

Third Sunday in Lent, March 4, 2018, Year B

St. Andrew's Anglican Church – Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ - Rector

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-21

"The Law is the Law"

It seems that today is Ten Commandments Day. I thought we would go back to the beginning rather than look at Jesus' clearing the Temple. The beginning of the people of Israel as they were taken out of captivity and slavery in Egypt. They were given a blessed gift – and we need to be reminded that the Commandments are non-negotiable, given to Moses in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt. They have since that time been called the "Law" because they gave God's people conditions of behavior. They are called "Apodictic Law – meaning that "no matter what" you must do this. There is no "if." There is no "if you do this..." then God will do this.

Here is an example of what ancient laws looked like before Moses was given the Law by God. They are casuistic – If this happens – then... For example:

- "If a man takes possession of a boat which is not his, he shall pay 10 shekels of silver."
- "If a man bites the nose of another man and severs it, he shall pay a mina of silver."
(From the laws of Eshnunna, 2100 BC)
- "If a son has struck his father, they shall cut off his hand."
- "If a builder constructed a house for a man, but did not make his work strong, with the result that the house collapsed and so caused the death of the owner of the house, that builder shall be put to death." (The Code of Hammurabi, 1700 BC)

You get an idea that these laws were even worse than the "old West!" The Ten Commandments can be found in Exodus 20, 1-17, where God gave these Laws to Moses on Mount Sinai sometime between 1250-1210 B.C. God spoke, and He said: "*I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.*" This is straight forward and self-explanatory.

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments." Basically, don't have any idols, and don't bow down to anyone or anything except God Himself alone, not even if you're kidding around.

"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name." – This is really big! A lot of drivers do this – and you hear God's name in vain. We are not just talking about "God" or "Yahweh" or "Jehovah" but also the

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name of Jesus. How many times have you heard the words “Jesus Christ” spoken in vain? You might hear them rationalize that they “don’t mean anything by it – it is just a knee-jerk reaction.” Well, get a different “knee!” Do not use His name in any bad way, He hates it! His name has such power that in using it correctly demons have to obey it. If a demon appeared to you and you were frightened you could say, “In the name of Jesus Christ, I demand you to leave me” and they will! Why? Because they have to obey His name. The Devil and his demons believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit just like we do, and they know they don't have much time left to deceive us before Jesus comes again to judge us. Please be careful what you say!

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” It is not saying here that your sabbath must be Sunday or your sabbath must be Saturday – as it is for the Jews. It is a day of rest – God did not make the sabbath for Him – He did it for you, so that you can rest and recharge your “batteries.” The Jewish people chose Saturday because their first day of the week was Sunday and the seventh day was Saturday and they gave that to the Lord for rest and relaxation. You know when you go to Israel today, on the sabbath – in a hotel there are 2 sets of elevators. One for the Gentiles where you go on, push a button and you go to your floor. Then there is the Jewish elevators – the Shabbat elevators – where every button is lit and it stops at every floor because they believe that pushing a button is work. I have been there and experienced it. Our sabbath is on Sunday and I love it that in Douglas, most places are closed, honoring the sabbath. I work on Sunday – so when is my sabbath? My sabbath is Monday and I dedicate it to the Lord. Of course, if the need be, and someone is on the hospital or something else, then I will go because I love the Lord and I am doing His work. I try to make it a “chill day” with reading Scripture and prayer, and I ask you to try and do the same on Sunday. For Christians it means to go to church, and don't work. By not working means the work we do for money. But if you can do without any kind of work at all: example; homework, chores, etc... try to do these things on other days. Jesus said that *“the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”* (Mark 2:27) Remember, it's your choice, nobody "forces" you work, it's your decision!

This is one that is becoming more difficult in this culture. *“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”* -Do not talk back to your parents or curse them. It goes on! It could be hard to respect a parent that doesn't deserve it or doesn't respect you, but we are to try. If you honor them – you are honoring God.

“You shall not murder.” This is self-explanatory, don't kill anyone! War is a different matter, basically don't kill someone because you're angry at them, or because it is an inconvenience, or

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because it would make your life better without them in it. That extends not only to murder with a knife or a gun, but abortion – and that is a whole ‘nother issue.

"You shall not commit adultery." Don't have sexual relations outside of marriage, and if you are married - be faithful to your spouse, and don't have sexual relations with anyone else. I can remember a president saying, "it depends on how you define 'sexual relations.'" That is a bunch of hooey! It's a tough commandment to follow, especially nowadays when it seems like everyone does it and it is glamorized in the movies and TV. But remember, that does not make it right! By the way - In the Old Testament - adultery was punishable by the death penalty. (Deuteronomy 22:22-27) God spoke much further on this commandment when He gave Moses Leviticus chapter 18 – with very clear specifics that have no expiration date. Things like incest, child sacrifice, bestiality – things we are seeing in today's culture. I don't think I need to say any more about that.

"You shall not steal." Again, straight forward. Never steal anything! It doesn't matter if it is as small as a gumball or as large as a car, if it isn't yours, don't take it.

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor." Don't accuse anyone falsely; remember that everyone is innocent until proven guilty. That is a hard one today – with all sorts of accusations going on and people resigning over them. We don't know if they are guilty or not. Don't lie, ever! There is no such thing as a white lie. When you lie you are not being honest with someone which we are supposed to do. You can end up hurting someone very badly, and probably yourself too – your integrity and reputation. There is a lot of this going on today in social media – stories get started and people carry rumors – it is worse than ever and can be cyber bullying. When you lie in any way, you break this commandment. So please, for your own sake, don't!

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." Do not covet. While most of us don't have donkeys or slaves, we can substitute these things for cars, iPad's, stereos, whatever... If someone has something you want, don't be jealous of them or hate them because of it. It does no good to worry about things we don't have. Remember that we take nothing with us when we die. So, don't build up material treasures, but spiritual treasures. Always give thanks to God for everything you have. Covetousness is not just about material things.

I have heard it said that if you break one commandment – you break them all. No matter how small a sin is – it is still a sin. It separates you from God until you repent and seek forgiveness. These were the beginning of God's giving many laws to His people in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. It was a lawless world as you saw from the examples I gave you at the beginning. They always boil down to the original ten which God gave to replace lawlessness.

In closing let me summarize the decalogue or Ten Commandments as simply as I can:

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- Believe in One God.
- Let no one worship idols.
- Use the Lord's Name with only reverence.
- Every Lord's Day is important.
- Parents should be honored and obeyed.
- Respect Human Life.
- Intimacy is for marriage only.
- No stealing.
- Truth Rules!
- Stop wanting other people's stuff.