are hurt when you exclude them and feel rejected. Even when we grow up and leave home they still want to hear from us. Is a phone call once a week too much to ask? This is like our relationship with God. We are His children and He wants to be included in our lives. If you think about it, that is amazing! Easy to turn to God in times of need, but God wants us share all aspects of our lives with him, the good times as well as the bad times. "*Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*" (1Thess.5:17).

Instruction: When we give time to our children it gives us time to instruct them and help them to avoid the pitfalls of life from our own experience. Sometimes they don't want to know and it is only later in life that they appreciate our instructions. Mark Twain said: "*When I was 14 my father was so ignorant I could hardly bear him, but by the time I was 21 I was amazed to see how much he had learned in 7 years!*" Included in instruction there must be *discipline*, which in families today is often lacking. Sometimes the parent feels that the child will not think they are loved if they are disciplined but the opposite is true. We read in Proverbs: "*If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them*" (13:24, NLT) and in the passage read to us from Hebrews,

we are told that God himself "*Disciplines those He loves*" (v.6). Therefore, follow His Example.

There has to be a balance between discipline and encouragement, which is often lacking. In Ephesians we read "*Fathers do not exasperate (or embitter) your children*", which can come from excessive discipline. Martin Luther said: "*To spare the rod and spoil the child is true. But beside the rod keep an apple to give him when he has done well.*" Easy to forget to praise and encourage.

Reconciliation: In all families mistakes are made and we do things that are wrong and which we regret. Therefore, it is of immense importance that we are ready to forgive. Sometimes forgiveness isn't easy and can be costly, but remember our Heavenly Father readily forgives us, His children, when we least deserve it and the cost to Him was giving us His Son, Jesus to die in our place.

How do we honour our parents?

Accept them. Recognise that your parents are not perfect, but accept them for who they are and respect them.

Appreciate your parents. Remember that they want the best for you. Tell them you appreciate them. You won't always have that opportunity. Don't regret you didn't do so when they have died.

Advice. Learn from their advice. Most of it will be good and for your benefit, and it comes from their experience. It will save you from making the same mistakes they may have made.

I said at the beginning that families are often imperfect and we can be discouraged by the wrong that goes on in our families. Let us have the hope of knowing that God can change even the worst things that may be going on. Jesus came, died and rose again so that the gap between God and people, and the gaps between individuals might be healed and that applies most urgently to the division in families.

In closing want to share a personal experience with you. As parents at times we may feel unappreciated and think we are taken for granted. This past Father's day I received a card from my daughter which I have here and which greatly moved me. It shows a pair of shoes, and inside is written: "*This picture took me back to all those mornings you polished my school shoes. Thank you and lots of love*". You see given time the rewards do come!