

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday March 7th.

“The Ten Commandments”

I am thankful Jesus boiled down all of God's commandments into two. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and Love your neighbor as yourself.

So, in Jesus fashion, the first three of the 10 commandments are about our relationship with God. I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make idols for yourselves, use my name inappropriately, and forget the Sabbath. These three commandments about our relationship with God. We are to place God first in our lives, use God's name with care and respect, and take time out of our busy lives to pause and worship God and hear God's word.

The next seven Commandments tell us how to treat our neighbors. The book of James calls this the royal law - You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” James 2:8.

First of the 7 is the fourth commandment. Are those who live in our homes our neighbors? Of course. The fourth commandment tells us that how you treat your parents matters. The commandment says that we are to honor our Father and Mother. That could be as children, teenagers or later in life when you have to make healthcare or financial decisions for your aging parents. The promise is that things will likely go better for you when you honor your parents.

And parents, how you treat their kids matters too. I had a youth once tell me in confirmation when we studied this commandment, what if I don't respect my parents and their choices... his mom was an alcoholic. Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21

I am reminded of Ephesians 6:4 “And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Colossians 3:20-21 “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.”

The fifth commandment is “You shall not murder”, according to Luther in the Small Catechism, this means we should not endanger or harm our neighbors (which is everyone and everything), but help and support them in all life’s needs. You can kill people with words too. Social media is notorious for this. Words do hurt. Sticks and stones. We can harm people and creation through our sins of omission too. Do your decisions about what you buy or how you live affect our neighbors across the globe? Our creation? Sometimes we don’t even know the damage we are causing.

Sixth says you shall not commit adultery. Don’t cheat on your spouse. In other words, God cares about marriage. Why would God put a commandment in if God didn’t care? In movies, adultery sells better. Can you think of a movie you watched lately that lifts up a healthy marriage? Luther says, we are to live pure and decent lives in word and deed. And we are to love and honor our spouse.

Seventh commandment is you shall not steal. Don’t take what isn’t yours from your neighbor. Instead we are to help our neighbor’s improve their property and income.

Eighth commandment is Do not bear false witness against our neighbors. Don’t tell lies, betray, slander, or destroy our neighbor’s reputations. Don’t talk behind people’s backs. When you do this, I think it says more about you than the person you are talking about. I have a hard time trusting people who talk poorly about others behind their backs. Instead we are to come to our neighbor’s defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light. Thumper, if you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say it at all.

9th and 10 Commandments are about coveting our neighbor’s stuff, humans, or animals. We get ourselves in trouble or debt when we want to keep up with the Joneses. Instead we are to help them keep what is theirs.

So we're tying everything together this week. What do the 10 commandments have to do with Jesus entering the temple at Passover in John's Gospel and turning over the tables of the money changers and driving the animals out?

Jesus saw injustices happening. The Temple scheme wasn't about loving God and neighbor. It was a money making scheme that devoured people's savings. The market meant more than love of neighbor. Human sin was on full display. I see a conflict now in our country about opening up without restrictions. What is driving decision making?

The chief priests, scribes were capitalizing on people's care and concern for God's law. Jewish people wanted to follow the Torah and make their annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The temple knew people had to come to sacrifice an animal for the forgiveness of sins. So to be "nice" they conveniently had a plan that was self-serving. Instead of people bringing their own animals, they had animals and birds of all price points there for purchase. They had money changers waiting to change people's local currency into the approved temple currency so they could buy an animal for sacrifice. They charged high exchange rates.

Jesus called them out, "why have you made my Father's house a marketplace?"

Instead, Jesus referred to himself as the temple. Destroy this temple, his body, and in three days he will raise it up. They were confused. In other words, Jesus will be the once and for all sacrifice that will put an end to all this folly.