

July 10-11, 2010
Trinity 6
Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 5:17-26

In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We shouldn't really need the Ten Commandments. We have the golden rule. It is written in our hearts. We are all experts in ourselves, we know what we like and dislike, what we want done to us and what we don't. So it is not at all difficult for us to figure what is right and what is wrong. If we did not want to be killed in our mother's wombs, then abortion is wrong. If we do not want our spouse loving someone else, if that fills us with jealousy and pain, then adultery is wrong. If we do not like people talking about us, telling our secrets, or saying unkind things about us, then gossip is wrong.

It is not hard at all. Except that we are such good liars we even fool ourselves and our fallen hearts are so corrupt, so confused and hardened by abuse, that we don't know what we want. Abducted by death, we fall prey to the having positive feelings towards the irrational in light of the danger or risk endured as a victim, this is called Stockholm syndrome. Think of those who cut themselves or starve themselves or hide in their homes and cut themselves off from their family and friends. *Why do so many of us turn self-destructive? Isn't our fallen nature, above all, selfish and self-centered?*

Yes. But that sinful nature is not fully in control. There are forces of darkness in this world that prey upon the weak. We have the devil and his unholy angels to deal with. And they confuse us, trick, and manipulate us. So that some poor girls think that if a man hurts them he is showing them love, he is attentive to them. They live in the buzz of terror and excitement, desperate to be loved. Others think they are fat even when their bones are sticking through their skin and that they only way they can be attractive, be

desirable, is to starve themselves. This same confusions exist in us all, so that we cannot apply the golden rule as we ought.

On top of that, we are experts at justifying ourselves, making excuses, and using a double standard. We think it is wrong if someone listens to hearsay that tells them of our gossip. We think it is wrong if someone whose wife or daughter stimulates evil thoughts in us looks at our daughter that way. We think we've earned what we have, have worked for it, but everyone else was given what they have, walked into it, or got lucky. At our worst, we even make theological excuses. We blame God for making women beautiful or chocolate delicious. We pretend as though our forgiven sins shouldn't hurt or have consequences.

Repent. Rejoice in the Ten Commandments. They show us God's will, how we were created, who we are. If they feel like a burden, that is because you are a victim. When the Law says **“You shall not bear false witness”** it is not taking away your fun. It is telling you to leave your abusive boyfriend, to stop lying, even the little so called **“white lies,”** and stop fearing what you look like. The Law is good for it is the will of the good and holy Lord. But we are fallen creatures, and if the Law forbids that which we love, even if our love is confused and destructive, the Law shows that we are evil, broken, not merely victims but also criminals. We need to recognize the co of co-dependence. Our troubles, our pride and arrogance, our dismissal of others and selfishness, sends ripples of pain across the world. We are victims, to be sure, but it is also our fault. We have loved sin. Repent.

The only way out is rescue. The Lord begins His great issue of the Law with a promise and a historical reality: **“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”** The Ten Commandments establish a sort of constitutional monarchy. Our God is not a tyrant. He could be. It is not wrong to speak of Him as sovereign. But He is not tyrant, He is the Lord and He is our God. He ties Himself to the Law. He is not above it. In the first place, He will be our God. He will not quit or stop, no matter what. Even if we commit treason, even if we run after other gods and husbands, even if we rebel and kill His Son,

He will not stop. The first Law of the Lord is that He is the Lord our God. He brought us out of slavery, rescued us from death and Pharaoh. He will not stop. This is who He is and who He will always be.

Thus there is a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. The righteousness of Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ keeps the Law. He does everything it demands. He does nothing it forbids. He endures temptation in every way that we do but He does not fail. He does not sin. He does not grow angry with His brother without cause. He does not look upon a woman with lust. He does not long for that which is not given Him, even bread in the desert when He was hungry. He accepts what the Father gives and waits, never doubting that He is good and will provide. He endures in that faith and hope to the very end, even when He is forsaken by the Father, made a curse and becomes sin for us. That is not merely outward righteousness worthy of honor and respect, that is perfect faith, the correct and good relationship of the creation to the Creator, and since the Fall not even the animals, the rocks, or the plants can do it. So the Lord God creator joined His creation, became a Man, to fulfill the Law and satisfy the demands of justice. He did not destroy the Law or the Prophets. He kept the Law in obedience and then He kept the Law in suffering and sorrow. For He allowed the Law to do to Him everything it should have done to us. He took on its full force. He endured an eternity of Hell for all of humanity. And then it was finished. The Law was fulfilled. There was no more.

And that righteousness He gives away for free to those who believe in Him. He pours it out in the waters of Holy Baptism, in His Word and preaching, in the Holy Absolution, in the Holy Supper, through prayer and in Holy Marriage, and so forth. The Lord speaks, His children are righteous. He says it and it is. Once He said **“let there be light,”** and there was. Now He says, **“You are forgiven. You are mine. You are free. You are righteous.”** and you are. Hearing this, you believe, you are thankful and full of praise. Jesus has paid the last penny. There is nothing left to pay, or to do.

Thus have you died to sin and now live to Jesus Christ, until such time as you finally die to the flesh to await the resurrection on the Last Day. Sometimes the only way a woman, even after divorce, is free from an abusive husband is when that husband dies. We have been divorced from sin and embraced by Christ, re-married to a Man who actually loves and serves us. Soon death and sin and Hell will die and we will rise, free from our confusion and bondage, free to bask in the grace of Jesus Christ who loves us to the very end.

In ✠Jesus' Name. Amen.