Proverbs 14:26; Proverbs 22:6; 1 Corinthians 11:1 August 26, 2018

*Pointers, Part 1*

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 Today we begin a new sermon series that will take us through the beginning of October. This series is called “Pointers,” with the idea that just as the lives of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob in the book of *Genesis* pointed to Jesus, so our lives as followers of Jesus should point to him too. We are going to spend time thinking about how we raise our kids, how we schedule our time, how we choose our friends, how we speak and choose our attitudes, and how we use our money. How do our lives point to Jesus as our Savior and as our Lord? Let us pray:

 *Gracious God, hear our prayer. Holy Spirit, teach us, help us hear what you want us to know, and strengthen our resolve to act on what you tell us is right and best to do. Help us to know the truth, for you tell us that the truth will set us free from slavery to old patterns that do not bring forth the abundant life you died to give us. This we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

 How do our lives point to Jesus as our Savior and as our Lord? Before we begin to dig into this question in the different ways that I mentioned, it is important that we understand the question. First, what does it mean for Jesus is be our Savior?

* It means that we recognize we are sinners in desperate need of a savior if we want to live in Heaven with God for all eternity.
* It means that we acknowledge that without God sending a substitute to take the full punishment for our sin, to pay the penalty for our sin, we have no hope of being saved.
* It means we know that Jesus is that substitute - the only worthy substitute who could die in our place because he was without sin.
* It means we have put our full eternal confidence in what he did for us on the cross, suffering and dying in our place so that we could live free from being slaves to our sin.
* It means we believe that three days after Jesus was crucified, he rose from the dead, thereby bringing forth a newness of life here on earth that culminates in the glories of heaven.

For us to say that Jesus is our Savior means all of those things. There’s no gray area here, folks. For Jesus to be our Savior means that we believe every single one of those statements without footnote.

But what about saying that Jesus is our Lord? According to Wester’s Dictionary, a “lord” is one who “has power and authority over others.” So, when a person confesses that “Jesus is Lord,” they are confessing that Jesus “has power and authority” over others. What others? All others. Jesus has power and authority over all creation, visible and invisible. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus said to his disciples, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* All means all. So, for us to confess that “Jesus is Lord” is to affirm what he has already said is true: All power and authority belongs to Jesus. He is Lord over all creation. This helps to make the Scripture in Romans 10:9 come to life, doesn’t it? “***9****If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

 But we have to go further today, because the question as we begin this sermon series is this one: How do our lives point to Jesus as our Savior and as our Lord - not just the Lord, but as our Lord? What’s the difference? Well, to say that Jesus is Lord over all creation, seen and unseen, is one thing. It sort of keeps him “out there.” But what we need to know is whether he is Lord “in here (our hearts)?” Does he have all power and authority in my life? In your life? Do we submit to his Word, to his instructions, to his ways in the world? If we say that Jesus is our Lord but don’t actually submit (which means to accept or yield to the authority of another), we are contradicting ourselves. It’s like saying, “Oh yeah. I’m a Penn State fan,” while wearing a Pitt t-shirt.

It’s no wonder Jesus asked (Luke 6:46), *“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and don’t do the things that I say?”* He’s pointing out that people who do this are simply paying lip service to something they don’t really live. Telling your girlfriend that you love her and she’s the only one for you, all the while looking behind her back at another girl across the way – it’s fake news. It’s not real – and it sure isn’t going to work out well in the end. To say that Jesus is my Lord and then to just go off and live any way I want, doing whatever I want, when I want, with whomever I want, with no love or time for his body, the church, makes a mockery of your confession.

For me to truthfully say that Jesus is my Savior and my Lord is to say that I give him first place. When I make a decision, he’s the one I ask first. When I’m ready to spout off at someone, he’s the one I ask to guard my mouth, so that I only say the right things in the right way. When I’m thinking I want to buy something outside of my budget, his way is the way I want to go. The way I raise my kids, schedule my time, choose my friends, choose my words and my attitudes, and view the use of money either points to me as the Lord of my life or points to Jesus as the Lord of my life. There is no middle ground. God hates the lukewarm. You are either hot or cold. He is either Lord of your life or he isn’t. Sort of stings a little, doesn’t it? But we need to hear this, because even if this time last year you were really trusting God in ways you never had, other circumstances can come into our lives that we allow to pull us away. Lordship is not a once and done thing. It’s a daily decision. It’s a lifestyle choice based on who you’re giving power and authority to in your life.

I think we need to stop and pray again. *Heavenly Father, we come before you. Speak to our hearts in this moment. We know you love us. We know you do not desire that any would be put to shame. You desire that all would know you, love you, and find their peace and their refuge in you. Show us what you want us to see. Stir up a desire within us to willingly consistently submit to your power and your authority in our lives, believing with all of our hearts that your way is the best and only way to live a life of joy and freedom. We know we will never be perfect. But we do want to keep moving in the right direction, your direction, day by day. This we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

Today’s question is this one, “How does the way we raise our children point to Jesus as our Savior and our Lord?” And let me be clear. Even if you don’t have children, or you no longer have children in your home, if you are part of this family right here, guess what? You have children and this question applies to you. End of discussion. Let’s take a look at a familiar verse, Proverbs 22:6.

* Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it. (NIV)
* Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it. (NLT)
* Point your kids in the right direction—when they’re old they won’t be lost. (MSG)
* Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it. (NKJV)

There is the idea of purpose, of clear intention, of a definite goal line, and of repetition in

order to fulfill the responsibility of child-rearing. The most important is the goal line. Where are we directing our children and youth? What way is the right way? Some might say, “Of course we know what the right way is. It’s the way we want them to go.” In other words, obedience to our instructions is the right way. We want moral children. Kind, engaged, and generous children. Children & youth who are willing to gather with the church, who understand the call and the command to be part of the Body of Christ, who work hard, who study hard, who get a good job, make a good living, and raise a good family. We’re talking The American Dream, right? And I’m not saying there is anything wrong with the American Dream, but when you look at Proverbs 22:6 and other Scriptures about how to raise our children, does it add up to the American Dream? Or is it the American Dream with a little bit of religion thrown in? I don’t think so.

What God wants for us in raising up our children and youth is to raise them to become disciples of Jesus Christ - people who follow Jesus. People who submit to Jesus as Lord. Which doesn’t mean that we have to completely toss out the American Dream. We can have many of the wonderful things that are provided in that model of life and still be faithful to God, but the issue is, faithfulness to God is so much bigger than the American Dream! If we are raising our kids to follow Jesus, that means there will come times when the decisions they make don’t follow the American Dream, but actually fulfill a greater dream – a dream of a kingdom that God is building in this world. Every time we have missionaries here to share what God is doing in their lives, we are reminded of this, aren’t we? Next week we will have Pastor Joseph and Pastor Martha from Kwezeke Ministries in Mozambique, Africa here to share with us about what God is doing across the world. It’s a reminder to us that the American Dream of the house and the cars and the two kids and the cabin in the woods or the condo on the beach is not the ultimate goal we should be pointing our lives toward. We need to be asking, “What do you want to do through me to build (not a castle for my family) but a kingdom that has no end?”

 This takes intentional action. It takes teamwork. It takes prayer. It takes encouragement. It takes a whole family of believers. It takes all of us knowing the names of the children around us so that we can be praying for them by name, calling them by name, and praying for their parents by name, too. Because you know what? The chance of a child or youth coming to a true profession of faith that Jesus is not just their Savior but also their Lord is much lower if their parents aren’t living under his Lordship themselves.

 Look at this Scripture from Proverbs 14:26, *“Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for their children it will be a refuge.”*  A *fortress* is a secured and strong place. A *refuge* is a place of shelter or protection from danger or distress. Whoever has a proper fear and reverence for the Lord (as the one who holds all power and authority) has a home that is a secure and strong place where children feel safe and protected. That needs to be your home, parents. That needs to be your home, grandparents. That needs to be your home, aunts and uncles. That needs to be our homes, church family. Whoever truly lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, provides a place where our children and youth can find refuge, peace, security, love, listening ears, and when necessary, words of wisdom from God’s heart to their heart.

 1 Corinthians 11:1 finds the apostle Paul writing this, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”*  Are we able to say that with confidence to our children & youth? Whether we like to admit it or not, we are modeling something to the children around us. We are either modeling faithfulness to Jesus as our Savior and our Lord, or we are modeling faithfulness to someone or something else. Are we modeling how to say I’m sorry when we have done wrong? Are we modeling forgiveness as God in Christ has forgiven us? Are we modeling good and godly use of our time, of the money God has given us to manage? Are we modeling good use of words and attitudes that honor God? Are we modeling making good decisions about who we spend time with? By the choices we make, are we saying that:

* Soccer is My Life or
* Hunting is My Life or
* Racing is My Life or
* Work is My Life or
* Football is My Life or
* Studying is My Life or
* My Kids are My Life or
* My Phone is My Life or
* Video games are My Life or
* What Everyone Else Thinks about Me is My Life or
* My boyfriend or girlfriend is My Life or
* My Desires and Wants are My Life?

Or are we clearly showing the children and youth around us that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Life, and what he says and where he directs, goes? Our children & youth can spot a phony from a mile away. I challenge all of us to live with thankful hearts because of the work of our Savior, Jesus Christ. But I also challenge us to live consistently faithful lives in submission to Jesus as not just The Lord, but Jesus Christ as Our Lord.

 If you haven’t been living this way, today’s a new day. Joyce Meyer says, *“I’m not where I need to be, but thank God I’m not where I used to be.”* Amen! God’s mercies are new for us this morning. You may be accused of not being where you should be. You may be accused of lots of things as you make some changes. Well, so what? If Jesus is our Lord, it’s what he says that matters. We need to live our lives for an audience of One, folks. Period. I need to point my life in Jesus’ direction, and by God’s grace, hope and pray that the young ones around me will follow my example. Whew. What a high calling this is on our lives. But in the end, nothing from The American Dream is going with us wherever we’re going. Only what’s done for Christ will last. Let’s make sure we are giving our children what they need the most. Let us pray: *Thank you, Lord Jesus, for showing us the way. Thank you for being the way. Thank you for being the foundation and the fortress. Thank you for being our refuge against the storms of life. Thank you for being the anchor that keeps us from drifting off into the darkness. Thank you for loving us, saving us, and lighting the path before us to show us the way not to the American Dream but to the Abundant Life you died to give us. All this we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*