

+ Deuteronomy 6:4-9 + A Godly Family Makes a Godly Nation +
+ Sixth Sunday after Pentecost + 4 July 2010 +

How do you build a nation? People over the centuries have pondered that question, including our nation's forefathers. The leaders of our nation and other nations today ponder that same question, especially in war-torn places like Afghanistan and Iraq. So what does it take? Laws? Legitimacy? Leaders? All are very important in the building of a nation, but what do you need most to build a nation, specifically a godly nation?

There's lots of talk about legislating morality or getting Christians into power or lobbying Congress, but none of those will really build a godly nation. Every one of us, however, can do our part to support and encourage a godly nation by simply being a member of a family.

When God created the family in the Garden of Eden, he intended it to be the building block of society. That's still true, but the family breaks down. Tension and anger and mistrust and divorce rip it apart. Guilt festers and forgiveness is withheld. The God-given role of men as self-sacrificing, responsible leaders of their families and the God-given role of women as loving supporters and helpmates are flipped around or ignored. The ungodly union between two men or two women is condoned as "family", while the godly union of one man and one woman in marriage is attacked. When the Lord is not present in a home or when he doesn't get top priority in a home, the family can very easily break down, which then impacts society. Look no further than the impact a broken society has had on you and your family.

So how do you build a godly nation? Moses pondered that question along the banks of the Jordan River. The Israelites were about to enter the land long promised to their forefathers and build a nation, but Moses would not go with them. So in his farewell sermon, he advised them **A GODLY FAMILY MAKES A GODLY NATION.**

How do you build a godly nation? Moses knew exactly where to start. "**Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.**" The Israelites had just left a land where the people worshiped the forces of nature. They were about to enter a land where the people worshiped the forces of nature. The Israelites did not, but they would be tempted to do so.

Moses reminded them that the Lord was their one, true God. Apart from him, there is no other. That statement, "**The LORD our God, the LORD is one**", was really remarkable. No other nation in the ancient world had such a God. The Lord wanted to impress on his people that only through him alone would they have a godly nation. Through him alone, they would not only be citizens of an earthly nation, but of a heavenly nation to come. Only through this divine revelation could they know that!

That's a remarkable statement for our own times. We live in a time when it's not unusual to hear someone say, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe it" or "We all pray to the same God." People may not bow down to idols of wood or stone, but instead give their honor and top priority to money or stuff or their job or their family or their children or anything or anyone else rather than the one, true God. How often don't we find ourselves forgetting the one, true God without even realizing it?

Jesus' response is just as remarkable. "**I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**" That only makes sense when the Lord reveals it to you through his Word. In that Word you find out why Jesus is THE way and THE truth and THE life and that there is no other. In our text, Moses used that name "**the LORD**". Whenever that name is used in the Old Testament it refers not to the almighty Creator of all things, not to the holy Judge who condemns the sinner, but to the God of free and faithful grace—the Lord who is gracious and compassionate forgiving the sins of the whole earth. It is the God who gave up his only begotten Son to save you from your sinful self. It is your Savior Jesus who humbly lived a perfect life in your place, even though you give your honor to others. It is your Savior Jesus who willingly sacrificed himself on the cross to pay the price for your sins. It is your Savior Jesus who gloriously returned from the dead to guarantee your salvation. In Christ alone, you see that the God of free and faithful grace is the one, true God.

This one, true God is also "**the LORD our God.**" Moses reminded the people of the One who had miraculously preserved their lives while rescuing them from the slavery of Egypt and the fury of Pharaoh's army. Moses reminded them that the "**the LORD our God**" had brought them to the banks of the Jordan River and would give them the Promised Land.

Moses reminds us as well, "**The LORD is our God**". Now the Lord did not promise to give us the North American continent, but he has promised to give us a heavenly land. The Lord did not promise to create our earthly nation, but in allowing the formation of this nation, he has allowed us to proclaim his saving message in

peace without fear. The Lord did not use a miracle to bring us here, but he did use the miracle of Baptism to make us part of his family and through the miracle of giving us himself, he strengthens us through his Supper. The God of free and faithful grace may not be the God of our nation, but he is your God through your Savior Jesus.

God, then, commands through Moses, ***“Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”*** How is that possible? By nature, we are corrupt sinners living in a corrupt and sinful society. We give in to temptation day after day and live more like citizens of hell than citizens of heaven. By nature, we hate God as Paul writes in Romans 8, ***“The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.”*** Even as Christians, we do not always love the Lord with ALL our hearts, ALL our souls and ALL our strength. Usually the Lord only receives a portion of that love, when he demands it all always.

How is that possible? Consider the LORD’s total love for you that made him your God! John writes, ***“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*** Total love for the Lord is only possible through God’s love for you in Christ Jesus. That total love for the Lord builds a godly nation. When a nation’s citizens are by faith devoted to the true God in heart, soul and strength, there you will find a godly nation. You can’t legislate that. You can’t lobby Congress for it. You can’t make it happen through a Christian leader. That’s only possible through God’s love for you found on the pages of Holy Scripture. That’s the most important step in building a godly nation, but there’s even more.

God wanted the training of Christian citizens to be something that began in the home—first with the parents and then with the children. The Lord wanted parents to inscribe his truths and commands on their own hearts rather than just go through the motions once every couple weeks. God didn’t want parents to simply leave the training of their children to the weekly Sabbath days and the religious professionals. He intended for parents to train their children in the ways of the Lord every day. ***“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”***

God wants the training of Christian citizens to be a regular part of your day. You don’t need to tie a cross to your hand or engrave his truths on your doorframe, but the Lord wants us all to see Christian education as something more than just Sunday School. He wants moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, even aunts and uncles to talk about the Savior on a daily basis with their children. He wants parents and children to spend time in the Word together. He wants parents to be godly examples in their marriage to model for their children the importance of confession of sin and forgiveness. He wants parents to make worship and Bible study a top priority because by such things the family as a whole grows in the Lord.

...But what a great responsibility that is—to train our children in the ways of the Lord and teach them about the Savior! With our busy lives and busy schedules, many of us barely have time to sit down for a meal together, let alone spend time in the Word. Then, of course, there are those times when we fail to give God’s Word and worship our top priority or when we fail to model godly Christian lives for our children. How can we possibly carry it out?

God commands us to raise godly families, but on our own that’s impossible. In some way, shape or form, on our own we will fail, but that’s where the God of free and faithful grace brings forgiveness for those times when you haven’t given his Word top priority or when you have failed to give a good example to our children. That forgiveness is yours through the One who lived perfectly as a citizen of both nations for you, and who died to give you citizenship in heaven. Christ’s forgiveness enables you by faith to not only love the Lord with all your being, but train your children to do the same.

In the meantime, the Church is here not to train your children for you, but to help you train your children to be heaven’s citizens. Yes, when godly parents train their children in the ways of the Lord, God blesses the earthly nation with godly citizens, but the Lord desires that we train our children to be more than good earthly citizens. He desires that we train our children to be citizens of heaven, where they will be with Christ their Savior forever.

So how do you build a godly nation? It starts with the Lord in the home. It continues as you train your children in the Lord to be citizens of his heavenly kingdom and as you lead them to the Savior’s waiting arms. May our one, true and faithful God enable us to do that for Jesus’ sake! Amen.