

## Ephesians 6:1-4

Good morning, Symphony. We'll be reading from Ephesians chapter 6 today, and just that first section from verses 1-4.

*1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Alright, so today's passage is a bit interesting because it deals with something very plain and simple, obeying our parents. As part of the commandments Paul shares to the Ephesians he's writing to, he exhorts the children of the church to be obedient and honoring to their fathers and their mothers.

Now, I think the temptation here is to try to extrapolate some deep hidden meaning and find a connection between our earthly parents and our heavenly Father, but in light of Pastor Barry's sermon on Sunday and in trying to be especially faithful to the text, I want to talk about our parents this morning.

First thing's first, why does Paul tell the Ephesian boys and girls to obey their parents? He gives them two reasons. First, he tells them, "children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right", because it's the right thing to do. Second, he tells them that if they obey, it will go well with them and they will live long in the land.

Obey because it's right, and obey because it will help you live well and long. Now this is interesting because nowhere does Paul suggest that children should obey their parents because they are good parents. Yes, in verse 4 Paul does command the parents to be Christlike in their parenting, he specifically addresses the fathers of the congregation in this case, but he doesn't say, "children, obey your parents **if** they bring you up in the

discipline and instruction of the Lord.” He doesn’t say, “children, honor your father and mother *if* they have satisfied their responsibilities as your father and mother and done a good job loving you and caring for you and not traumatizing you.”

No, he says, “children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Honor your father and mother because it is the right thing to do, it is what the Lord wants you to do. You see, even in something as unassuming as the attitudes that children had toward their parents, Paul wanted to instill in the Ephesians an understanding of grace. Like I said, I don’t think this is some elaborate theological metaphor. Very simply, I think Paul understands the grace of Jesus Christ to be so transformative, that it redefines every aspect of our life.

The reality is, that parents back then in the times of Paul and the Ephesians, were probably just as broken as the parents we know. They made mistakes, they lashed out in frustration at times, they did things that hurt or scarred their children. They weren’t perfect parents. Some of them probably weren’t even good parents. But Paul says, “obey, because it is right for children to obey their parents.”

I want to share a story about me and my dad, and I know some of you are like, “Dan always talks about his dad”, but hey, I love my dad. My mom was diagnosed with terminal leukemia before I was born, and so my dad spent the first four years of my life taking care of this newborn child and taking care of his sick and dying wife. And after my mom passed, my dad raised me on his own while trying to figure out how to make a life for us in America. And yet, growing up I never felt like I lacked in anything. He did everything he could to give me everything I needed.

My dad was a great dad. But he wasn’t perfect. A few years ago, in the summer of 2018, my dad and I took a trip to Hawaii to have a reunion with his side of the family, who lived in Korea and who we hadn’t seen in close to two decades. My dad was really excited to see his mom and his sister and her husband and children, and I was really excited to see Hawaii. That was kind of the theme of the trip, where my dad wanted to prioritize

spending time with the family and I wanted to prioritize exploring and making the most of our time there.

And after some growing disagreements, we ended up getting into an argument about five days into the trip. My dad was frustrated because I wasn't making an effort to enjoy our family reunion, and I was frustrated, well for a lot of reasons. I was frustrated because these relatives were basically strangers to me, and given the language barrier it was difficult to get to know them. I was frustrated because the whole trip, we were cancelling plans and making last minute adjustments because my cousins were constantly complaining. And I was frustrated because my relatives kept insisting that we eat instant noodles and kimchi in our hotel room rather than go eat Hawaiian food!

I know it sounds silly, but after five days of having to compromise and defer to my relatives, I just wanted to spend a little bit of time enjoying the trip. But my dad, in his frustration, asked me why I was being such a brat and so self-centered. He wasn't typically one to lose his temper, and I think it went to show how angry he was. Eventually, we realized that we were both being a little inconsiderate and decided to cool off apart from each other. And although to be honest I still felt like I was in the right, I remember feeling a tug in my heart and the Lord telling me, "honor your father in this moment, Dan". Even though I was still angry at my dad and I felt like he didn't earn my obedience at that moment, I felt God calling me to obey him and to submit to him because it was the right thing to do.

I wouldn't go so far as to say that that story was me showing grace to my dad, but I do think it was one small step in the process of learning to love and obey him not because he was a great dad, which he was, but rather simply because I was his son. The grace that Jesus Christ shows us should change how we see every part of our lives. God loves us, not because we're perfect or because we've earned it, but because we are His beloved creation. And likewise, I pray that we can honor our father and mother, not because they're perfect and without fault, but because it is right.

Application for us: let's take some time to bless our parents today. Let's take some time to call them, or message them, or send them a selfie of you and show them that you're doing okay and that you're thankful for them. Maybe your relationship with your parents is strained, and it's a little too tough to talk to them. Even then, could you spend a moment to pray for them? To pray that God would work in their hearts and would keep them healthy and bring them to know His heart? Let's honor our parents as the Lord calls us to today. Let's pray.