

“Unity” Sermon for December 30, 2018
 Psalm 148. 1 Samuel 2:18-20, Luke 2:48-51

Sermon Text:

Exodus 20:12 (NIV)

12 “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. (the Fifth Commandment)

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The Fifth Commandment, “Unity,” is the centerpiece that makes a connection between our actions in the human sphere to the larger purposes of God. The fulfillment of God’s purposes is realized in community. The covenant God makes with us through the Ten Commandments focuses on our relationships with other human beings. Let’s look back to the summary of the commandments that we used in the introductory sermon “Ten” by Dr.

Mendenhall—

They call for the existence of tolerable social life—the security of persons from attack, the honesty and good faith between persons in all kinds of negotiations, the love and respect between the generations of humanity, the security of family relationships, and freedom from

aggression against the structure of economic and social functions upon which all civilized man is dependent.

Unity suggests that God expects us to continue to keep this agreement or covenant with him from one generation to another. Because we are tied with God by being made in God's image, it follows that God expects unity to be demonstrated through the home. The *tolerable social life* that George Mendenhall writes of in his book, "Tenth Generation," begins with the relationship that children and parents have with each other. The apostle wrote in the letter to the Colossians, chapter 3—

¹⁸ Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

²¹ Fathers, ^[c] do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

The apostle, inspired by God's Spirit, wrote these words, understanding that love and respect between the generations was necessary. It is essential if there is to be love and respect in the larger society, and honor, honesty and trust between all human beings in all kinds of human interactions. The

commandments that follow this one all have to do with the way we relate to each other, understanding that if holiness and righteousness, and fairness and equality are not a part of the communities that call the Lord their God, then the very nature of the community as God's people is invalidated.

In 1954 Dr. Dorothy Law Nolte, a lifelong teacher and lecturer on family dynamics wrote, "Children live what they learn." It is a guide for parents to instill values that will enable healthy family dynamics:

If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.

If children live with fear, they learn distrust and hate.

If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.

If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.

If children live with honesty, they learn truthfulness.

If children live with fairness, they learn justice.

If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those about them.

If there is unity in the home, an order based on

mutually agreed on roles and relationships, the child

will learn to initiate and define her or his own place and role in the larger society. Chaos and rivalry between parents never produced a decent human being. If children fail to obey parents, it is often because there is no or little unity of purpose and direction coming from their parents. If parents are abusive and dictatorial, the self-discipline, self-esteem and self-reliance necessary to live as full, loving and trusting human beings will never come. God calls for unity in the home. Husbands should love and honor their wives. Wives should love and honor their husbands. Children should obey their parents, and parents must live loving examples and communicate in positive nurturing and uplifting love. We create unity in the world by honoring those closest to us and thereby demonstrate, honor, respect and acceptance for the people around us.

12 “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

Jesus did not dishonor his parents, nor was he disrespecting them. He was saying—Did you not know that because of the manner in which you have nurtured and raised me, that I would be engaged in what was good and honorable?

And so shall our children honor us, if we honor one another in Christ. In the name of the creative, redeeming, nurturing and enabling spirit of life.

Amen.