

Disrespectful:
March 3, 2024

[VIDEO - TVDAD]

Some of you remember... **[1 Ward Cleaver]**
Ward Cleaver... husband of June...
Father to Beaver and Wally...
Good old Ward... always had the right answers...

And more of you know... **[2 Mike Brady]**
Mike Brady... the wise and wonderful father...
Of a complicated blended family...
The Brady Bunch.

And of course... **[3 Steven Keaton]**
Steven Keaton...
Father of the impossibly precocious... and obnoxious...
Alex P. Keaton...
Played by Michael J. Fox.

Anyway... it must be nice for them... **[4 TV DAD]**
To be a TV dad... at least in the past...
TV dad's had all the answers.
And every single problem...
Was resolved... and wrapped up with a bow...
In 23 minutes...

I have not been a perfect parent.
And if we are completely honest...
None of us have been...
We're all just doing our best...
Which sometimes...
Falls a bit short.

There is one time...
I remember...
Raising the brood of daughters...
When I unintentionally...
Hurt one of our daughter's feeling...

Don't get me wrong...
I was in the right...
I definitely needed to reprimand her...
For whatever behavior it was...
That had gone off the rails...

I can't even remember what was happening...
But I looked at her... and said... **[5 Disrespect]**
You are being DISRESPECTFUL.

Tears welled up in her eyes.
And I could see...

The word I chose... the word I used...
Cut straight to her heart.
And hurt her.

She cried...
And said...
I'm sorry Dad...
I don't want to be disrespectful.

It was one of those moments in parenting...
When I definitely...
Could have done better.

Could have channeled the wisdom...
Of one of these perfect dads...
But instead I was stuck...
Being me.

So listen.
Even though it was a powerful experience...
For both our daughter... and me...
It didn't really change anything.

It didn't make her instantly respectful...
For the rest of her life...
We have had other bumps along the way...
But it did make me stop...
And think about the power of respect.

I think RESPECT is the primary problem...
In the gospel lesson today.

Jesus came to the temple in Jerusalem. **[6 Water Jugs]**
This was right after his first miracle... in the gospel of John...
When he changed water into wine...
And saved the wedding celebration.

Then... he left that area... Capernaum...
And went to Jerusalem...
Because the Passover was approaching...
And it was expected... that good Jewish people would go...
To the Temple in Jerusalem...
To celebrate the Passover...
If at all possible.

And you have to remember...
As important as our church is to us...
And how we work hard together...
To make sure things are good here...
We have council meetings...
And committee nights...

To make sure things are going...

The way that we think God...
Would want things to go.

Anyway... as important as this is to us...
The Temple... was even more sacred.

The building itself... was the fulfillment of a promise from God...
It was the place... where sins could be forgiven...
Where life could be restored...

It was the center...
Of Jewish faith... life... and identity...

So. Jesus came to the Temple. **[7 Cleansing]**
Saw what was happening.
People selling animals.
People changing money...
Into Temple coins...

All this busy-ness was being done...
Right on God's doorstep.

I remember one historic Lutheran Church...
Back in Wisconsin...
That had the most ornate...
Hand-carved wooden railing...
In a semi-circle... around the altar...

It was gorgeous... It also had a secret.
The knobs on the posts of the railing...
That were on either side of the main opening...
Could rotate open...

So when it was time for communion...
People would come forward...
And drop their dimes...
Into the built-in railing cups...
Which would offset the cost...
Of the bread and the wine.

Now... some people might think that's terrible.
It feels like they were paying for communion.
But that's not how they saw it.
They saw it... as supporting the mission of their church.
Paying for the supplies...
So that communion could be celebrated.

BUT... if they had thought...
They were paying for forgiveness...
That would have been a problem.... Right?

Because on our end... forgiveness is free.
It's God's gift to us.

Christ died... to forgive us.
To restore us to God.
To give us hope and life.

And that's what we get...
When we come to communion.
We remember his sacrifice...
His body broken.
His blood poured out.
His life given in exchange... for our lives.

If you understand what it cost to forgive us...
Then you can imagine why Jesus was upset.

The problem wasn't buying animals for the sacrifice...
Everybody had to bring some kind of offering...
To be sacrificed at the Temple.

If you had financial limitations...
You could bring two pigeons...

If you were rich as Roosevelt...
You could bring a big old ox.

Everyone brought something.
So the animals weren't the problem.

The problem was...
That these money changers...
Were making an unreasonable profit...
From people who were coming to worship God.

They had developed a system...
That you had to exchange your dirty old street money...
Into fancy bright and shiny Temple coins...
And in the process of that exchange...
Of course... they made a healthy profit.

You know... the same way they make a profit in the airport...
When you exchange dollars for euros... or whatever.

Then they sold the animals...
At a higher price...
Than the normal market...

But it was a supply and demand situation...
They charged more... because they could.
Right. Things are worth...
What people will pay.

But it felt wrong to Jesus.
Like the people of God...
Were being gouged...
In order to receive the forgiveness of God.

By their actions...
And the motivations of their hearts...
The money changers...
Were making a mockery...
Not taking seriously...
What God has done.

They were being disrespectful.

This was especially problematic for Jesus.
In John... this was at the beginning of his ministry...
But that doesn't change the fact...
That he was on his way...
To accomplish God's will...
He was on his way to the cross.

He was just about... to fulfill... all the requirements...
Of the sacrificial system.

He was about to pay the price...
That no one wants to pay.
The wages of sin are death...
He was going to die...
Once and for all.
And put an end...
To the need of sacrifices.

BUT in the meantime...
These fools... were acting like...
Sacrifices were something...
To be used...
To their advantage.

So Jesus... did what he thought needed to be done.
He chased out the animals.
He turned over the tables.
He confronted the vendors.

It was clear...
That they did not understand...
That they were offensive to God.
They were being offensive to Jesus.

But did you hear... those old money changers fought back.
They said... what gives you the right... to do this?
What sign can you show us...
For making this chaos happen?

In other words...
By what authority...
Are you messing up our lives?

Jesus answered... weirdly... **[8 Raised]**
Destroy this temple...
And in three days...
I will raise it up.

John tells us...
In the gospel...
That at that moment...
He was talking about his own body.
He was talking about death... and resurrection.

And the disciples...
Well... after everything was said and done...
And Jesus was raised from the dead...
They remembered... this dramatic interaction.

But you all know... that his death and resurrection...
Is HOW Jesus fulfilled...
The sacrificial system.

That's what he did...
He became the Lamb of God...
Who takes away the sin of the world.

He was the sacrifice.
No more cattle, sheep, or doves required.

He paid the price.
No more exchanging of coins necessary.

He became the offering.
He paid the price for us...
And that should mean something to us.

But in order to experience the life-changing power...
Inherent in what Jesus did for us...
We have to... not understand...
Because we can't possibly understand.
The grace of God...

We have to let ourselves... be **OVERWHELMED**...
By what God has done.

I think the money changers...
Got too comfortable with God.
So, sometimes that happens to us too.

In our relationship with God...
We receive so many good things...
And of course... we emphasize over and over again... love.

And it's true.
God is love.

God loves us...
And we have received God's love...
In and through Christ.

And by the power of the Holy Spirit...
We do our best...
To live that love out.

But there's more too. God is HOLY. Right?
God cannot tolerate sin.
God and sin...
Are completely incompatible.
That's what the Word of God tells us.
In him there is no darkness at all!

So. Since we sin... early and often...
We should have some healthy concern...
Maybe some outright fear...
At least some serious respect...

For the power that God is.

It's like the sun. **[9 Sun]** I like the sun.
I'm so very happy it's just the right distance from earth.
It makes my life sustainable and good.

However... you can't get too close to the sun.
The sun can hurt us.
The sun can overwhelm and overpower us.
Heat exhaustion. Sun burn. Cancer.
The sun is good **AND** powerful.

It's nice...
But I wouldn't want to live on the surface of the sun.

And maybe you think...
That's a silly example.

Well... but God made the sun.
Therefore God is greater than...
That flaming ball of power...
You and I need...
In the sky.
All I'm saying is... like the sun...
God is good **AND** powerful...

Hebrews 12: 28-29
Let us give thanks,
By which we offer to God
An acceptable worship
With reverence and awe;
For indeed our God is a consuming fire.

So I started by talking about RESPECT...
But God deserves... more than... common respect.
God deserves our reverence and awe.
That's what we mean when we say...
The Fear of God.

The fear of the Lord is more than...
Just acknowledging that God exists...

It's more than coming to the Temple...
And going through the motions.

It's more than saying God loves me.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
It's when the lightbulb turns on...
It's the moment we realize...
That we are not the most important thing...
On God's green earth.

That we are completely dependent...
On something bigger than ourselves.

And that everything in this life...
Belongs to our God.
And will return to our God.

It's just the way it is.

Steve Brown is a self-described Calvinist...
And an author and professor at Reformed Theological Seminary...
Down there in Orlando Florida...
And he has written a whole slug of books...

Inside his own Bible... he has written the following words, **[10 Bible]**
**"I wouldn't be so shocked at my own sins
If I didn't have such a high opinion of myself."**

Hasn't that been the problem... since the very beginning...
We.. humans... have a high opinion of ourselves.
We think... that we deserve honor and respect...
We think... that we know better... than everybody... even better than God.
We think... that we are really important.

We act like God is our equal...
Or even less...
Sometimes we treat God like a pet...
A convenience.
An idea...

God is here at church...
Inside this building...

And is contained to my participation...
In worship.

God is in the communion...
God is in the baptismal water...
God is here in this place...
Which is all true...

But that's not everything.
That's not the WHOLE truth.
That's not the totality of God.
That's just NOT big enough.

That's does not capture... the sense of awe and wonder...
That our God deserves from us.

If we aren't impressed with...
And overwhelmed by our God...
And what God has done for us...

Then... it's obvious...
We don't get it.
And I'm not sure that we can.

But you know what we can do...
We can do the same thing David did...
When he felt the overwhelming...
Conviction and forgiveness of God in his life.

We can speak words he spoke...
Asking God to help us see the wonder.
Fill us with awe.
Overwhelm us with grace.

We can fall on our knees... and recite together...
The words of **Psalms 51**... **[SLIDE]**

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit. **[11 Create in Me]**

It's LENT. This is the season...
To come back to the Lord our God...
With weeping and mourning...
Sackcloth and ashes...

It should break our hearts...
When we stop... and realize...
That we have been disrespectful...
To our God.

It should crush us...
To think that Jesus...
Was mad enough...
At people like us...

To overturn the tables...
And make a whip...
To drive out the animals...
And the people...

Because mad is a just secondary emotion...
Jesus was hurt.
He was hurt...
That they took God for granted.
He was hurt...
That they didn't fully embrace...
What God had done for them.

He was hurt.
And I don't want to hurt Jesus.
I don't want to disrespect God.
I don't want to forget...

Who I am.
Who God is.

And most importantly...
How much God has done...
To set me free.

Thanks be to God...
Amen.