

Today is a special day of celebration. We celebrate the accomplishment of our graduating high school seniors and their parents and guardians. They have put about 13 years of work and dedication, at least, to accomplish all things we are celebrating today. Graduating high school seniors and parents/guardians! Pamper yourselves and tell, “I did a great job!” Surely you did.

Graduating high school seniors, however! Please know that you are who you are because of the sacrificial love you have received from your parents, guardians, family, and friends. Let us thank them by saying, “Thank You” right now.

The theological term of our parents’ sacrificial love is “substitutionary love.” On behalf of the children, our parents sacrifice themselves. They have given up their sweet morning sleep to get up early enough to wake the children up, feed them, and give them a ride to school. Our parents have given up what they wanted to buy and spared the money to buy what the children needed. Sometimes the children didn’t get what they wanted, but the parents have provided what the children needed. There is no way to pay back for what our parents did for us, the children. But, at least, we can let them know we appreciate them and love them. Also, we can love others as our parents have loved us.

Our relationship with God is similar to our relationship with our parents. The “substitutionary love” of God is shown on the cross. The simple way to say this is Jesus died for us on the cross. He shed blood for us because of our sin. The bloodshedding image of substitutionary love is a hard image for many of us. When Mel Gibbon’s movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” came in 2004, there were much negative feedbacks because of the bloodshedding image of Christ in the film. But that’s the reality. That’s the price God has paid to earn us back as God’s children. That’s the core message of Christianity which is not negotiable. Because of sin, Christ died in our place on the cross.

Sin is a violation of God’s intended order for creation and violates the very nature of God. God’s primary activity in the world is to bring order out of chaos. God’s intent for our broken world is to restore to its original state of goodness and perfection.

Some of us might think that we have no sin because we did not kill anyone or steal anything. But the scripture says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Let’s pause for a moment and think. Once again, sin is a violation of God’s intended order, living in harmony and peace. For living in peace and harmony, we have the rules or conventional rules we need to follow.

For the Jews in the Bible, there are 613 rules—the 365 “negative” rules correspond to the same number of days of the solar year¹, and 248 “positive” rules correspond to the number of bones in the human body². The summary of 613 rules is the 10 Commandments many of us know of. The summaries of the 10 Commandments are the Great Commandment—Love God and love others as we love ourselves.

If you feel that you have not sinned, then think about this: Have you ever argued with anyone in life? With your siblings, parents, grandparents, or friends? How about leaving the trash at the stadium or beach after the party? How about driving faster than the speed limit posted on the street? If you did one of these even for once, you are a sinner because you violated God’s intended order. I don’t think any of us, including myself, are free from this. We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

To make us right with God, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, because God loves us so much. And He suffered and died in our place. I would say Jesus is a “crazy glue” from God to glue our brokenness and make us whole again. I say “crazy” because He came to us even though He knew He would suffer and die. He is crazily in love with us. Our parents are also a “crazy glue” from God because they knew they had to give up their own wanting and sacrifice many things when they had us as their children. The only way we can respond to the sacrificial love we have received from God and our parents is by thanking them and living in gratitude by sharing the love with others. Let us be a “crazy glue” for God in gratitude to glue the brokenness in the world like Jesus, and our parents did for us. Amen.

¹ Negative commandments of the Torah. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/901723/jewish/negative-commandments.htm

² Positive commandments of the Torah. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/901695/jewish/positive-commandments.htm