

“Passing on a Family Tradition”—Exodus 12:25-27

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Passing on a Family Tradition”, is Exodus 12:25-27 → *When you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall keep this service. And when your children say to you, “What do you mean by this service?” you shall say, “It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for He passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Traditions. Traditions are activities which are developed in life over a period of years by individuals, within families and in communities. They become an understood way of doing something even to the point of successive generations continuing to do them maybe without knowing the meaning behind them. Yet, with as ingrained as traditions may be, it still takes intentional effort and emotion to keep traditions going in each successive generation. Otherwise they become simply ghosts from the past which have no bearing on reality in the present.

If one might think of a holiday filled with a plethora of traditions Christmas would rank very high on the list. From baking to banners, from

parties to programs, from the presence of family to the presents beneath a tree, Christmas is filled with traditions passed on from one generation to another. Yet, it seems those traditions are kind of an “endanger species” as successive generations may not feel the need to carry them on in the affluent, materialistic “me, myself and I” culture in which we live. While I’ve heard people talk about Hallmark Christmas movies being “sappy” with the same themes running through each movie, have you ever noticed that one of the themes is a longing for a “traditional” Christmas . . . usually associated with a small town context?

In our text Moses gave instructions to God’s people concerning the Passover. Yahweh’s final *judgment* upon *all the gods of Egypt* was to *strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt* with death (cf. Exodus 12:12). In order for His people to save the firstborn in their houses they were given specific instructions of killing a lamb and placing it’s blood on the doorframes of their houses (cf. Exodus 12:3-7). Connected with this sacrifice was a meal, the preparation and eating of which involved very specific instructions (cf. Exodus 12:8-11). In verse 25 of our text he told them: *When you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as He has promised, you shall keep **this service**. This . . . feast to the LORD* was supposed to be observed *throughout their generations, as a statute forever* (cf. Exodus 12:14).

Like so many traditions which are passed down from one generation

to another the question will usually arise at some point: “Why are we doing this?” Yahweh anticipated this dynamic of traditions with His instructions in verse 26 of our text: *when your children say to you, “What do you mean by this service?” . . .* When asked what was so important about this particular meal and observance Yahweh put the words in the parents’ mouths: *You shall say, “It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover, for He passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.”* (Verse 27) This should open the dialog for further inquiry since it doesn’t contain the whole story. This tradition provided a “teachable moment” where parents could share the Gospel of deliverance from slavery and blessings of a land wherein the LORD dwelt amongst His people. It is called a *service* because the LORD served them His grace!

We continue to share a meal whereby we do more than simply remember the salvation accomplished for us by Jesus, referred to by John the Baptizer as *the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world* (cf. John 1:29). He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, taking on Himself the judgment which our sins deserved. His blood was shed on wood as well—the wood of the cross—and is given to us in the Lord’s Supper, another meal in which He commanded us to eat and drink for the forgiveness of our sins (cf. Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20). We do this in Divine Service in this place. This too is called a *service* because the

LORD serves us His grace!

People may pass on family traditions of all kinds. Some may see no need to pass on family traditions. Family traditions as we've seen throughout history fade away and discontinue. For the Christian, though, there is a family tradition which will not fade away and discontinue from God's perspective. Taking the Lord's Supper as His children in His family is a foretaste of the feast yet to come in the glory of His kingdom when sin, death and devil are completely defeated on the Last Day (cf. Isaiah 25:1-9). It's a celebration Yahweh wants all to experience forever, including your family.

Yet many are choosing to not pass on the family traditions handed down to us by our Father in heaven Himself. They do not see any need for them to come to the altar for the forgiveness of sins themselves, let alone for their children. However, Jesus commands us to *let the children come to Me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God* (cf. Mark 10:14). In our family Christmas service we are showing that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the Holy Spirit's producing good works through us and the constant desire and need for God's grace is just as important for the grown-ups as it is for the children.

Did you notice in our text what God's people did after receiving these important instructions from Moses? Verse 27 of our text says: *the people bowed their heads and worshiped*. They humbled themselves before the

LORD to thank and praise, serve and obey Him for this wonderful grace and salvation in their lives. Regular worship attendance passes on this service, a family tradition which lasts into eternity because *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever* (cf. Hebrews 13:8). Amen.

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