

This sermon delivered by
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“Since Jesus is Lord ... Of My Home”
Ephesians 2:17-22

You’ve heard me use this image before. Sorry, after last week’s miserable failure for the beginning of a sermon, I had to go back to a tried and true illustration.

Here it is. Our lives are like a chest of drawers. Remember? You’ve heard this. You have one drawer for your work life, and during work time you pull it out. You act a certain way, talk a certain way at work. You have one drawer for your leisure time, and on evenings off you open that drawer and act a different way. You have a drawer for your family life, when you’re hanging around your kids, one drawer for your personal time, and on it goes. Life is like a chest of drawers. Oh yes, you have a religion drawer, and on Sunday morning you open that drawer and you act a certain way.

But here’s the question for us. Is our relationship with Jesus Christ just one of the drawers, or is it the whole piece of furniture? Because if it is just one of the drawers, then we have a problem. And my observation is that far too many people, their faith, their relationship with Christ, is just one of the drawers. When I’m at work, I pull out the work drawer. When I’m out on Friday night, I pull out the good time drawer. When I’m in church on Sunday, I pull out my religious drawer.

The problem with that attitude is that it fails to take seriously the fundamental affirmation of the Christian faith -- Jesus is Lord. Jesus is in charge. He cares about decisions I make, he cares about how I live my life. He cares because he loves me and he wants the best for me. He’s Lord. And he’s not just Lord of my spiritual life, he’s Lord of my entire life.

That’s what we’re talking about in this series of sermons. What does it mean to affirm that Jesus is Lord in every area of my life. Two weeks ago we talked about the physical body, last week we talked about emotions, and next week we conclude by dealing with our future. But for today, “What does it mean to affirm that Jesus is Lord of my home?”

Well, let’s make it clear—this is not a lesson on parenting skills. You know, when I first started out in the ministry I was an expert on parenting. But then we had two children of our own and I realized how little I knew.

We need to be learning from each other about how to be good parents, but we’ll save that for another day.

I want to reflect with you this morning about your home—the place where you live. It may or may not include children. It may not include anyone else but you. Home is the place where our identity is shaped. It’s the place we set our priorities and where we decide what is really important in life. Home is the place where we are really honest about what really matters to us.

So what does it mean to say Jesus is Lord of your home—whether it's Mom, Dad, and the kids; a single parent home; an empty nest home, a one-person home ... or whatever your home may be?

What does it mean to say Jesus is Lord of your home? Let's listen to a passage in which Paul speaks of the church as a home, a place for the family of God.

—Read Ephesians 2:11-21—

What does it mean to say Jesus is Lord of my home and to truly live that way? Remember, home is the place where we determine our priorities, what really matters to us.

FIRST, SINCE JESUS IS LORD, A RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS, LIVED OUT IN THE CHURCH IS THE FOCAL POINT OF THE HOME. When I affirm that Jesus is my Lord, I'm entering into a relationship, a friendship, with the God who made us, the God who made this world.

To be a Christian, first and foremost, does not mean to be a member of an institution. Joining the Roswell Presbyterian Church isn't what makes us a Christian. To be a Christian means to walk in a daily relationship with Christ.

But that relationship is lived out in the church. The place to know Christ, the place to worship Christ, the place to grow in a relationship with Christ, is in the church. And so, if I'm living under the Lordship of Christ, then regular worship, study, fellowship with other Christians and service become the hallmark of the Christian home. The church becomes the extended family for single people, elderly people, families on the move, families in transition.

It's not that church is just one more on a long list of our children's activities. We have soccer, gymnastics, piano, and church. I open my sports drawer, my music drawer, my religious drawer. That's not it. It's through the church that I live out my relationship with Jesus.

The church becomes a place to find our bearings. It's an anchor, week after week, in a stormy world.

Since Jesus is the Lord of my home, then living out my faith in regular worship, study, and fellowship becomes a focal point.

I'm grateful for many things my parents have done for me, but most of all, I give thanks for the relationship with Christ lived out in the church that they passed on to me.

Many of you know, I grew up in a Navy family, and we moved around a lot when I was young. I told the fourth and fifth graders last Sunday that I went to four different elementary schools by the time I was in the sixth grade. We moved a lot when I was young. But wherever we lived, it was the church of Jesus Christ that became the focal point of our home. Never once did we get up on Sunday and debate whether or not to go to church. Sunday school, worship, youth group, were all

part of my home—and though there may have been Sundays when I balked, I'm so thankful now that my parents took me to church — to Sunday School and to worship.

And not only did they take me to church, but I saw them live out their faith in the way they set priorities, and the way they lived their life, and the way they determined what was important to them.

It was in the church that I learned what it meant to be in a relationship with Christ, and it's through that relationship that I have strength and direction and peace and hope in my life. It's in the church that we become "members of the household of God," as Paul said.

In the midst of a crazy world pulling us in a million directions, I'm thankful for the church which holds our household together.

Since Jesus is Lord of the home, a relationship with Jesus, lived out in the church, becomes the focal point for that household.

Let's move on. Paul talks of the "foundation of the apostles and the prophets," and that leads to the second point I raise up. **SINCE JESUS IS LORD OF THE HOME, GOD, REVEALED THROUGH THE SCRIPTURE, PROVIDES THE BOUNDARIES FOR LIFE.**

Home is a place to learn ... to grow ... to discover. Home is the place where that foundation is set. Home is a place to learn not only about God but also about what God has to say about life—to discover that there are some boundaries, some things that are out of bounds.

It's in the home we need to learn values and morals. We can't expect the schools or the government to teach our children ethics and principles. We need to do that at home.

Perhaps there was a time in our culture when values could be learned just by growing up in the community. That was when Ozzie and Harriet lived down the street, Andy Taylor was the town sheriff, and the greatest problem in town was what mischief Beaver Cleaver might happen to get into.

But that's not the world we live in anymore. Values and morality and ethics can't be learned by osmosis anymore. They can't be gained just by growing up. They need to be learned in the home. And for that to take place, the guidance of the Scriptures, the foundation of the apostles and prophets, need to stand at the center of the home.

A few years ago William Raspberry wrote, "The problem with today's children is international drug cartels, neighborhood drug pushers, under-funded schools, under-prepared teachers, bigotry, peer pressure, a stalled economy, liberal welfareism ..."

Take your pick, he suggested. But then he went on to cast his vote. The real problem with today's children is not these great social ills ... it's the home.

“If we took some of the money we spend on drug education, sex education, and dropout prevention, and used it to teach parents how to raise their children to be confident, well-behaved, and smart, who knows what the payoff might be.”

The Hebrew people knew that. They knew the importance of saturating the home with the teaching of God. In Deuteronomy 6, the people of Israel were instructed to take the teachings of God and write them on their door—wear them on their arm—teach them when they get up in the morning and when they go to bed at night.

God has something to say about how we live—how we treat each other, how we spend our money, how we develop our priorities—and the place to learn and grow and discover that guidance is in the home.

But instead we turn on the television and drift off to sleep. People don't talk anymore. We forget to talk to each other, we fail to exercise discipline, and we care more about getting out for a night than being together as a family.

If we are to live with Jesus as Lord, then the teachings of the Scriptures, the guidance of God, need to be our foundation. With love, we need to say to ourselves and to our children—some things are out of bounds. No, I can't have one more drink—I can't handle it. No, you can't go to that party—I know what goes on there. No, you can't have everything you want. Living in God's Kingdom means being thankful for today's bread, not wishing for the whole bakery.

God has boundaries, not because he's out to get us and to take all the fun out of life. God has boundaries so that safe within his family we can discover what real fun is all about.

When Jesus is Lord, we have a hunger to learn from him. He's in charge - he made the world - it only makes sense to listen to him. He's not out to get us and make life miserable. He loves us and knows best how life should be lived. And the place to learn is in the Bible.

Since Jesus is Lord of my home, scripture and all that it includes—the guidance and morality and ethical values—the hope and the peace of God—become the foundation of life.

And one more—**SINCE JESUS IS LORD OF MY HOME, GRACE, AND FORGIVENESS BECOME THE CORNERSTONE.** We have been “brought near by the blood of Christ,” Paul says, referring to the forgiveness of God. Because of his forgiveness of us, “he is our peace.”

We live in a harsh world—a world quick to judge—a world more than willing to pass sentence on each of us. You're too slow, too overweight, not good looking enough. You don't wear the right clothes, run with the right people. You're the wrong color, you're from the wrong family. All around us there are judgments.

Home needs to be a place where there is forgiveness and grace. Home is the place of acceptance—the place for the prodigal to return even when he's blown the family fortune.

Even when the world beats us up, home is the place we can find love. Home is the place we know we're accepted, forgiven, even when we've blown it; and it's the place we forgive others, even when they fall. How I pray we communicate that acceptance between married partners, with our children. Even when we mess up, home is the place to say I still love you. Yes, there are standards, and there are expectations, but there is forgiveness and grace as well.

There's a scene in Lorraine Hansberry's play *The Raisin in the Sun* that captures the meaning of forgiveness in a home so well. The mother in the story is saving her money to move her family to a new home. Her son convinces her to let him have the money. He has a business deal that can't lose. But, of course, his business partner turns out to be a crook, and the money is lost, and with it go their dreams for a new future.

His sister is furious and doesn't want to have anything to do with her brother, and for good reason. But his mother says to her daughter, "I thought I taught you to love him."

"Love him?" she says. "There is nothing left to love."

And the mother says this.

There is always something left to love. And if you ain't learned that, you ain't learned nothing. Have you cried for that boy today? I don't mean for yourself and for the family 'cause we lost the money. I mean for him; what he been through and what it done to him. Child, when you think is the time to love somebody the most; when they done good and made things easy for everybody? Well then, you ain't through learning—because that ain't the time at all. It's when he's at his lowest and can't believe in hisself 'cause the world done whipped him so. When you starts measuring somebody, measure him right, child, measure him right. Make sure you done taken into account what hills and valleys he come through before he got to wherever his is.

Home is a place of forgiveness and a place of grace. It's a place of the second chance. In the prayer in the wedding ceremony I use there is a line in which I pray for the couple's home to be a "haven of blessing and a place of peace."

Now I confess. That's sort of a "wedding line." I've never walked into anyone's home and said, "My, what a haven of blessing and a place of peace." But I can't think of a better thing to be able to say. A haven is a safe place, a place where I know I am welcome and accepted and loved, even if the world is beating me up. Home is a place of forgiveness and grace.

So here we are ... in the midst of a world that has forgotten the meaning of the word home. Home is the place where we set our priorities and determine what really matters in life. And we're reminded that Jesus is Lord, even of our homes. A home is a place where a relationship with Christ lived out in the church is the focal point. A home is a place where guidance and values come from God, taught through the Scriptures. And a home is a place of forgiveness and grace, a place for a second chance.

I want to invite you not to make Jesus the Lord of your home—he already is. I want to invite you to live that way.

And my prayer—my prayer for us all—is that this church would be a home, that the Roswell Presbyterian Church would be a family of faith turning the house of God into a real home.

Several years ago, while she was still the first lady, Barbara Bush once said this. “Success doesn’t depend on what happens at the White House, but what happens at your house.”

So what happens at your house? Remember this ...

A relationship with Christ ...

... the guidance of the Scriptures...

... the forgiveness of the cross...

... all begin at home.

And the Good News is, the God we worship in this home is the Lord who will go with us to each of our homes as well. He will be there to offer his strength ... to offer his peace ... to offer his love.

At the end of the book of Joshua, this great Old Testament leader calls together the people of Israel and offers them a challenge which echoes down through the ages to each of us as well. “Choose this day whom you will serve,” he said. “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” May it be so for each of us as well. AMEN.