

PLEASING GOD AT HOME

An exposition of Colossians 3:20-21
at West Hills San Jose on April 25, 2021

PASTORAL PRAYER: Worship. Thank you for the time and place we live, thank you for the unprecedented prosperity we enjoy, the infrastructure, the access the security, the technology that enables us to enjoy You and enjoy each other through your many gifts. Help us to steward these things to YOUR glory. We pray for those

Thank you for the gift of the local church. Help us love one another as you have commanded. Help us to see and hear one another needs, and to help each other. Pray for the La Casa team, make them effective both in their work and in their evangelism. May their work open doors for the gospel for the local church in Mexico.

We pray for the leaders and rulers who are over us at the federal, state, and local level: would you turn their hearts in your hands toward yourself, and incline them to wisdom and righteousness. Would you grant that under their rule, we would be enabled to live a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way, fulfilling your gospel mission unhindered, working diligently with our own hands so that we might have something to share with those in need.

Finally we pray for our own souls this morning. Would you open hearts and minds to hear and receive the truth of your Word without resistance. We are going to be interacting with a sensitive topic this morning, parenting and fatherhood. I pray that our hearts would be humble, looking to ourselves and not comparing ourselves to our neighbor. We want to be shaped by you LORD, help us by your powerful Spirit I ask, that the gospel might be displayed in every home represented in this room. In Christ's name, Amen.

INTRO: Well grace and peace West Hills, I'm Pastor Josh, and I'm one of the teaching elders here. Today we will be continuing our series in the book of Colossians and we will be picking up where we left off in chapter 3 so please go ahead and turn their in your bibles.

We have been discussing what Colossians has to say about life in the home for the last few weeks, and so far the discussion has largely revolved around marriage which has been super helpful. But in today's passage we are going to transition from relationships between husbands and wives to relationships between children and their parents. And one of the common sentiments I've heard from you guys as we have been doing this is the comment that these passages have been SUPER convicting. Or to say that another way, there are ways that many of us have been conducting ourselves in our homes that are not consistent with the Word of God, and as the Word of God has been preached, the Spirit has been shining it like a flood lamp on our sin and it's made us go yikes, I need to repent. Let me just remind us as we continue working through these texts THAT IS A GOOD THING. That is what the Word is supposed to do and that is how you are supposed to respond. This is how the church has grown in holiness for thousands of years. Men of God, have looked intently into his Word, carefully considered what it says and it's implications, and turn and shared with the church what they have seen. And the church repents where relevant and seeks to grow in holiness more and more. Being made uncomfortable isn't bad...it's good. If you find yourself repenting a lot as we go through this...that's what supposed to happen. That's what's been happening to me too. And we shouldn't resist this work

of the Spirit. And this morning I want to continue teaching on the family while also being really clear about WHY this is so good and important. Here is my main point this morning

MAIN POINT: God wants to form our homes into something beautiful, so strive to please Him.

SETTING THE CONTEXT: We are going to be reading from Colossians 3:20-21 a very short text this morning let me say one very brief word about the context. In the book of Colossians, Paul has spent all of chapter 3 laying out the habits and practices and ethics of what it means to be a person oriented towards the God of heaven. Being a heavenly minded Christian has a dramatic impact on how you interact with your neighbors and with your brothers and sisters in the church. You are no longer a person that is bound by the power of sin, but you are a person who is fighting to grow in Christ-likeness as God Himself is making you more like Him day by day. And what we have seen is that this orientation doesn't just impact your life at church on Sunday's. Your public outward life that everyone sees. This is meant to have a direct impact on your life at home as well.

And Paul doesn't say this people in private. He doesn't take wives or husbands and fathers aside and say you know you really shouldn't be doing this or that. He lays out the vision for a God pleasing home for everyone to hear, husbands are to hear what God expects from their wives and children and wives and children hear what God expects from their husband/fathers. It's all in the light, it's all out in the open, and now everyone knows what it looks like for every member of the house to obey or disobey God. He builds accountability into how he delivers this instruction. And I believe God does it this way because He loves us and wants to create something fitting, something lovely, something well pleasing in His sight for the spiritual prosperity and beauty of your home. So as I'm teaching today, and I'm saying things that touch on areas you may struggle, I want you to try your best to keep that in mind. God is working to help me cultivate something beautiful at home, I should strive for Him, not against Him. The Lord is on your side, what can man do to you.

READING: Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. (Col 3:20-21)

PRAYER: Lord you see all of the idols, and all of the landmines, and all of the potential to feel misunderstood by a sermon like this....would you go before me in your glorious grace and let my Words land with the appropriate force for everyone here, and grant my brothers and sisters in this room whom I love, humility and willingness to hear hard things. In Christ's name, Amen.

ROAD MAP: Today I want to consider 4 things with you. 1.) I want to very briefly talk about how to listen to sermons like this, 2.) The Word to children, 3.) The word to parents, 4.) the word to fathers.

HOW TO LISTEN TO SERMONS LIKE THIS

1. Let's begin with how to listen to sermons like this, and I'm thinking specifically of those to whom these words may not directly apply. Give me two minutes on this. Maybe you are

thinking, I'm not a child anymore and I'm not a parent, this doesn't apply to me, where are we going to lunch after this. And I want to extend this even broader to the rest of us, when we are listening to a passage of Scripture that doesn't appear to directly apply to us. If something doesn't apply directly to you that is not the time to shut off your ears and cease caring.

1. I want to suggest with love, that only thinking about how a passage serves or doesn't serve you is a very consumeristic, it's actually kind of self-centered way of thinking if you think about it. The Lord doesn't teach us to think about His word like that. 2 Tim 3:16 says that ALL SCRIPTURE is breathed out by God and profitable...for making us godly and equipped for every good work.
2. But there is something bigger going on. It's not just that the word is inherently valuable so you should listen to it. God ALSO wants you to know what holiness looks like for me, just like you want me to know what holiness looks like for you. This is God's design for how we love each other and help one another live lives of accountability before the Lord.
3. I want to grow. And I want our church family to grow as well.
4. I also can't answer every possible question a sermon like this might raise. The Puritans tried to do that in the 17th century. The pastor would exposit the text and then offer like 50 different ways it could apply. And the sermons would last like 4 hours and there would be two of them every Sunday. I think I WOULD ENJOY preaching for 4 hours at a time but I feel somewhat confident that I'd be the only one.
 1. My goal here is to give you the overarching principles and a few applications so that you would go home, pray, and talk with your spouse or with other godly people about how the Word applies to your specific circumstances, or your specific relationship to your parent or to your child. All of you are different, all of your kids are different, and so while the principles are made of iron, their specific application can have a fairly wide range.
5. So that is how to listen. Let's now look at our text specifically Colossians 3:20 and the Word to children.

THE WORD TO CHILDREN

1. KIDS- I want to speak with you. If you can hear me put your hand on your nose. Are you listening? I'm speaking to you directly because the bible is about to speak to YOU directly. Did you know that there are things in the bible that are written directly to you. This isn't a children's bible I'm reading to you, this is the Scripture, God's Holy Word.
2. You are addressed directly because you are an important part of our church. You have some important jobs to do. To love each other. To pray for each other. To help new kids feel welcome. Some of you kids are going to have an easier time obeying your parents and some of you are going to have a harder time. If you are better at it than someone else your job is to help them get better at obeying. And you can do that by encouraging them with your Words and also praying for them before you go to sleep at night. And that's a really important job. Because you have an important job in our church and so God speaks directly to you.
3. Hear is what the Scripture says are you read? Children obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord.

4. The first thing that says in kids OBEY YOUR PARENTS...
 1. That means when your parents ask you to do something you need to do it. If your parents ask you to do something, and you do not do it, or you argue with them about it, that is not OBEDIENCE that is disobedience. And that isn't just disobeying your parents, that's disobeying God.
 2. Obeying can be hard. But you learn to become obedient to God whom you can't see, by learning to be obedient to your parents who you can see.
 3. In your house, your mom and dad are not the most in charge. GOD is the most in charge. And as a kid, you can't control whether or not your mom and dad obey God, but YOU can obey God by obeying your parents. do you understand? This doesn't just say obey, it's says obey your parents in EVERYTHING.
5. in everything
 1. Sometimes your mom and dad are going to ask you to do things that you don't understand. Sometimes they will ask you to do things that don't seem fair. You don't just obey when you understand, you even obey when you don't understand.
 2. But there is one big way that you are allowed to disobey your parents. Do you know what it is? If you mom or your dad tells you to sin, you are allowed to disobey. Because God is the most in charge of your house. If your mom or your dad tells you to sin, you are allowed to say no but you need to make sure to explain to them why you think it's a sin and let them give you an answer if they think you are wrong. If you can't agree come and ask one of the elders or one of the pastors and we will try to help you.
 3. So children this has said you need to OBEY, in Everything except sin, and finally
6. DO you know WHY, you should obey your parents? BECAUSE this is pleasing to God in the Lord. You should obey your parents because God likes it when you do that and He rewards our obedience in heaven, did you know that? Do you know why God reminds you of that? Because obeying your mom and dad all the time can be hard.
7. What should you do when your heart doesn't want to obey mom or dad?
 1. What if something doesn't feel fair?
 2. What if you are really excited to play with something, and your mom or dad tell you to stop and do something else?
 3. It's hard to obey when that happens isn't it. Or maybe it feels like your brother or your sister is really good at obeying, and you feel like you are really bad at it. That's how I used to feel when I was your age. I used to think my brother is just better than me so I don't want to try and obey any more. But that was a very foolish thing to do. I was foolish because I didn't know about God's powerful love.
 4. Do you know what you should do when it's hard to obey? You should use God's powerful love to help you. When you are having a hard time, you should remind yourself it makes GOD happy when I obey and He will rewards us in heaven for our obedience. I should obey because it makes Him happy, even when I really don't want to.
 5. Do you know what else you can do? You can pray, God will you help me obey, I'm having a hard time. And God hears all of our prayers and answers us in the best way He can. God's love is powerful and He wants to help you.

6. One last thing you can do. If you are having a really hard day, and obeying just seems too hard...instead of just disobeying, you should be honest with your mom or your dad and tell them the truth. I'm having a really hard time obeying, my heart doesn't want to obey, can you please pray for God to help?
8. So here is what I want you to remember. God is the MOST in charge in your house. And you should obey your parents because you love Him and obeying makes Him happy. And when it's hard to obey, that's okay, all of us had to learn how to obey our parents. God's love is really powerful and He will help you if you ask Him to. Thank you for listening children, I'm so glad you are a part of our church.

A WORD TO PARENTS

1. Now I want to transition to the other way I think Paul intends this command to be heard. Parent's of children, it's your job to teach your children how to do this.
2. There is a perspective in the cultural waters that we are swimming in, that assumes children are intrinsically good, and if we just provide them a nurturing, safe and supportive environments they will grow up to be astronauts and CEO's, who live kind and benevolent lives filled with rich, unselfish relationships. That is not God's perspective or the perspective of the Scripture.
3. Every human child is has inherent dignity and worth because they are made in the image of God. But they were conceived into a world and into a nature that has been corrupted by the fall, corrupted by the presence and power of sin.
 1. As a consequence children are born with both good, and sinful proclivities in their hearts. There are going to be parts of them that naturally reflect the heart of their maker in whose image they are made, but the influence of sin will always be working to corrupt their heart and to lead them into selfishness and evil. And your job as a parent is to encourage and promote that which is good, and to correct and train out to the best of your abilities what is bad or destructive to their souls.
 2. And how do we as christians distinguish between what is good and what is bad? We have God's Holy Word that speaks directly to most moral actions and attitudes, and we have wisdom and generations of experience that address the things that aren't directly addressed.
 3. And God has put you, parent, over the life of these precious little ones, to teach their hearts to obey the word of the Lord, that they might serve Him all their lives. You obviously can't cause the miracle of conversion. But you can teach them and show them how to follow God as God is doing His own work in His own ways in their hearts.
4. Now let me follow that up offering you some categories or some ways of thinking about this that I believe are biblical and helpful.
 1. **First:** what Scripture teaches concerning how to parent your children is a beautiful, nuanced, righteous and humble picture of home life. It is the kind of home that a kid would be doubly blessed to be raised in. And when all the commands of the Lord are taken together and applied with equal force, it typically and for the most part yields good spiritual fruit in the lives of parent's trying to do it.

1. But when one part of biblical teaching is applied earnestly and the rest of what the Scripture says is ignored, or fails to incorporate it produces distortions. When you are only focused on making kids obey you...you can miss the point that it's not about them learning to obey you but about them learning to obey God.
 2. If your primary focus is only on them obeying you, you can commit the sin of verse 21 where you have completely nit-picked them to death and they become totally disheartened or discouraged.
 3. On the other hand, and what I think may be more of a temptation for many of us, is out of a desire to not be overly harsh, or wanting to not dishearten them or call them to things that are difficult we end up not teaching them to obey God by obeying us.
 4. We can excuse disobedience by calling it developmental and fail to see that we haven't helped our child learn to obey us, we have simply excused their sin.
 5. Verse 20 says children need to learn to obey their parents for the Lord's sake, and verse 21 says parents can teach them to do this in harmful and unhelpful ways. And if we emphasize one of those points to the exclusion of the other it can produce a distortion.
 6. Both of these responses to our children are an overemphasis of one biblical text to the exclusion of others, and both are distortions of what godly parenting is meant to look like. My point is you need to do both things. Teach your children to obey you out of a desire to please God AND to go about doing it in a way that doesn't frustrate them to the point of them giving up.
5. This means I don't look at discipline as end in itself. I never teach discipline because I'm angry. That's not what it's for. It's a tool meant to teach them to serve the Lord. To teach them to want to please God by obeying me because that is what God wants for them. On the other hand, if I'm trying to do that and it doesn't seem to be working...verse 21 tells me to look at myself and to say...maybe I'm not doing this in a helpful way. If the way i'm parenting is just frustrating all the time for them and for me, maybe I'm not going about this in the most helpful way.
 1. I should ask other godly men how they do it and see if maybe there is something I need to learn or something about my kid that I may not understand. Godly parenting emphasizes the whole counsel of God evenly. And when you emphasize it all evenly, it is pure and good and beautiful.
 6. **Second** word to parents that flows naturally from the first. From the perspective of Scripture we go into parenting recognizing that we are sinners, trying to teach another sinner how to be righteous. Or to say that another way, I'm someone who still struggles with sin, trying to show someone younger who is struggling with sin, how to overcome their struggle with sin.**Repentance, prayer and dependance on the Spirit is going to be the norm**
 1. And it's humbling in a good way to be self-aware of this. You don't want to be the parent who walks into a room with two kids who are screaming at each other and to start screaming at them for screaming at one another. You aren't modeling righteousness. You aren't illustrating an alternative to the sin they are walking in. **There are things to learn.**
 7. Finally **third**: granting that we will need to repent and grow, those things shouldn't not hinder us from trying to lovingly parent with all our might. I have never understood the

language of defeat in the mouths of Christians. When I was a young christian I would hear jokes about how husbands are helpless to ever understand their wives. That understanding your wife as a man was impossible, and I saw people using that as an excuse to just not even try to grow in their love for their brides.

1. Here's a thought. You shouldn't utter statements of failure over your relationships. You should strive to be like Jesus Christ the perfect husband even if it feels impossible. Their are good husbands in the world, I've met them. Their are men who have learned to live with their wives in an understanding way. Why not me? Why not you? Don't quit ahead
2. Being a mom and being a dad is really challenging. But it's like everything else, if you work hard at it and remain humble you will get better. If you keep reading your bible and trying to do what it says in your home, if you keep repenting when you sin and praying for God's help, you will grow. You may not see it in yourself. But the people around you will see it, and God promises that He who began a good work in us is bringing it to completion. You can be an amazing parent despite limitations...because GOD is involved
8. So what am I saying to you parents. I'm saying God's word has given you a beautiful picture of life in the home. He has given you commands and wisdom to be great loving parents to your children, and his input is the most reliable input in the world. Second, your natural inclinations will be to do things wrong, because of sin. So you will need to keep humbling yourself, keep repenting, and keep striving in the power of God if you want to be a great parent. And finally, you should aim high. Aim to be holy as God is holy. Aim to be an awesome mom, an awesome dad because God is at work in you as you try and He has been working through the same normal means of grace for the last 2000 years. Be encouraged to teach your children to obey you, because this pleases God. Finally

A WORD TO FATHERS

1. This is to Fathers...dads you have a unique role in your families life. Every human being has a yearning for Father love. We were made for it. And if your child doesn't find it at home they will look for it elsewhere. One of the amazing things about being a part of the church is that Jesus' promises are true, that he who loses father or mother for the gospel's sake will receive many more in return in this life Mark 10:29-30.
 1. If you didn't have a godly father, there are godly men in this church who will disciple you and encourage and affirm you. If you want to learn how to throw a ball or grill a steak or change a tire, just ask. I would love to show you how to do that. Many others here would love to show you how to do those things with you that most people learn from their dads.
 2. But that being said, if you are a man, and you have a child, this is written to you. You are given an incredible opportunity to influence your children life for God. And to give them their introduction to what a loving Sovereign, and a gracious Father is like. Introduction...
 3. And in this text you are given a negative behavior to avoid, and the reason you should avoid it. Don't pick at your kids to get a rise out of them. Don't provoke them to anger. And you are given the reason not to do this. So that they don't shut down and shut you out.
 4. What does this assume? Being a godly Father isn't doing the minimum...bringing home the bacon. Being a godly Father means interacting with your kids at home.

5. And what Paul says here is you also want to be careful not to be a force of evil in your kids life. Don't use your words in harmful ways that tear down and make your kid feel like they don't even want to try any more.
6. **Remember this when something makes you upset.** God bound you to that kid, and that kids heart is bound to you with a powerful rope. And every time you loose your temper at them, you break some of the strands of that rope. And if you keep doing it, over and over and over...eventually that rope is going to break. And the relationship will break, and recovering it will become very difficult.
 1. Don't provoke your children to frustration lest they become disheartened. The different suggested translations for the greek word under disheartened go like this...don't provoke your children to anger, so that they don't close their hearts and minds to you. So that they don't hide inside of themselves to avoid you.
 2. When you walk into a room, do you start criticizing before you affirm your love? You might be in danger of doing this kind of thing. Do you like it when your boss comes into what you're doing and just starts telling you what a bad job your doing? No one responds well to that, why would you expect your kid to?
7. As with all biblical commands, whoever something is forbidden the opposite seems to be implied. We see this in the sermon on the mount when God said in the Old Testament don't murder, what He also meant according to Jesus in Matthew 5 is also love your enemies as yourself and pray for those who persecute you.
8. So when Paul says don't provoke to the point that your kid becomes disheartened. It would seem to follow that you OUGHT to do the opposite, encourage until your kid becomes energized for obedience. Father's, listen to me. You ought to use your words to build up and encourage your sons. You might feel love for them in your hearts but if all they ever hear out of your mouth is your criticism and correction, they will eventually begin to assume that you don't like them. **My dad before He died gave me the greatest gift in the world...**

And as Jason and Brad before Him pointed out, there is a sense in which all of these things apply to all of us. We all need to submit. We all need to love and not be harsh. We all need to obey, and we all need to try to not provoke or discourage each other. We should all be seeking to help one another's children please the Lord by obeying their parents. That's what a big extended family does. And that is what we are, the family of God, sinners trying to help other sinners become righteous.

9. THE BIG WHY TO ALL OF US...why should Fathers, and Mothers and uncles and aunts and friends and members of this church seek to be an agent for blessing in the life of all these children? Why should we want to help these kids, some of whom are lost in sin and folly and really need a lot of help?
10. Because God's love is a love that seeks those who are lost. God's sought us out when we were lost in our sin and folly, God sought us when we were his enemies.

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. **4**But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, **5**he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, **6**whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus

Christ our Savior...be this kind of father or mother, be this kind of kid, be this kind friend... because God has loved us this way first.

Maybe you are listening to this, and you are thinking to yourself...I see the glaring sins in my own life. I see my failures and the ways that my sins are torching these relationships, things are broken beyond repair and I'll never have the kind of home that you just described. I have good news for you, today, RIGHT NOW, you can repent. You can repent of your sins, cast them on the Savior Jesus and ask for His helping healing power to come with strength into your relationships. He may not fix them the way you want, and it may not be an easy road ahead. But God WILL help you. God can heal you, God can separate your sin from you as far as the east is from the west. If you have God things are never hopeless, come to Him and be healed and restored by His merciful grace. Why should you respond this way, even if things have gone horribly wrong up to this point? Because...

By virtue of His commanding these things, God makes it clear that He wants to form our homes into something beautiful, so strive to please Him. Amen.

COMMUNION: This table is a place where fathers, mothers children and friends, saints and sinners are welcome to come and receive grace. This table tells us that we are sinners, by coming we are acknowledging that the Savior died for us. But it doesn't just tell you you're a failure. It proclaims that God's love is greater than our failures and He has made a way for reconciliation between us and God, and with one another. Today I would like everyone to take a few moments before coming forward to examine yourself. Are their ways you have allowed sin to be at home in your life that you need to repent of. If the Spirit puts his finger on something...don't hold yourself back in shame...come forward to the table in faith that the broken body and the shed blood are sufficient to save and cleanse you.

Call and Response

Why should we give thanks?

"Because we are a family, beloved by the Lord." (2 Thess 2:13a)

Why are we God's family?

"Because God chose us as the first fruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth." (2 Thess 2:13b)

And to what future have we been called through the gospel?

"To obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess 2:14).