

March 29 & 30, 2025

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## In and Out of the Wilderness:

### *The Reveal*

Exodus 20:1-8, Luke 9:28-36

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Have you ever had the 10 commandments used as a way of making you feel guilty about something? Or have it used as the law that you must follow and if you don't you aren't faithful or a good person?

I want to break down the common misconception about the 10 commandments and how they have been used.

When I was studying Hebrew, one class was translating the commandments. The professor pointed out that the commandments are laws in the sense that you have to follow them or something will happen, but it was that you should, would, want to because of what God has done for you. The 10 commandments weren't about sinning and were used to enforce how people should live or even correct their habits. This is a common misconception. We are going to show a video clip from our Finance Director, Kienan, who talks about living with the teaching of sin and correction growing up. (1st Video Clip) You see the point of these laws are not to make the sinner's soul into a self-help project, but rather to turn one neighbor towards the other. The point of the law is not self-improvement, but neighbor-improvement.

Moses doesn't go to the border and say God will save if but first you have to sign on the dotted line that you will do these 10 things. NO, he rescues them first. The covenant is given first in the chapter prior where God chooses them, then gives the law. But not without a reminder of who God is and what God has done for them, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt." Which shows us that the Law is not a condition to God's love and faithfulness. The law is not a prerequisite for Israel's rescue. God delivers them from Egypt first and then gives them the law.

The law is not Israel's means of salvation, it never was. God sets us free and this is how we live as a

result. God calls them priestly people, people called to live in a holy nation. The law is how they will represent God by living in a way that demonstrates God's character.

The law was not used to be implemented in a legislative sense. The Torah functions differently than modern law codes. Viewed as instruction, these laws are the beginning point for wisdom, not the final word. How to honor each and God in community. It's not the last word. Think of the things the commandments ask of us as a heart issue and not micromanaging your actions.

Accountable to God for and not something that others can pin us down on.

I am the Lord your God...therefore you should keep these commandments. Because God is a covenant keeping God.

The commandments are a vertical and horizontal relationship. It covers our relationship to God and our relationship to our neighbors. It calls us to value life versus taking it. Because God is faithful so we can and should expect that from each other as well.

The Ten Commandments start with the ultimate commandment—not to put anything else in our lives ahead of God. Positively, as both Moses and Jesus say, this means to love God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our might (or mind). And when we fail to do this, our neighbors pay. When we center our lives around things other than God—whether it be money, fame, power, pleasure, beauty, even religion, or anything else—our neighbors will pay.

Second, this means not having idols in our lives. An idol can be anything we love, worship, or center our lives around that isn't God. Luther wrote these famous words in his Large Catechism: "A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress ... That now, I say, upon which you set your heart and put your trust is properly your god." We cannot love God more than things or ourselves. We have

many gods, many things that we love and trust more than God.

Third, the Lord has given us the divine name (in the Old Testament, YHWH, “The Lord”; in the New Testament, “The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”) in order that we might call upon God for forgiveness, sing out in thanksgiving and praise, and cry out for deliverance and healing. God’s name is poured out upon us in baptism. And the life of faith consists of learning to use God’s name properly.

Fourth, loving God means keeping the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of worship to attend to God’s Word. A day for the gathering as a community of the forgiven who are sent in mission. A day for hearing the preaching of the Word and singing in praise. A day of fellowship, learning, and again as Luther put it, for the “mutual conversation and consolation of the saints.”

But the Sabbath is also a day of rest and justice. The Sabbath was the first fair labor law. Not only were the heads of households to rest, but also the working poor, slaves, and even the animals were to be given rest. Keeping the Sabbath, first and foremost, is about lives that are captured by a God who keeps faith with us and who keeps on intruding graciously into our lives.

The reason we keep the Sabbath, according to Deuteronomy, is that our people used to know what life was like when we had a lord named Pharaoh who did not allow days off. Put yourselves in the feet of the Exodus generation. For years they served Pharaoh, a burdensome master who gave no days off and when complaints arose, who said, “Now make bricks without straw.” God graciously intruded into that reality and said to the people, “You will no longer serve Pharaoh, you will serve me. And to serve me means that once every seven days, you, your kids, your workers, even your animals get the day off.” Why? Because God’s gracious intrusion into human existence was not a one-time event, but a regular, ritualized reality.

And this gracious reality extends beyond only one day a week. In the Old Testament laws, God offers a series of other sabbatical laws. Once every seven

years, the land is given a rest—“the seventh year you shall let it rest ... so that the poor of your people may eat.”

Notice that. God’s gracious intrusion now is ritualized over the course of years and it is for the sake of the poor. Once every seven years, all debts are to be forgiven God announced. Why? For the sake of charity and stewardship. God said this: “Give liberally and be ungrudging.” Likewise, every seven years slaves were to go free—God’s gracious intrusion to free those in chains. And every seven times seven years, all land was to return to its original family. God’s gracious intrusion to ensure that the means of life were not monopolized by the few.

Notice that keeping the Sabbath then, has to do with much more than one day a week. It is about an entire way of life. A way of life that is in keeping with the One who keeps faith with us.

The purpose of the law is not “your best life now,” but rather “your neighbor’s best life now.” Because we are stuck in this fallen condition called sin, and because we are going to remain stuck in this condition until God unweaves all the fibers of creation and then reknits them in the new creation, God says to us, “For as long as you’re here in this condition, love your neighbor.” Which means the law isn’t about you. It’s about your neighbor. And God loves your neighbor so much that God gives you the law. And God loves you so much, that God gives your neighbor the exact same law.

The final parts of the commandments center on honoring and coveting. In class we were reminded that these commandments were given to adults. Which means the commandment about honoring your father and mother is given to adult children, calling them to care for their elderly parents. Additionally, in relationship to adults and their children, the Commandment reminds the adults to live in such a way that they honor the “office” of parent, that is, as they are to be honored, they, too, are to honor their children—loving them, caring for them, and protecting them. And you shouldn’t covet, desire, lust over your neighbors property or things that you don’t have because we should trust

that God will provide, will supply what we need, so that we don't need to desire what you don't have.

the Ten Commandments show us how a liberated people who have been freed by Jesus Christ from the powers of sin, the world, and self live a new life. The commandments are what divinely bestowed freedom looks like. Freedom is not when the powerful take whatever they want, but when we respect the property of others and we do our best to help them maintain it and retain it. Freedom is not when the strong dominate the weak, but when the bodies and lives of all—from the unborn, to the impoverished, to the handicapped, to the vulnerable, to the elderly—are protected and their rights are respected. Freedom just like Kienan found... (2nd video clip)

These laws are good news. Good news for free people. Good news for those who need help from a neighbor. These commandments are what living in the kingdom of God looks like. This is what the laws, the commandments are revealing to us. The same is being revealed to those on the mountain with Christ when he is transfigured before them.

"Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning....from the cloud came the voice of God that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

The same way God reveals Godself and who God is to God's people, is the same thing that is happening in the transfiguration story. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt and this is my son, my chosen." Therefore, the command that I am giving to you is to listen to him. Listen to him when he shows you how to live in the kingdom, when he lives according to the commandments. Listen to him when he frees his neighbor, and loves beyond limits. Listen to him when he puts God first and lives according to God's love. Listen to him. Listen to him!