**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 8-30-2020** - **A culture of Honor**

A number of years ago I was listening to a message from a missionary named Will Hart. And in his message he shared a story with me that stuck with me. It was the story about a poor woman who owned hardly anything and she was walking with her Bible when suddenly it started to pour outside. She didn’t own an umbrella, so in moments like this, she had a choice to make.

She could stay pretty dry by using her Bible has an umbrella or shield it from the rain. But instead, she chose to tuck her Bible closely to her and lean forward, protecting her Bible from the rain. She knew that the Bible was more valuable than avoiding getting soaked in the rain.

This woman’s actions demonstrated an honor for the written word of God. To honor is to show respect or reverence towards someone or something.

Christians are to be people of honor. And while we should live our lives in ways that others recognize us as honorable, being a person of honor is really about giving honor to others. **It is never about seeking to be honored, but to give honor.**

We see this in the Trinity – how the Father seeks to honor the Son and the Son seeks to honor the Father and they honor the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit honors each of them. The focus is always on giving honor.

And as we take a closer look at God’s Word this morning together, we will see how throughout the Bible, God’s people are to be people who are givers of honor.

I invite you to turn with me to Psalm 139:13-18, as we hear God’s word together. And I know that we do not normally stand for the reading of God’s Word, but I think from time to time this is appropriate as well, as one way that we show honor to God and to His inspired Word. So, I would ask you to please stand with me as we hear God’s Word together.

**13For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
14I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
    your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
15My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place,
    when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
16Your eyes saw my unformed body;
    all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
17How precious to me are your thoughts,[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139%3A13-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-16257a)**] God!  How vast is the sum of them!
18Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—
    when I awake, I am still with you.**

These verses of David are some of his most beautiful inspired words. They remind us that God values every life. While David writes this with himself in mind, this psalm is also God’s Word for us and for everyone.

Like David, God formed our inmost being. The Lord knit us together in our mother’s womb. We were fearfully and wonderfully made. This means that we were not thrown together, but were carefully formed by the hands of God. And not only did Jesus make us, but He had wonderful plans in his mind for us before we were even born. We know that because of the brokenness and sin of the world, His plans are not always brought to fruition. But He has good plans for us and for all. And if we trust in Him, though there is pain in the journey, it will work out very well in the end. We can trust in Him. He loves us.

And so in light of this profound inspired poem of David, I would like for us to consider how significant living lives of honor is to God’s church.

**First, we are to honor one another as a Christian community.**

Romans 12:10 teaches us to **10Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Paul is writing to the Christian community.**

Sisters and Brothers, the church is meant to be a family that demonstrates to the world what God’s kingdom is like.

And this is lived out as we honor one another. Paul writes to ‘honor one another above yourselves.’

What does that mean? It means to look out for their interests above our own. It means to be more focused on understanding and on being understood. And not only that, we live this out by getting to know one another. Our closest friends should be our church community. We honor one another by seeking to genuinely grow as brothers and sisters in Christ together. My seeking to listen to one another and to learn one another’s stories. By learning everyone’s name and interests. We honor one another by showing appreciation to one another and by encouraging one another. Truly, our closest friends should be our church community.

We honor one another when we care for one another as a family. And when we seek to honor one another, our individual walks with Jesus will be strengthened.

As the church community is intentional in practicing honor towards one another, the kingdom of God is established in a greater way.

**Second, we are to honor leaders**.

This could be leaders in employment, leaders within the church, or leaders in government.

This goes against the grain in our present American culture. American culture at large only seeks to honor leaders whom we agree with. But the church is called to set an example to the world by honoring all leaders. There have been leaders within the United Methodist Church whom I disagreed with on a large number of things, but I know that I am called to honor them.

The Lord will hold leaders accountable on how faithful we have been to Him in our leadership.

As Christians, we are called to honor leaders, whether we agree on a lot, on a little, or on basically nothing.

Jesus disagreed strongly with some of the leaders of his day. While he condemned their hypocrisy, he honored their position. Peter the Apostle wrote this in the first of his 2 letters found in our Bible. **17Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor.**

Most likely the emperor at the time of Peter’s writing was a man named Nero. Nero was crazy. Nero in all likelihood, started a fire in Rome in order to distract attention away from himself and his poor leadership. And lead, Nero chose to blame the Christians for starting the fire. And history records very evil things that Nero did to punish the Christians whom he scapegoated. Likely, even Peter himself was put to death during Nero’s reign.

And what does Peter say to the Christians about the Roman emperor? He says “honor the emperor.”

What would that have looked like for Peter and the Christians to honor Nero? It would look like praying for him, it would look like any noble qualities that they happened to see in this very evil man. Like all of us, Nero was fearfully and wonderfully made. God had good plans for Nero’s life. To honor him would be to recognize that he was loved by God and that he had the potential for greatness if he would come to know his Savior.

We currently live in a country that is very polarized politically. But I believe that the Lord calls us as Christians to rise above the divisiveness and mean-spiritedness that is all around us.

**Back in the 1800’s it was said that there are 3 political parties in America. The Democrats, the Republicans, and the Methodists. And what was meant by that is that the Methodists were focused on the kingdom of God and not being synonymous with a political party. Christians are to be about the politic of the Kingdom of God.**

This doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t vote or that we can’t register within a political party. But what it should remind us is that our allegiance is to the Kingdom of God. And part of our faithfulness to God is in how we honor our leaders. We can honor leaders while still completely disagreeing with them and seeking to vote them out of office.

But we are called to earnestly pray for our leaders. In fact, as one way of practicing being a culture of honor, I would like you to pray this week for a leader that you agree very little with.

The world seeks to divide us. But Christ seeks to unite us as people of honor.

**Third, as Christians we are to honor everyone**. Every person is powerful and significant, because we are all made in God’s image. Everyone we meet is someone whom Christ died for.

I love how the Benedictine monks teach about honor towards their guests. They are instructed that **“All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”**

Think about this, for every visitor or guest that comes through the doors of Chestnut Grove Church, to welcome them as if they were Christ Himself. That’s honor. That’s hospitality.

We honor others as we seek to talk to them and not through them. Think of the person at the checkout line or the library or where we may work. Every person that we meet should be loved and honored by us as if they just walked into Chestnut Grove Church.

And in fact, if they encountered you, they encountered Chestnut Grove Church. For the Church is a people far more than it is a building.

We also honor people as we seek to bless others in our surrounding communities. It has been said that the Church is ***the only organization that primarily exists for the benefit of its nonmembers.*** When we honor people through meeting needs and through free events just seeking to bless and show love, it can touch hearts in powerful ways.

In Psalm 139, David shares that God’s thoughts towards us outnumber the grains of sand. That’s amazing. That’s true for you and me and for every person that we will ever meet.

**And fourth and finally, we are to live lives that honor God.** We honor God directly when we worship Him and seek to love Him more every day. But we also honor our Triune God’s Word, like the woman who kept her Bible dry in pouring rain. And we honor Him indirectly when we honor others. One of the 10 Commandments is to honor our parents. We honor God as we honor our parents. Truly, some parents are easier to honor than others. But we honor God as we honor our parents and our leaders and really, as we honor all people. We honor God as we honor one another. We honor God as we honor leaders and we honor God by expressing honor to all.

So friends, the kingdom of God is at hand! It is growing in our midst. It is within us and around us.

And beginning next week, we will take this focus on the kingdom of God and begin to look at some very specific ways that we can live a very blessed life from God’s perspective as we grow in God’s kingdom. So be excited, because our Triune God is doing amazing things in us as we journey together in living for the Kingdom of God.

Let’s pray…

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-early-church-teach-coronavirus/>

<https://biblehub.com/romans/12-10.htm>

<https://biblehub.com/1_peter/2-17.htm>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139%3A13-18&version=NIV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A10&version=NIV>

<https://christdesert.org/prayer/rule-of-st-benedict/chapter-53-the-reception-of-guests/>