

How Much More: The Gift of Honor

05.28.2021

I want to show my cards today

We're wrapping up this series

How much more

And I just want to be extra blunt about what we're saying

Jesus said: If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him! {Matthew 7:11}

So we're saying, when you see good gifts in this life

Things like compassion from your mom

Or legacy or perspective

It should point our hearts and our minds to God

Because as good as things can sometimes be here

He's more

He's better

Every good and perfect gift comes from God

So, these are just glimpses

For what life with God can be like

Just tiny fractions

For what life in Heaven will one day feel like

Today is a great example of that

Today we're talking about honor

The honor you feel for our country

Or the honor you feel for someone who's served

Or is serving

Or who has given their life in service

That's only a glimpse

A tiny fraction

Of the honor you will feel welling up in you

When you stand before God one day

I remember a few years ago, going to a graduation ceremony

At this particular ceremony – several of the graduates were going into the military

So it had a little more of a patriotic feel than some of the other ceremonies I've been to

It started with several young men coming out in a drum line as they walked across the football field

They were carrying the flags – walking in procession

The whole crowd arose... in silence

All of the chatter stopped

All of the horseplay ceased

Everyone was focused... in stillness... on the reverence of the moment

It was powerful

What you felt... was honor

Honor for these young men's service

Honor for the country & the flag they were sacrificing for

Honor for the older gentleman a few rows in front of us taking off his Vietnam vet hat as he struggled to stand to his feet in attention

Honor

This weekend... our country sets aside... as a weekend... for honor

Honor is a shrinking quality in our culture – and that should cause us all concern

Those moments stand out to us, because there's fewer of them

I believe that we should view that - a shrinking amount of honor - as a warning sign of things to come

In the book of Romans, chapter 1, Paul writes to the church there to describe the spiritual downfall of their once great people

He describes the increased sexual perversion

The lawlessness & suppression of the truth

He describes a nation turning away from the living God towards a more secular vantage point

All of these descriptions fit our culture as well as theirs

In fact, next week, we're starting a summer series on the book of Romans

And we'll be starting, of course, in chapter 1

But in the middle of that narrative, we find this... important verse:

Romans 1:21 (NASB) - For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Honor - especially towards God - is a central part of making a culture thrive

Honor is a big deal to God

In His economy, honor starts at the top and trickles down to everything underneath

And when honor is missing - or begins to go away as we see in our culture today

The implications are broad and far reaching

God says that this is the standard for every relationship

Honor is the standard for culture

Romans 12:10 - Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

When we find this kind of honor flowing among us

From husbands to wives and wives to husbands

From parents to children and children to parents

From citizens to leaders and back to the citizens

From employees to employers and back to the employees

Even among strangers

When honor is the standard for relationships, a culture thrives

Without it, everything begins to unravel

Because God... is a God... of honor

1 Corinthians 10:31 (CEV) - When you eat or drink or do anything else, always do it to honor God.

Everything that we do

Everything that we say

Is a chance to honor God

Which is important

Because honor is a big deal to God

When you honor God, everything else falls in line

And when honor is missing - everything else begins to erode

I was listening to a podcast recently

Where a Christian leader was being interviewed by the podcast host

They had recently been criticized

Publicly

Over some of the things they were teaching

And so the interviewer – the podcast host

Was asking them for their reaction

And they said something very key

The host asked, “Do you think its ok for Christians to ‘go after each other’ in such public ways?”

Their answer surprised me

They said, “Absolutely”

“We’re teaching the truths of the Gospel”

“People *should* absolutely hold us accountable to getting it right”

“What Christians shouldn’t do toward other Christians...

Are the personal attacks

The name calling

The disrespect

He didn’t say it

But I was thinking

Christians should disagree with other people

Without dishonoring the other person

Think about it

How often – today

Do you hear someone on a news program

Or radio program

Disagree... while still honoring the other person

While still giving them the respect that their position or experience or title offers them

Honor is a linchpin for society

From religious expression - to relational harmony – it should even extend to politics

And it's going away

Honor is now *counter* cultural

And we need to bring it back

Romans 13:7-8 - Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Let me ask you a pointed question:

Would you put those in the same category?

Taxes... profits... respect & honor

Two of those can go on a spreadsheet

Line items to be dealt with

But respect & honor?

Can you owe someone... a debt of respect?

Can you go to Advanced Financial to shore up the honor you owe someone?

What does God command us to do when we owe someone honor?

The next verse tells us

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. – Romans 13:7-8

I think God placed them in the same discussion, so that we would see them with the same level of urgency

Just as we can run a deficit in taxes and revenue

God says, that we can run a deficit in the honor department

That if you're not honoring someone in your life that deserves honor... you're actually piling up a debt

A debt that has to be repaid

And God goes all Dave Ramsey on us - and says, let no debt remain

It's a command - let no debt remain

If you owe a debt... of honor

Then pay it

There's a lot of benefits for us of honoring someone:

It improves our relationships

It grows our humility

It builds up this other person in our lives

Very likely, it's going to cause them to do more of the things that we're honoring in the first place

There's lots of reasons to show honor

And yet - probably for every one of us –

There are accounts that are dipping in the negative in the honor department

You know, if you could look at it on a spreadsheet

And God responds... by commanding... let no debt remain

If you owe a debt of honor - pay it

There are lots of reasons we struggle to show honor

But I think the biggest one is time

There's just always more to get done than we have time to do

And honor is one of the casualties

My favorite email moment of the whole year came this past week...

Life seems to be more & more that way, doesn't it?

Everybody has something more for you to do

Emails from the school talking about how to help your kids
more

Bills and to-do lists and demands from work

Events for sports teams and school groups and extra-curricular
activities

Everybody has something more for you to do

I feel like there are things in my life

Where the pile keeps getting higher

And I never seem to catch up

My mom - we've always teased my mom

She has a long-standing subscription to People magazine

And she's not like the rest of us

If I pick up a magazine, especially a magazine like People, I flip through and look at the pictures & headlines

Maybe read one article and part of a second

And then I'm done... a few minutes

My mom - my retired English teacher mother

Reads every word

And she doesn't like to get ahead of herself - so she has this pile of magazines beside her chair

And she just keeps picking up where she left off

It's a big week for my mom... in her People magazine stack, this week... think Nixon just resigned

Do you ever feel that way?

That there are things in your life that you need to attend to... but you never seem to have the time to give them due consideration?

A more important question:

Do you have anyone in your life that you 'owe' honor?

James tells us to **“not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22)**

It's not enough to say

“I'm indebted in the honor department”

Towards this particular person

But then do nothing about it

“Sure, honor's a big deal to God”

Now what's for lunch

Not enough

You know, it would be great

If you had a day coming up

When normally you went to work

But you actually could stay home

A day devoted to catch up on honor

Maybe call it Honor Day

Or... Respect & Reverence Day

Or... Memorial Day - or something

I don't know, it probably wouldn't catch on
But if we could make that day an annual holiday
It would give us a chance to catch up
To pay down some honor debts that we're carrying

Look at that verse again

If you have someone to whom you owe honor

And you know that

But don't do anything about it

Look at that verse again

You're deceiving yourself

Why is this so hard for many of us?

Why do we have these 'debts' of honor, that never seem to get paid?

Maybe it's time

Maybe it's pride

Some of us have a hard time complimenting people

But for some of us, and I don't say this lightly

For some of us, there is someone in our life that we need to honor

We know we owe them a debt of honor

We feel God nudging us, just now, to do something about it

But you're not there yet

There is pain or mistrust or resentment that has built up

And it will not allow you to truly show this person the honor that you feel that you owe them

Here's the thing with honor - we are called to show honor, even to less than perfect people

God calls us to honor our parents **{Deuteronomy 5:16}**

Even though they may have hurt us in very specific ways

We're still called to honor our father and mother

God calls us to honor our political leaders **{Titus 3:1-2 (MSG)}**

Even though they drive us crazy

Even the ones you disagree with on everything

Our approach to politics should be characterized by “no insults,
no fights, bighearted and courteous”

How many of us can say that that’s true of us?

It’s easy to do that with people we agree with

But God didn’t make the command conditional

Honor can sometimes be a little bit unconditional

It’s at times like this where our faith gets extremely practical

What do you do when you’re called to honor someone

That you don’t think is honorable?

Jesus teaches us that decisions like this

Affect not only our relationship with them

But our relationship with Him

Matthew 5:23-24 - Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Some of us

Need to do something horizontally this morning

As a part of our vertical worship to God

And honestly

It works both ways

Some of us need to give honor to God

As a way of opening up

Channels of honor – relationally – in our lives

God created us

He sustains us

He knows us completely

But loves us without condition

And for that, and countless other reasons, He deserves great honor

For some of us, honoring God represent someone who is easy to honor

You don't say it as often as He deserves

Truth be told, your account is sometimes in the negative

But you're grateful for the chance to honor the One who's done so much for you

But for some of us, giving honor to God is hard

You have some hang-ups with God

You're not even sure He exists

Or there's some pain that you're not sure why He let you face

So, this will be hard

But I invite you to open yourself up to the idea that He's here

That He really does love you

And that He cares

And I would repeat to you the command of God **{Romans 13:7-8}** - let no debt remain

Would you stand with me - and pray with me - and then give God the honor that He deserves?