

SERMON - PASTOR GREG
15.10.2023

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you like to be told what to do? Let us pray.

Genesis 1: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."* Even after the Fall, all human beings are made in the image of God and as such all human beings have a deep, innate knowledge of God. Romans 1:21 and 2:15 tell us: "*although all people knew God they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him*" and "*the Gentiles (non- Jews) show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences are also bearing witness...*". So all people have the law written on their hearts but the Jewish people also have the Law of God written- first on stone then in book- as summarised in the Ten Commandments.

Do you remember the story? Living as slaves in Egypt, freed by the blood of the lambs and on the way to the Promised Land. But a stop along the way- at Mt Sinai -where God gave Moses His holy and life giving word- the way to live as God's people- the way to thrive and the way by which all people would come to know the only true and living God. We usually only think of the Ten Commandments but there were many other rules and regulations and celebrations that were given to God's people. As well as the whole sacrificial system- given so that the sins of the people might be dealt with. God's people and now God's Law. For life! And never forget that God saved them first and then He gave them the Law.

Luther understood the matter very well. His Small Catechism begins with the Ten Commandments then the Apostle's Creed then the Lord's Prayer and Baptism, Holy Communion and Absolution. To summarise: The Ten Commandments tell us WHAT WE MUST DO. The Creed tells us WHAT GOD HAS DONE. And the Lord's Prayer is OUR RESPONSE. But remember that the Small Catechism was written for Christians- who in the vast majority had been baptised as infants. Salvation first then the Law. Remember again the story of deliverance from Egypt- God could have given Moses the Ten Commandments and told him to go to the Israelites and say: DO THIS AND GOD WILL SAVE YOU but no- God heard their cry for mercy and saved them and then He gave them His good and holy will. And their response was to live holy lives just as God had declared them holy.

Most of you were baptised as infants- there God saved you and set you apart to serve Him- declaring you holy. Salvation first and then the call to respond- which many of you did when you were confirmed. And how are we to respond? By keeping the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are of course summarised in the words of Jesus Christ in Matthew 22:37: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...Love your neighbour as yourself.* The first three commandments deal with our relationship with God and the next seven speak of our relationships with one another.

Last week I preached on the first three commandments but today let us consider the rest of them and how Luther taught them:

The Fourth Commandment: **Honour your father and your mother.**

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honour them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

The Fifth Commandment: **You shall not murder.**

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbour in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.

The Sixth Commandment: **You shall not commit adultery.**

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do, and husband and wife love and honour each other.

The Seventh Commandment: **You shall not steal.**

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbour's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and income.

The Eighth Commandment: **You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.**

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbour, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way.

The Ninth Commandment: **You shall not covet your neighbour's house.**

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbour's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

The Tenth Commandment: **You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.**

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbour's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

This is what we must do as the people of God. In fact, all people of all time and in every single place are called to do likewise- to trust and honour God above all things and to love our neighbour as ourselves. But this is what we do not do. And so the Cross. And even we- the holy and baptised children of God fail to keep these commandments all the time- Because it is impossible for us to keep any one of these commandments perfectly and that is why we confess our sins and seek God's forgiveness- again and again.

God's word is holy and wonderful and life giving- to us who trust in Jesus Christ it is perfect, it revives our soul, it is worthy of our trust, it gives joy to the heart and is light to our eyes, it is more precious than much pure gold and sweeter than honey. The Law of God is wonderful because Jesus Christ has fulfilled all of it (Matthew 5:17).

Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I say it- rejoice! Amen.