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Honoring Where You Came From, Part 2

Deuteronomy 5:17-22

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says,

"They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

So the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

I want to give us some encouragement here today on how we make it easier for those coming behind us. How do we make it easier for the generations behind us to fulfill the fifth commandment and walk in the fullness of life? How do we do this?

We can only do this by treating them with respect and dignity and honor. And to do this—and speaking now mostly to parents and grandparents, but also to the whole faith community—every time we have a child down here front and we pray for him, and we commit to raise him in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, what are we committing to do?

We're committing to love them, to honor them, to help them find the pathway to life, to instruct them in the ways of living. And we do this with our love, our servant-minded love towards the younger ones coming behind us. We give them our life-giving love.

And by life-giving love, I mean we use our words to encourage them and build them up. It has been said in social studies, psychological studies, that for every word of correction that you give to someone, you should give them between five to seven positive, affirming words of encouragement.

King Solomon said, "Life and death are in the power of the tongue." He's saying—he's literally giving us a weapon to produce life with our words or also to give death.

And so when we speak to those coming behind us—I don't know how many times I've heard it—I'm standing beside a parent who has their children around them, and they mutter something like this in earshot of their children: "Oh, that's my little troublemaker." They say, "That's my little burden to bear." Oh really?

Have you ever heard of self-fulfilling prophecy? We can speak words of life, or we can speak words of death. And the young people coming behind us will not get inflated by over-encouragement. Everyone in the world has a sense of insecurity since we've fallen away from God. We need encouraged. We need built up. We need fueled with the words of those going before us to feed us the words of life, to call us out, to live into who God created us to live.

And so the Scripture says, "Let no unwholesome words come out of your mouth, but that which is for the building up of others." So we love those coming behind us by catching them doing things right, by catching them doing things good and rewarding them with our words.

And it doesn't matter how old you are, you can still learn to do this. Love them with our words. We love them with our life-giving ears by giving them an ear and listening to them.

How many of you can finish this sentence: "Children are to be seen but not heard." What kind of stupid advice is that? Children are to be seen but not heard from?

Correct me if I'm wrong, but last time I checked, most children were given mouths by God, and they have an ability to learn to speak. And I don't know what happens when you sit and listen to someone coming behind you, but when they feel heard, they feel validated. They feel loved. They feel cared for. They feel as if they have a voice.

And God sent them here to have a voice, to leave a mark with their words. And if they're receiving encouragement from us and we're helping them learn how to speak, you know what's going to happen to them? They're going to become encouragers of others.

And so we serve them with affirming them with our words, the uniqueness of God's design for them. And then we listen to as God is stirring in their hearts. We listen to what God is teaching them and instructing them. And though it might be immature, we still hear it out and we listen and we affirm them.

I'll press a little further. We nurture the next generation with our life-giving touch. Our touch. Now, it should go without saying, but we have to say it in our culture. We're talking about appropriate touch. Appropriate touch.

Mark chapter ten records for us when Jesus was on the earth. The children came to him, and it says he took them in his arms. He took them in his arms. And then he blessed them. God in the flesh, touching the children.

I don't know if you've ever seen photos or videos of young children in orphanages who don't get touched—physically touched. What happens over time is if they don't experience human touch and human interaction in this way, their bodies start to grow rigid and stiff, and they get under stress from a lack of nurture. And then their hormones go bad, and then they get all out of whack in the way they're growing.

In Mark chapter fifteen, we read the story of the prodigal son. This son rebelled against his father, was gone for a long time, spent his inheritance. And then he came to his senses. And when he was returning to his father, the text says, "His father saw him a long ways off, and he ran to him." And notice—this is Jesus, God, telling the story—"He wrapped his arms around him and kissed him." Kissed him.

Jesus gives a blessing to children. God speaks about human touch and the sharing of love.

When our kids were younger, Chris and I had a little ritual that we went through when it was bedtime for the children. One of us would go up when they were tucking in, and we did this from early on before they could even understand what we were saying—for many years. And we would lay hands on their forehead. And sometimes what I would do is smoosh up their face a little just for fun. Squeeze their skull a little so they could feel my hands on their head. And then I would speak a blessing into them:

"May the Lord bless you and keep you. Make his face shine on you. Empower you. Give you grace for tomorrow. Encourage and strengthen you."

And my son, who—kind of one of his love languages is touch—he just laid there and took it. My daughter often grimaced and acted like she didn't like it. But then one day in the seventh grade, she was going up to bed, and I have an office right by the steps that go up to her bedroom. And she stopped in the doorway of my office, and she leaned up against the frame of the door, and she said to me, "Dad, let's get it over with."

And what she was doing was asking me to come lay my hands on her and touch her and speak life to her.

What we're talking about here is building a scaffolding for the next generation to flourish beyond where we're flourishing—to fulfill the fifth commandment. You see, because if we're honoring them well, it'll make it easier for them to honor us.

So we love them with our words. We love them by listening to them. We love them with our touch.

And then I'll just say one more here: we love them with our life-giving repentance.

I can't tell you how many times I've had to apologize to my own children—even to this day—to go to them and say, "Your dad is imperfect. He doesn't get it right all the time, and he's sorry."

I remember when my son was in the third grade, and he was playing post on an all-star basketball team. And he was a third grader, and the other players were fourth graders. He was relatively new at it, but he

wasn't using his strength. He was recruited because he was big, and I knew as his dad he could do better. So I was screaming at him from the sidelines.

And then all of a sudden the Lord sat me down and said, "Look at him, Tim. He's a third grader."

So after the game, I went to him and I said, "I'm sorry. I'll be a dad. I won't coach you anymore."

This is nurturing those that come behind us. And all of us can do it. Whenever we're with a younger person, we can affirm them with our words. We can listen to them. We can touch them with a hand.

To this day, my son's 31 years old. Whenever I greet him, it's time for a big hug. And I'm telling you, he's 330 pounds. It's like hugging one of the great redwoods in California. But he still wants the hug.

We love him with our life-giving love—the nurturing love. And then we love them with the lifting and limiting love—training them.

Children, when they come into the world, they don't know anything. They don't know how to eat. They have a natural reflex to drink, but they don't know how to get hard food in their mouth. They don't know how to walk. They don't know how to talk. They don't know the ways of the world. They don't know the spiritual battle that's raging. They don't know the ways of God. They don't know how to read or write.

And so we're called to then train them, teach them, instruct them without causing them to be frustrated and angry. Raise up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Don't discourage them, the Bible says—and especially says it to men—for men to engage in this process.

And then we have to restrict them at times. Discipline them in love, not in anger. Because if we discipline them early and correct them when they're doing dishonoring things when they're young, they won't pay such consequences when they're older and God has to discipline them.

And so we give them our life-giving love. We give them our lifting and training love. We give them limiting love—restricting them when they're moving in the wrong.

And then I'll end with this if we can. And this is a true gift to those coming behind us: we share with them.

And then I'll end with this if we can. And this is a true gift to those coming behind us: we share with them the ability to laugh. To laugh in the face of the future. Because a heart of laughter is a heart filled with faith. It's a heart that's not filled with fear and worry and trembling and wringing hands.

Proverbs chapter 17 speaks of a woman who is clothed with strength and dignity and laughs at the days to come because she is so confident in God. She laughs at the days to come.

Proverbs 31 speaks of a joyful heart being good medicine. Good medicine passed on to those who come behind us. When we laugh with our children, we're teaching them that God can be trusted. You don't

have to wring your hands if you're a child of God. He's going to watch over you. He's going to care for you. He's going to walk with you.

The other day, the grandchildren were over at our house, and they asked my wife—they call her Lulu—"Lulu, would you play chase with us?" Before I knew it, the entire home was a massive racetrack with kids running around it and grandma chasing them at full speed and laughter all around.

And what does that do for children? It teaches them our lives are in God's hands. And this is a God who, the Bible says Himself—Psalm 2:4—laughs. He laughs at His enemies when they plot against Him.

And so we can laugh in the face of a mad and evil world with our children because we know this God. And it will teach them to have joy and faith in their lives as well.

Friends, if we do this to the generations coming behind us, it'll be a whole lot easier for them to honor us. And when they do that, they're on the pathway to flourishing in life themselves.

Those who have ears, Jesus often said, let them hear.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for giving us guidance, for instructing us in your Word and teaching us your ways. We sometimes get caught up in rituals and traditions and the form of things over and above the idea of relationship. But we know from your Word all of life is about a relationship with you and where we're at with you, and then how we're relating with each other.

And you have instructed us in this first instruction about this very tender area of family. And I'm sure there are some here listening this morning who feel some of the soul wounds of their past, and they need touched and healed in those areas. So I pray that you would minister to us in those broken areas so that we could offer to others maybe what we didn't get ourselves from human beings, but what we get from you—and that we could be a part of, as we so often pray, having your will be done in our lives here on the earth as it is in heaven.

And Father, I pray a special prayer today for the parents and the grandparents that are here, and all of us in the community of faith, that as we come to interact with those coming behind us, you would free us from ourselves so that we could be free to serve them in love, to encourage them in love, to build them up with our love.

Forgive us when we stray from this, Father. And we also acknowledge that we can't do this in our own strength. So I ask, whatever age we're at, whatever stage we're at, you would minister to us and empower us to keep moving down this pathway with you—to be your life-giving spirits in the world, walking in your ways, fulfilling the law by the Spirit of Christ in us.

And Father, if there's someone here today who hasn't opened their heart to your Son Jesus, I pray that you help them cry out for the salvation of their souls—that you, by your Spirit, then as they put their trust in you, would enter them and guide them down the pathway of life that is truly life.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.