

YOU SHALL
[written in oral form]

Exodus 20:1-17
Lent 3, Year B

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The Ten Commandments is also known as the Decalogue:

To Some, the 10 Commandments have become a symbol, like a flag.
I've seen it posted in civic buildings as if it is a holy badge declaring identity, instead of a code to live by.

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We are all familiar with the Decalogue,.....yet I wonder if we grasp its purpose and true message. ??

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The 10 commandments are truly profound, **and** they demand a response.
Certainly, there are many ways to respond..... depending on one's perspective,..... situation.... and attitude.

The dutiful "eldest" child may respond.... *"No problem, tell me the details, and I hope everyone else has to obey them, too."*

A middle child would likely reply.... *"I guess 10 isn't too bad, .. could be worse..... are they all equal?"*

And, The youngest, the baby of the family or an only child may cry OUT...*"You've gotta be kidding me.....TEN??
Do I get to pick and choose.... like say 5 out of 10???"*

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A task oriented person may ask, *"Does someone keep track of how we do, and do we get an award for obeying them?"*

And a nonconformist might add..... *"I'm not a member, so does that mean that I can ignore them?"*

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The other day, I saw a cartoon of Moses on the mountain, with the caption, "Moses downloads the commandments from the cloud to his tablet." It gave a contemporary view of the event.

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Humour aside,..... the point is that,.... admit it or not... we all react differently when confronted by the 10 Commandments.

Yet, regardless of who we are,... ALL OF US.... must contend with those 10 Commandments. We are all affected by them.

On the surface, those 10 may seem simple and straight forward, and we may relegate them as mandates to others, not ourselves.  
However, Jesus' interpretation makes them more personal and much more challenging.

Not only is it, "DO NOT STEAL", but Jesus also said we are to let go of our possessions!

And, adultery is NOT just a physical action, but....according to Jesus, .... it is an activity of the heart / our thoughts.!!

And, I've only mentioned 2 examples!!!

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Perhaps we'll measure up better if we just stick to the O.T. version-

Such as..... You Shall Not covet.....

Ouch, let's try another.

You Shall not make false statements about anyone.....

Let's see ??..... Have we ??... umm?? Moving on....

You shall not steal!

Okay, we are not thieves, yet does this include supplies from work that came home with us? Or, what about the cheap imports that we buy..... that are made by exploited labour??? Or. .. natural resources we extract from the environment, and do not replace or restore.

Surely they don't apply?????

~~~~~ ummmmm

You shall NOT murder....

! Finally one we haven't broken!

Yet, dare we overlook what Jesus taught about loving our enemies and confronting injustices?

Have we spoken out loud enough against the murder of war and the weapons industry.

*I just learned that my Bell bicycle helmet and Camelbak water bottle were made by Vista, the gun company and supporter of the NRA.*

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Does our relative silence about the police and legal treatment of the indigenous people matter?

And, what is our responsibility in defending nature against destruction ?

Perhaps, we haven't pulled a trigger, **but are we** complicit / guilty of supporting and enabling those who do???

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We could go on.....

Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy -

Abusing the name/nature of God, and having idols... other gods/other priorities;

Honouring our parents... and so forth, ....But I think we get the message..... which is: most of us have broken each or most of the 10 Commandments..... directly or indirectly, ... at one time or another.

Facing that **realization**..... Can feel like we are seeing flashing blue and red lights in our rear view mirror!

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Rules/laws remind us of "punishment"..... They can conjure up feelings of intimidation and of being "judged."

Laws can feel like a burden / a weight that screams at us to beware that a day of reckoning is approaching, so we better obey the rules.... even just for the sake of the rules.

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To be sure, when rules control and confine.. only for the sake of the enforcer, then they ARE UNJUST. Therefore, it is always prudent to question authority and to question the rules. Question authority! Question the rules. Ask "Why"!

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When we look beneath the cold surface of a law or authority,... we will likely discover....injustice.....or Justice.
And, what about the Decalogue?

We usually hear the “**SHALL NOTS**” in the ten commandments,..... and we accept them at face value, without investigating, and they can feel “cold” , heavy and condemning!

Shall Not is a negative. It's restrictive, and we don't like to be in bondage.

Nevertheless, it's okay to question God... and the 10 commandments. We need to know if these divine codes are simply a test of obedience? Are they only for God's sake?

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Taking a closer look at the Decalogue we'll see that the 10 commandments are **not** for God's sake,... but instead they are **for us!**

And, .....they may even be a part of our redemption.....????  
They are intended to make life whole!

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Examining the 10:
The last 6 commandments, #5-10, deal with community;
The First 3 have a more personal focus.... on how we relate to God.

The 4th, encompasses both aspects.... Personal and community.
All 10, are solid statements about life, values and about reality.

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We won't necessarily go to hell if we break them, But we will feel like we are in hell if we disregard them because they present the way to a full and freeing life.  
They are intended to set us free from Bondage....  
The 10 commandments are intended to save us and set us free!

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Before we review them, note that the 10 are introduced in Exodus 20 with a statement about God's Deliverance!

God Delivers US from bondage! It is God's desire that we are free!
Moreover, this is OUR God speaking. This is for us!

With that in mind, let's view the 10 and their intent, starting with #10.
And realise, the intent is a Positive / constructive statement, instead of the **NOT** being a negative burden.

#10 – Coveting:

You shall be FREE to be Content,... to be satisfied with what you have, and not envy.... OR.... be envied.

It is an uneasy feeling being a victim of envy: It is like being the prey while the predator lick’s his chops.

Even so, the thrust of this law is to be FREE to be content.

We do not have to compete to be fulfilled, but instead are free to just BE!

Let us remember that we can invite God's help when we are in need. ~~~~~

Number Ten: We can celebrate just being and engaging in life.

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#9 – False Witness:

You shall be free to have justice, AND To be able to trust others. When truth is told, including being honest to ourselves, we will be free to have rest and peace – – – no secrets. And, we don’t have to remember what we said in the past..... because it was the truth.

This is a message for peace of mind.

This is a way to live secure and safe.

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#8 – Stealing:

You shall be FREE to have and to keep what is by you.

We are Free not to be paranoid; Free not to be assaulted for what is by us, Free from exploitation, ... and **free to be generous!**

We shall be free not to be suspicious and insecure.

#7 – Adultery:

You shall be free from betrayal, abuse and abandonment.

For women, this once meant, free to trust and not be treated as property. These days, we take that for granted, well most of us do.

This commandment deals with trust and relationship issues, with an emphasis on dignity and respect. Consider the "metoo" movement.

All people should be respected and not objectified.

All relationships and covenants should be honoured.

All shall be free from assault, disrespect, betrayal and abandonment!

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#6 – Murder:

You shall be free to live without fear of being murdered, and Free to let live!

I wish the Hebrew said “kill,” but it doesn’t. The word is “murder.” I suppose we need to be able to kill to eat meat. Beyond that lies the realm of perspective, and my perspective is killing humans is murder.

Moreover, there is no justification in bringing a gun to an argument, even when rowdy young men are on your property.

God’s creation is precious, life is precious, you are precious!

We shall be free to live and let live! We shall be safe.

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#5 – Honouring our parents:

You shall be free to be valued, Remembered and cared for. What we do will be respected. Our children will carry on with what we hold as dear and holy. And, we will carry on / pass on what our parents entrusted to us. We will honour the caregivers and life nurturers.

We will not be forgotten or live in vain!

We shall celebrate our heritage and all those who enhance our lives.

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#4 – Sabbath and its holiness:

You shall be free to Rest!

God declares, No One is allowed to make you work 7 days a week, not even yourself!

By precedence, God ordained a day to rest, and we shall have it! We need rest. Our household needs rest, and so does our equipment.

Moreover, we are free to Worship and Connect with God!

We can rejoice in life by releasing ourselves and resources through rest and worship. This commandment is about giving and releasing.

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The next three / the first three are more personal; they deal with our relationship with God.

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#3 – Wrongfully using the name of God or wrongfully representing God:

**You shall be free** to trust God without hesitation and without distortion! God shall not be altered, simplified or reduced.

A few examples: we must not blame God for calamities; we must not declare that it was God's will that someone died, and we are wise not to think that wealth means we are blessed by God.

Keep in mind, this commandment has very little to do with profanity.

In essence this law states: You shall be free to hear Good Theology, and not a counterfeit theology that merely feels nice or sells well.

Subsequently, we dare not assume we know God's will for others.

We are not that intelligent to know how God thinks.

A red flag should go up when someone, often a leader, declares "This is God's will for the church" or whatever.

We shall be free to trust God without distortion.

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#2 – Idols:

You shall be free from Bondage, deception, addiction and exploitation.

No one should tempt you with lies, drugs or gold and glitter.

Lots of words that end with "ism" fit here..... consumerism, racism, militarism, and so forth.

We shall be free to receive and embrace the truth, and to soar above the restraints of fear and bondage.

We shall be free from addictions and deceptions.

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#1– having another god:

You shall be Free from Confusion!

There is only ONE God!  
And, the revelation in the Bible teaches us that God is just and loving.  
The one God desires that all people Be FREE and to live in and with Love!  
The concept of other gods causes confusion and dilutes love.  
There is one God, and God is love.  
We are free to engage God, engage love—to be loved and to love.  
We are to be in an honest relationship with God.....and all things.  
We shall be free from confusion and competition.

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These are the 10 commandments to set us free– to redeem “life.”

The laws are FOR US.....They are meant to set us free!
They are not intended to be a burden, but rather are something worth celebrating.
These 10 laws are to launch us into a healthy and free life, full of love and trust.

Not surprisingly.....the Decalogue is about Love.
It's a gift of love to humanity, just as Jesus was / is.

Jesus was the fulfilment of the Law – the demonstration, the gift, the model.
But, learning how to truly live did NOT begin with Jesus.
Our path to wholeness / away from destruction did not begin with Jesus.
Our redemption comes when we embrace the way and message of Christ and when we live the Decalogue.
True life /divine living happens when we receive and give love..... without reservation or equivocation.

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God delivered the Hebrews from captivity, yet they felt helpless and lost out in the wilderness. So, God provided their needs, and with the 10 commandments, showed them how to be found / saved!

The commandments are NOT instruments for condemnation, but rather directions for liberation and salvation.

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We tend to think that it is our past errors that make us lost, but it is rather our future choices that separate us from the path of love and kingdom living.
The Hebrews in the wilderness were not lost because of **where** they had come from, but because of where they were heading.

Being Lost is not a condition of the past or present.
Lost is not knowing where to go next.

Being Lost is not a condition of the past or present.
Lost is not knowing where or how to go next.

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The Hebrews wanted to be free. They wanted safety, trust, wholeness and peace,.....and God showed them the way.

Jesus clarified and embodied God's redemption -- "the way."  
Thanks to Jesus, we understand salvation--the way-- more clearly.

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God is love! God is love.

God loves you and me.

Over and over again, God calls us to be free and live in love--to be in right and life-giving relationships.

God has provided the way.

YOU SHALL..... LOVE !

Love.....hold onto that.