

Reverence
Psalm 67 May 9, 2010
Mother's Day

– with prayers for Mother Earth and the destruction in the Gulf-

Here for your listening pleasure -- a couple of scriptures upon which the future of our species depends.

Let all the ends of the earth revere God.

Revere your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Both of these scriptures call for a reverence, honor, respect, for -- that from which you came.

Without this reverence there is no hope for our future.

Let me start with the second scripture.

We all know where the first scripture came from, we just read it from the Psalms.

But, how about the second one, what part of the Bible does it come from?

It is the 5th of the 10 commandments.

The first four commandments are all directed at our relationship with God.

The commandment about honoring your parents is the first of the commandments that guide us in our relationship with other humans.

Is it possible that reverence for your mother and father is the first scripture dealing with human relationships because it is more important to our survival than even the admonition not to murder or steal?

So what do we really mean by revering your parents, your ancestors?

To start with, to revere, or honor, your parents, doesn't mean you have to like them.

There are some parents that are despicable.
They shouldn't be parents.

Some parents are mean, cruel, and abusive.

Some parents are too busy with their own lives to really care about their children.

Some parents haven't figured out how to live their own lives, much less be responsible for someone else's life.

Some parents provide the absolute worst role model possible for their kids.

Some parents fit into the role of the enemy
that you really have to work at loving.

Then there are some parents that try, they really do
try, but sometimes the natural relationship between
parents and kids just isn't all that smooth.

Songwriter extraordinaire, Loudon Wainwright III,
years back wrote about a Father and a Son, but it
could also be about female familial relations.

- **A Father and a Son**

When I was your age I was just like you,
And just look at me now; I'm sure you do.
But your grandfather was just as bad
And you should have heard him trash his dad.
Life's no picnic, that's a given:
My mom's mom died when my mom was seven;
My mom's father was a tragic guy,
But he was so distant and nobody knows why.
Now, your mother's family, you know them:
Each and every one a gem,
Each and every one a gem.

When I was your age I was a mess;
On a bad day I still am, I guess.
I think I know what you're going through;
Everything changes but nothing is new.
And I know that I'm miserable; can't you see?
I just want you to be just like me.
Boys grow up to be grown men
And then men change back into boys again.
You're starting up and I'm winding down;
Ain't it big enough for us both in this town?
Say it's big enough for us both in this town.

When I was your age I thought I hated my dad
And that the feeling was a mutual one that we had;

We fought each other day and night:
I was always wrong; he was always right.
But he had the power and he needed to win;
His life half over, mine about to begin.
I'm not sure about that Oedipal stuff,
But when we were together it was always rough.
Hate is a strong word; I want to back-track;
The bigger the front, then the bigger the back;
The bigger the front, then the bigger the back.

Now you and me are me and you,
And it's a different ballgame though not brand-new.
I don't know what all of this fighting is for;
But we're having us a teenage/middle-age war.
I don't want to die and you want to live;
It takes a little bit of take and a whole lot of give.
It never really ends though each race is run,
This thing between a father and a son.
Maybe it's power and push and shove,
Maybe it's hate but probably it's love,
Maybe it's hate but probably it's love

While usually kids figure out that “maybe it’s hate,
but probably it’s love.

Still, some parents are hard to love and you don’t have
to like them, but we do need to revere them, honor
them, respect them.

The reason that it is so important is because of what I think there is a much, broader and more profound meaning to be taken from the commandment to honor your Mother and your Father.

It is a commandment to revere that from which you came and to not forget that you are not of your own making.

So many people think that the world just owes them everything.

They think that they have gotten to where they are because of all they have done.

It's true that some people work really hard to get where they got to, while others are rather lazy and they don't go anywhere.

There's also those who work incredibly hard and do all they can to do and get most everything right and still they seem to go nowhere.

All of these folks need to recognize that their good fortune and their bad fortune is strongly influenced by all the world beyond them over which they have very little control – a world from which they come.

To dishonor the reality, that where we are is due in large measure to that from which we have come is to violate the commandment of honoring your mother and father.

Yes, we were born of a fleshly mother and father, and given some genetic predispositions, but every morning we are born a new, born with not only those genetic predispositions, but with cultural, educational, economic, familial, spiritual predispositions and expectations.

As I was saying, to respect and honor doesn't necessarily mean that you like what you are honoring and respecting.

If I'm walking on a trail and I come upon a rattlesnake, I don't necessarily have to like it, but I am definitely going to honor its position and give it proper respect.

Sometime one needs to give proper honor and respect to that from whence they came, so that they can move far away.

For instance, if you came from a family that for generations believed that beating children was a proper thing to do, then you need to give that notion its due honor and respect and move away from it, giving it a wide birth.

If you come from a family where for generations everyone has been satisfied to live a menial life with little education and hope of moving beyond your current status, you may want to move beyond that; but to do so you have to recognize it and give it a proper respect.

If you don't revere that from which you came, you're going to have a distorted view of reality – and believe a blind man – distorted vision is not very good for ones survival.

The other scripture that will save our species teaches us much the same lesson, that scripture as you recall is, "Let all the ends of the earth revere God."

Even more so than our parents, to revere that from which we came – is to revere God.

How do we revere God?

Remember what Paul told the Athenians, that God doesn't need anything from us.

God was around for an eternity before we came on the scene, what possibly could God need from us.

God doesn't need our reverence.

We need --- we need to revere God or all will be lost.

But how? How do we revere God?

Worship is a good start.

But you know, to be honest, worship is more for us than God.

Again as Paul reminded us – God doesn't need anything from us.

Worshipping that from which we came, revering it, reinforces **our** eternal and inherent meaning and value.

I think the best way to revere God is by caring for the things that God has given us to be stewards over; like all of creation, one another and relationships of love.

When it gets dangerous to our species is when we forget to revere God;
when we forget that we are not here out of our own making;
when we start to think that all we have is because we're such cool people and we did it all on our own.
Then again, we start living in a fantasy world with distorted vision.

When we forget that – “But by the grace of God there go I,”
-- we start to think that all we have is of our own making that it is ours, -- it is mine.

Greed I believe, is the most common and destructive symptom of the disease of not revering God.

Every morning my daughter Annie wakes up and one of the first things she sees is a George Sumner poster that is hanging in her bathroom. It's a picture of some Great Whales and at the top of the picture is the phrase –
“A time for respect”
Is it any wonder that she keeps trying to be a vegetarian?

We all need something like that picture every morning – so that the first thing we do in the

morning is give thanks for just being alive
another day and reminding ourselves that it is
time for respect, time to revere that from which
we came –
a time for reverence.
AMEN.