

[Exodus 20:12:] "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

[Luther's Small Catechism:] What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect.

1. What in the world does the Fourth Commandment have to do with our Gospel Lesson for today? Today we start a sermon series about how the Ten Commandments apply to the Gospel Lessons of this Pentecost season. I've chosen a different commandment for each of the next ten Gospel Lessons and talk about how Jesus upholds that commandment for us. Our Gospel Lesson for today intersects nicely with the Fourth Commandment.
2. Confessional Lutheran shop-talk uses the Small Catechism's Explanations to the Commandments as a shorthand to categorize sin. For example, as we just heard, Luther used the Fourth Commandment of Honor your father and your mother as a way to talk about honoring *all* authority: first in the home where parents have the unique role of being *both* the spiritual *and* the legal authority, and then by extension those who are spiritual authorities and those who are legal authorities. So, if I decide to break a law of the land without Scriptural justification for doing so, you may hear a Lutheran say, "Well, that's a Fourth Commandment issue." That's because it has to do with someone not following authority. Luther's genius was using the Ten Commandments as an outline to teach all of God's moral law from the Scripture.
3. Jesus upheld all of God's law—moral, civil, *and* ceremonial! In our Gospel Lesson, Jesus honors the Roman commander—the centurion—who was over the Jews at that time. {Read verses 1-6a.} The so of So Jesus went with them just continues the story and does not show result. I make that careful point because we don't want to slip into a work-righteousness concept with this text. A false interpretation is "God owes me because I did good—*like this centurion!*" Nope! That was the people's conclusion, not Jesus'. So Jesus [simply] went with them. And we know that the centurion didn't think he was owed anything from what happens next. {Read verses 6b-8.}
4. The centurion understood authority. All he had to do was say a word and something happened. He recognized the authority of Jesus. First of all, it was up to Jesus whether to speak the word of healing. If He did it, wonderful! If He did not, that's fine too! He's the One with the authority to speak. And secondly, once the Word was spoken, it was going to be done. That's how authority is supposed to work.
5. Jesus knew about authority. He is the Son of God, the Lord Who came to do the work of our salvation. Jesus also knew that many people struggle with the concept of authority. We struggle with the concept of authority. It is difficult to honor authority when what the authority wants isn't necessarily what we want. Do we joyfully pay our taxes, seeing it as a way to honor the authorities God puts over us? Do we always respect those who are authorities over us, even if they're not the people we would have chosen to be in that position? We sin when we don't! You can (maybe even rightly) argue that you would use the money in a better way than the government or that the

person with authority is of questionable character. That's because the authorities over us in this world are sinful like you and I who don't want to honor them. However, unless they are telling us to disobey God's Word—the ultimate authority—the Word itself tells us to honor the imperfect authorities over us. This is so hard for us. And Jesus did it perfectly for us for when we don't.

6. Jesus was amazed that the centurion, whom Jesus was bound by His own Word to honor, showed Him the honor due Him as the Son of God. And Jesus did choose to bless him. {Read verses 9-10.}
7. As we look at the Fourth Commandment, we ask ourselves about our merit based on this text. Remember that the people said that the centurion *deserved* to have Jesus help him. But the centurion saw himself as unworthy. How should we look at ourselves when it comes to honoring authority? We ask God to graciously *not* give us what we deserve, for we have not kept the commandment perfectly and hell is what we deserve for breaking *any* of God's will. Instead we trust God's promise that Jesus kept this commandment perfectly for us. And we see how God acts in line with His grace in this reading: mercifully healing the centurion's servant. We also know how God has acted in line with His grace in our lives. Every time that we have failed to honor authority, we repent of our sin knowing Jesus honored authority perfectly for us.
8. We look at what Jesus came to earth to do for us—what He was authorized to do. He came to die for our sins of rebellion against God's authority. Because He completed that work, He had to rise from the dead, the proof that He did the work. We are connected with Jesus' death and resurrection through Word and sacrament. That means we would honor the centurion—even if that meant we didn't want a centurion to have authority over us. God grant us the will to do what Jesus was happy to do for us. He honored the authority of His Father when He saved us by upholding the Fourth Commandment. We honor our Savior when we do the same. Amen.