

Outdo One Another in Showing Honor (Rom 12.10)

Mother's Day || 2023

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. One of the essential ingredients in building the type of church culture that the Lord is calling us toward is to seek to embody a culture of grace and honor. This is of profound significance in our cultural moment and is one of the marks of the family of God.

⁹Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (Rom 12.9-10)

- B. We will build a culture of grace and honor by demonstrating honor in our **actions** (willingness to serve, brotherly affection, etc.) and in our **speech** (words, spirit of prophecy, commitment to not slander and gossip).

²You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured out on your lips (Ps 45.2)

⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person (Col 4.6)

- C. To grow a culture of grace and honor requires that we *intentionally* and *consistently* seek to align our methods of evaluation according to God's methods of evaluation — as well as concrete commitments to pursue this in our actions and speech.

- D. God desires that his family be vessels of grace among one another. He has placed us in families (spiritual and natural) in order for us to be strengthened in our true identity, to be secure/confident in love, and to be built up and edified in accordance with what he says is true.

- E. The Scripture regularly teaches us that God does not see (evaluate) things the way that we see things. In the family of God, this is especially true as we have been purchased, saved, justified, and given a new name in Christ.

⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. (Isa 55.8)

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh... ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (2 Cor 5.16-17)

- F. Our standard of evaluation is based on what we "listen to" (i.e., what we allow to shape how we interpret things). We must regularly ask the question, "Am I seeing things with God's eyes, or with fleshly eyes?" This affects our interactions with one another in profound and dynamic ways.

- G. **Goal:** to use motherhood as a specific and glorious "case study" in working toward building a culture of grace and honor here at Redeemer.

II. THE GIFT OF MOTHERHOOD

- A. Motherhood is a unique and powerful expression of a particular aspect of God's essential design for women. The ability to conceive, sustain, birth, and bring forth (both naturally and spiritually) life is a beautiful part of how God has created the feminine image bearer.

- B. This important aspect of femininity is tied to the concept of **giving life**. There is a profound correspondence between the natural capacity to give life and the spiritual capacity to give life.

²⁰The man called his wife's name Eve [i.e., life], because she was the mother of all the living. (Gen 3.20)

- C. Mothers are essential in the work of creating and passing on life throughout generations. This happens through the rearing of children, and through spiritual motherhood in prayer, discipleship, and training.
- D. Women are given the unique ability in their bodies to receive and sustain hidden growth. This is a picture to us of every believer's role to receive the word of God within and let it grow to fruition.

²¹Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls (Jas 1.21)

- E. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is presented in the scripture as the ideal life-giver and portrait of *responsiveness* and *submission* to the will of God.

³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." (Luke 1.38)

- F. It is impossible to overstate the importance of mothers throughout the history of mankind. Each of our existence is tied to a mother. And throughout history, mothers have been a remarkably important element of discipleship (specifically of their children).

III. RETHINKING VALUE

- A. To rightly think about value, we must think about what we see as important, worthy, and successful. God has put within each of us the *longing* to give our lives away to things that matter and to be successful. However, we often do not think much about our value system and allow it to be shaped by the narratives of this world.
- B. What we ultimately value is what we believe will offer us satisfaction and fulfillment (i.e., our picture of the "good life"). Every society in human history has presented a picture of what it believes will provide true and lasting satisfaction. Humans are hard-wired to orient our lives around what we believe will provide us the most true and lasting fulfillment. Whatever we picture in our minds as providing us ultimate happiness (money, status, freedom, etc.) will be the things we orient our actions around attaining.
- C. One of the hardest realities of the Christian life is learning to evaluate ourselves (and in turn what will provide ultimate fulfillment) in accordance with God's evaluation.
- D. A remarkably important revelation given throughout the Scripture is that God does not evaluate (see) things the way that we see them. All of us naturally see things with fleshly eyes — but God sees and evaluates differently.

⁷But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart (1 Sam 16.7)

- E. In this passage, God tells Samuel (and by implication us) what is *most important to him*. We all tend to evaluate ourselves and our success based on *externals* (both positive and negative). However, God does not evaluate us or our success in this way.
- F. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares that the way his disciples are to orient their pursuits before God is in order to do them before his eyes alone. He warns us not to practice our righteousness before the eyes of men in order that we would be seen (and rewarded) by them. Rather, we are invited to live before the eyes of God alone.

¹Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward before your Father who is in heaven... ³but when you give to the needy... ⁴[let your] giving be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matt 6.1-4)

- G. Jesus here teaches that God sees in the "secret places" (i.e., the hidden places of the heart). Understanding this truth radically reorients how we determine our value, success, and worth.

IV. RE-VALUING MOTHERHOOD

- A. Our contemporary cultural narrative is designed to denigrate and devalue the gift of motherhood. Our world evaluates worth (what matters) and success in ways that are profoundly opposed to the ways that God defines these things.
1. **Number of followers:** we are offered portraits of a “successful life” that looks like size and scope of our impact. We are consistently “told” to build a brand (yourself), a platform, or a following.
 2. **Impact of voice:** our culture holds a high value of the importance of our voice being heard. This specifically means the ability to influence or give shape/direction to things.
 3. **Vocational impact and success:** our culture has oriented large worth and value to our vocational role and its impact, success, importance, etc.
- B. Each of these definitions of value and worth has profound implications on how we see motherhood. In order to regain or re-value motherhood, there are important Biblical truths that we must hold to (these are just *some* of the Biblical truths that shape how we see worth and value — there could be many more!).
1. **Children are a blessing:** God’s word invites us to see that children are a gift given from the hand of God. They are not something that stands in the way of us realizing our greatest worth or truest potential. In many ways, the gift of children is the particular avenue in which God’s estimation of value is fought for and won in our own lives.

³Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. (Ps 127.3)

2. **It is better to give than to receive:** this declaration from the Scripture is one of the most counter-fleshly realities in God’s word. God declares that it is *better for us* to live in a posture of giving than a posture of receiving. We are invited to see — through God’s word — that we will be most satisfied, not when we seek our own gain and fulfillment, but precisely in the place where we lay that down.

³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’. (Acts 20.35)

[Jesus] though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant (Phil 2.6-7)

²⁴Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matt 16.24-25)

3. **God remembers:** the Scripture invites us to stake our hope in the fact that God sees in the secret places and will remember those things done in his name — and will reward them in all eternity. This gives the hidden, seemingly insignificant, mundane, and menial aspects of our lives a potential for *eternal significance*.

⁴²And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. (Matt 10.42)

²it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. ³But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. ⁴For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God (1 Cor 4.2-5)

4. ***When you throw a party***: One of the further ways that Jesus demonstrates that we should not work for success and worth in the eyes of others is by telling his disciples to “throw a party” for those who can never repay them.

¹²He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” (Luke 14.12-14)

5. ***A sword will pierce your heart***: there is a particular vulnerability related to motherhood that will be faced by all women. The very capacity for conceiving and giving your life away will be laden with many difficulties and trials (infertility, miscarriage, loss of children, wayward children, children will never return all the life/love you have given).

³⁴And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵and a sword will pierce through your own soul also (Luke 2.34-35)

¹¹He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (John 1.11)

V. A CHARGE TO HONOR AND BLESS

- A. To re-value motherhood in such a way has profound implications on how we live together in our families and as a spiritual family. Such ways of “seeing” should have implications on our speech, energy, time, focus, etc. as we seek to bless and honor what God calls valuable.
- B. There is a particular way in which seeking to honor women (in general) and motherhood (as an aspect) must be carried out by the men of our church. Primary leadership (responsibility) must be embraced and owned by men in order for this to “take root”.
- C. Some practical pursuits in walking this out:
 1. ***Speak and demonstrate the blessed gift of children***: how we talk about children (both in small and in large contexts) will shape a lot of how our spiritual family views things in accordance with God’s eyes. It is common in our day to speak disparagingly of children and the “cost” they are to someone. This will require gaining God’s heart (in accordance with his word), patience, and a “slowness” as a spiritual family.
 2. ***Fight to regularly honor women in action/behavior***: this includes willingness to serve/help in our homes (specifically to husbands), treating with great respect, and walking in purity (making a “covenant with the eyes”).
 3. ***Fight to regularly honor women/mothers with words***: this includes seeking to understand God’s evaluation both of the individual (what does God see) and their vocation. For husbands specifically: spend time verbally honoring your wife’s vocation and its value (her pursuit of the Lord, dignity of motherhood, areas of growth and discipleship, and areas of specific assignment).
 4. ***Husbands, seek to teach your children to honor with action and words***: take primary responsibility to create a culture of honor in your home. Seek to sow seeds of respect and obedience from your children toward their mother in both word and action.
 5. ***Fight to honor what God honors***: As a spiritual family, I desire that we press on (reach) toward aligning ourselves with what God values and honors. The Sermon on the Mount (specifically the beatitudes) provides an excellent road map for the value system of God’s kingdom. We must be committed to renewing our minds according to his word, start speaking (naming) the things as valuable that he does, and asking God for more revelation and grace to live according to his ways.