



The 10 Commandments

Lenten Study 2018

6:00– 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday Evenings:

February 21, 28, March 7, 14 and 21

Led by Pastors Peter, Stephanie and Melissa

“The Ten Commandments: Promise and Blessed Boundary from God”

Welcome and Introduction to these Lenten mid-week conversations

Christ Care Prayers

Proposed Schedule

Wednesday, February 21: Grounded in Promise – 1st and 2nd Commandments

Wednesday, February 28: Sabbath and Relationships – 3rd and 4th Commandments

Wednesday, March 7: Care and Intimacy – 5th and 6th Commandments

Wednesday, March 14: Care for Others – 7th Commandment

Wednesday, March 21: Words and boundaries – 8th, 9th and 10 Commandments

Grounded in Promise

In a remarkable book, Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann writes that lives guided by a sense of promise and trust in that promise has fallen in our post-modern world – he even uses the word “banished.” In his Theology of the Old Testament (1997), he writes: “It has become evident, however, that when promise is banished and circumstance governs, we are most likely left with nothing but despair, whether the despair of the self-sufficient or of the disempowered. And despair is no basis for a viable social community.” Page 172

The 10 Commandments are grounded in the primary faith event for the people of Israel, an event that was foundational to Jesus. It is in the exodus event that people of faith see that God keeps God’s promises. As a gifted Disciples of Christ Old Testament Ph.D., Mark Mangano, likes to say, “when the promise is in danger, God intervenes.” In the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai, the people of faith are given a vision of viable social community, based not on self-sufficiency or on disempowerment. Rather, it is a positive vision of our individual lives lived interdependently in community. It is the blessing that comes through promise, within the boundary of our human limitation and vulnerability.

Warm Up Questions

1. What is the despair of self-sufficiency, for you?
2. What is the despair of the disempowered?

The witness of the central event

The exodus as the central event is established throughout the Old Testament story. Here is a sample of texts:

Exodus 2: 23 After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery, and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God. 24 God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 25 God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

Micah 6: 4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5 O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD." 6 "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" 8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

The Stage is Set

All of this sets the stage; freed from slavery the people of Israel are in the wilderness, what will be the promise and the blessed boundary for their lives? What gift will establish viable community? Yes, the 10 Commandments. Can we list them together?

The first commandment governs all nine that follow. Without the centering on the Lord our God, the others are not possible. No law can contain or voice can direct us to keep God's name, remember Sabbath, honor parents, and refrain from killing, adultery, stealing, gossip or coveting, without the presence of the living God.

The 10 Commandments – Promise and Blessed Boundary

Exodus 20:1 Then God spoke all these words: 2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 3 you shall have no other gods before me (1). 4 You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, 6 but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. 7 You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God (2), for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

8 Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy (3). 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 10 But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work--you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

12 Honor your father and your mother (4), so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

13 You shall not murder (5). 14 You shall not commit adultery (6). 15 You shall not steal (7). 16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (8). 17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house (9); you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor (10).

Martin Luther and the Small Catechism

We close today with a look at the first two commandments and Luther's explanations in the Small Catechism. What do you notice about the rhythm?

Small Catechism of Martin Luther

The 10 Commandments

The First Commandment

You shall have no other gods.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear, love, and trust God above all things.

The Second Commandment

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not curse, swear, practice magic, lie, or deceive using God's name, but instead use that very name in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise, and give thanks to God.

Conversation questions:

Where do you hear the promise? Where is the boundary that guides our vulnerable, human lives? What is familiar to you? What is something new, something that opens you to God and neighbor?

What is so important about a name? What is powerful in a name?

Thank you for this holy conversation, we turn to a time for short, Lenten prayer.

**Wednesday, February 28:
Sabbath and Relationships – 3rd and 4th Commandments**

Welcome

Christ Care Prayers

Review

Are there any insights or follow up questions from our conversation last week on the 1st and 2nd commandments?

Tonight - The vertical and the horizontal

One way to begin reflecting on the commandments is to look at their structure. The first three comprise the first table, commandments which reveal the promise and boundary of the relationship God establishes with us. The second seven comprise the second table, which reveal the promise and boundary of the relationships God establishes for us with one another.

What do you notice about the break between the third and fourth commandment? How do you understand the first three commandments as vertical and the second seven as horizontal?

Need a quick reminder of the commandments?

1. I am the Lord your God, no other gods
2. God's name
3. Sabbath
4. Honor parents
5. No killing
6. No adultery
7. No stealing
8. No gossip
9. No covet neighbors relationships
10. No covet neighbors possessions

The Third and Fourth Commandments: Rest in God and Honor

The third commandment also begins in Genesis 2, at the first four verses.

Genesis 2: Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ²And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. ⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

What do you hear in this passage? How do you understand Sabbath? What is important in Luther's explanation? How do you enjoy Sabbath? How is remembering the sabbath deeply connected to the promise and to tending boundaries?

How is sabbath rest connected to verse 4, a verse we almost miss in our reading? How does that lead us into the fourth commandment? What does it mean for you that the third and fourth commandments begin in the positive: remember and honor?

Lets take a look at the commandments and Luther's explanation as we close our conversation today:

The Third Commandment

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not despise preaching or God's word, but instead keep that word holy and gladly hear and learn it.

The Fourth Commandment

Honor your father and your mother.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither despise nor anger our parents and others in authority, but instead honor, serve, obey, love, and respect them.

Conversation questions:

Where do you hear the promise? Where is the boundary that guides our vulnerable, human lives? What is familiar to you? What is something new, something that opens you to God and neighbor?

What does it mean to remember and to honor?

Thank you for this holy conversation, we turn to a time for short, Lenten prayer.

Wednesday, March 7
Care and Intimacy – 5th and 6th Commandments

Welcome

Christ Care Prayers

Review

Are there any insights or follow up questions from our conversation last week on the third and fourth commandments?

Tonight – care and intimacy

First, we need to talk about the personal and interpersonal, for a moment. What is the difference between these two understandings? What is important about these two understandings for our study of the Commandments? Some warm up questions:

1. What is the most significant personal relationship that you have been given?
2. What is the next most significant relationships?
3. What are your next important relationships?
4. How are these personal relationships unique? How are they different from the interpersonal relationships that are protected with the last four commandments?

Second, we turn to Martin Luther as a guide to the conversation on promise and boundary within the fifth and sixth commandments. What Luther introduced in the second commandment's explanation is a little, life giving phrase: "but instead..."

Lets turn to the commandments and Luther's explanation for our conversation tonight:

The Fifth Commandment

You shall not murder.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs.

The Sixth Commandment

You shall not commit adultery.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we lead pure and decent lives in word and deed, and each of us loves and honors his or her spouse.

Conversation questions:

The key question that can guide us is this: Where and how has God promised to uphold the Lord's part of the relationship? How are we empowered to live within the boundary?

Where is the promise in danger? Where are we struggling with the life-giving boundary?

Where do you hear the promise? Where is the boundary that guides our vulnerable, human lives? What is familiar to you? What is something new, something that opens you to God and neighbor?

Thank you for this holy conversation, we turn to a time for short, Lenten prayer.

Wednesday, March 14
Care for others – 7th Commandment

Welcome

Christ Care Prayers

Review

Are there any insights or follow up questions from our conversation last week on the fifth and sixth commandments?

Tonight – care for others

The commandments are both a promise to sustain life and a boundary that acknowledges our brokenness. As we have pondered this Lenten season, we are made both brave and vulnerable. (Brene` Brown). As the baptized, brave children of God we are part of the promise. As part of the promise we work with God to sustain the promise. As the vulnerable who can be hurt and can also help heal, we are vulnerable boundary tenders.

As you have entered into these commandments over the past weeks, what insights do you have about our participation in God's promise? How are we called to join in the work of tending boundaries?

Where is the promise of God in danger, where is God at work and how are we called to join in that work? Where are the boundaries at risk, where are we called to help "mend the fences?"

We begin with a look at the seventh commandment and Luther's explanation. Then we turn to a study of one of the central lessons of Jesus that is rooted in the seventh commandment.

The Seventh Commandment

You shall not steal.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we neither take our neighbors' money or property nor acquire them by using shoddy merchandise or crooked deals, but instead help them to improve and protect their property and income.

What do you hear in the commandment and explanation that opens you to God and neighbor? What is the negative and what is the positive in the explanation and how do you hear it? How does this connection with our life together?

Jesus' parable on the seventh commandment:

Luke 10: But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Conversation questions:

What do you hear in this famous parable that connects to the seventh commandment? Where do you hear the promise? Where do you hear the boundary? Where do you hear both at work at the same time?

Where do you hear the promise? Where is the boundary that guides our vulnerable, human lives? What is familiar to you? What is something new, something that opens you to God and neighbor?

Thank you for this holy conversation, we turn to a time for short, Lenten prayer.

Wednesday, March 21

Words and boundaries – 8th, 9th and 10th Commandments

Welcome

Christ Care Prayers

Review

Are there any insights or follow up questions from our conversation last week on the seventh commandment?

Tonight – words and boundaries

God has given the 10 Commandments as a law to guide our personal and community lives. They limit what we can be and do. At the same time, they give us a vision for who we are called to be, what we are called to do.

When you look at the Commandments, specifically the positive side within one or two of the explanations – which one draws you in more than any other?

Tonight we turn to the last three commandments, which in many ways are two commandments. The ninth and tenth commandments really function as one, even as they are specific in their promise and boundary as it relates to property and our most central relationships.

Lets begin by walking through these last three commandments and noting the negative and positive dynamics.

The Eighth Commandment

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light.

The Ninth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not try to trick our neighbors out of their inheritance or property or try to get it for ourselves by claiming to have a legal right to it and the like, but instead be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs.

The Tenth Commandment

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What is this? or What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not entice, force, or steal away from our neighbors their spouses, household workers, or livestock, but instead urge them to stay and fulfill their responsibilities to our neighbors.

Conversation questions:

Where do you hear the promise? Where is the boundary that guides our vulnerable, human lives? What is familiar to you? What is something new, something that opens you to God and neighbor?

What is so important about a name? What is powerful in a name?

One last thought:

At the center of Jesus' teaching and life is the famous:

"We are to love God with our heart, soul and mind and our neighbor as our self."

For Martin Luther this means that following the law, living in relationship with Jesus is not simply "doing no harm," or living your own life. It is more; it is reaching out for the sake of our God and our neighbor. It is moving beyond our apathy to engage a world in need, right in front of us, each moment; by the way we talk, act, help, support and love one another. Here is the place of deep vulnerability and of true humanity, of faithfulness and grace.

Thank you for this holy conversation.

Do you have any closing thoughts before we turn to a time for short, Lenten prayer.