

Lent 3 - March 8, 2015
Text: Exodus 20:1-17
Theme: "The 10 Suggestions?"

We memorize the 10 Commandments in Sunday School as kids. We usually memorize them again in confirmation. Those of us who went to Lutheran colleges may well have memorized them again in college. And then we promptly ignore them as though knowing them is enough. It's sort of like figuring that writing the check every month to the health club is enough. If you're paying every month, it must be doing you some good, right?

Knowing God's Commandments is not the same as doing God's Commandments and there are benefits in doing them and consequences for not doing them. To the extent that we keep his commandments, great things will happen for us. Say for example that you keep numbers 1-3,

**"You shall have no other gods before me....
You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain...
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."**

The benefits are amazing. Your faith will grow. Your relationship with God will grow. You will become a person of amazing strength just by keeping Him first, using his name often and appropriately and worshipping him every chance you get.

And likewise commandments 4-10. Those are the ones we tend to remember best because it has to do with getting along with one

another. Honor authority, don't murder, live a sexually pure life, don't steal, don't lie about one another, and don't covet stuff or people. Again the benefits are amazing. You will be more content. You will be a happier person. You will have zero relational problems and you will generally be loved by everyone.

Not keeping the commandments has just the opposite effect. I am amazed by people who don't understand why they feel distant from God but don't come to worship where they would hear his Word and receive his Body and Blood. I am likewise amazed at people who live debaucherous, selfish lives and don't understand why no one trusts them or why everyone ignores them. Breaking the commandments has consequences. The consequences are not because God is mad at you and wants to get you back. The consequences are the natural order of things that God warned you about because he created the system and knows how it works.

If you go to the zoo, stick your hand in a snake cage and get bitten are you going to blame the zoo? Well, yes, some people would because many human beings simply refuse to take responsibility for anything they choose to do. In fact, they would probably sue the zoo and win, but God is neither stupid nor that malleable. He insists that we accept consequences for our actions and we really have no choice.

That's what got Jesus angry. He walked into the temple and there were people taking advantage of other people by charging huge fees for sacrificial animals and money exchange. They were stealing from the people, blatantly breaking several of the commandments right in front of God and everybody and acted like they had every right to do so. In Exodus, which they all knew, God was not *suggesting* that they treat one another with love and respect. He was not *suggesting* that they honor him, his name and his worship. He was *commanding* it. That's why Jesus made a whip and drove them out of the temple courts, whipping them and overturning their tables. He was emphasizing the point that this was a *commandment*, not a *suggestion*.

The commandments are there for our good, but never think that God is complacent about whether or not we follow them. If I bought you a Maserati and you parked it in the street and never bothered changing the oil, I would be furious. Why would you treat an amazing Maserati like that? Life is a far greater gift than a Maserati. God gives us life but beyond that, he gives us the commandments to follow to give us a rich and fulfilling life. Follow them to the best of your ability and you will see things improve all around you. You will have blessings rain down on you. Break them

and suffer the consequences. Christ does not want us to suffer any consequences.

Please understand that we are saved either way. By Jesus death on the cross and damnation to Hell all your sins have been paid off. The commandments have ABSOLUTELY NOTHING to do with your salvation. But, having given his life and soul for you and having given you your life on this earth, Christ wants your life to be joyful and productive until he returns for us.

They are not 10 Suggestions but not in the sense of, "you're going to get zapped if you don't do this!" They are commandments like the law of gravity is a law. Gravity is just what happens. It's not like objects are required to fall to earth by some sort of moral code. They just do because that's the way God made the earth. Likewise, keeping the 10 Commandments results in good outcomes and breaking them results in bad outcomes just because it is the way God created the earth. So rejoice in your salvation, be thankful for your life and keep the commandments to the best of your ability because that is the way you glorify the Lord and multiply joy.