

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Third Sunday of Lent - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalm 19

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

John 2:13-22

3/4/2018

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. John:

3The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

15Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle.

He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a

marketplace!" 17His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?"

19Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20The Jews

then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in

three days?" 21But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22After he was raised from the

dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The Gospel of our Lord.

### **Prayer**

Let us pray,

Amen.

### **A Catechism**

Good morning! Some Sundays I am not sure what to preach about; the texts maybe aren't speaking to me and I don't know what to say. This week however, I loved all three of the readings, but ended up choosing our first lesson. For the bulk of this academic year the Sunday school class has been reading Martin Luther's *Large Catechism*. Now, we Lutherans tend to associate the word catechism with Luther but the word actually means "A summary of religious doctrine often in the form of questions and answers."<sup>1</sup> When boiled down to its simplest form the catechism of the Christian church consists of three things: The Ten Commandments, the Creeds, and the Lord's Prayer.

And since the first reading today was the Ten Commandments, I figured I would do something different and preach on them using some of what we read from Luther with my own thoughts added throughout. By the time we're in high school most of us who have been raised in the church can say the Lord's Prayer and one of the Creeds, but the Ten Commandments tend to be forgotten. So hold on, because we are going to fly through all Ten.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/catechism>

1. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. 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. 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, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Luther writes that: “God is that in which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart.”<sup>2</sup> That’s about as convicting as they come. If you’re anything like me you tend to make things like money and other forms of security a false god or idol. Luther continues: “Those who have money and property feel secure, happy, and fearless, as if they were sitting in the midst of paradise. On the other hand, those who have nothing doubt and despair as if they knew of no god at all... This desire for wealth clings and sticks to our nature all the way to the grave... Idolatry does not consist merely of erecting an image and praying to it, but it is primarily a matter of the heart, which fixes its gaze upon other things and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints or devils.”<sup>3</sup>

When I think of the relationships that we consider important I think we tend to put more stock in others than in the relationship we have with God.

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<sup>2</sup>Luther, Martin, and Kirsi I. Stjerna. *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, 1529*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2016. pp. 300

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp. 301-303

2. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Writing about the second commandment Luther writes “*Just as the first commandment instructs our heart and teaches faith, so this commandment leads us outward and directs our lips and tongue into a right relationship with God.*”<sup>4</sup> We often take this commandment to mean we can’t swear or cuss, but for Luther the meaning is much deeper than that. “*It is a misuse of God’s name if we call upon the Lord God in any way whatsoever to support falsehood or wrong of any kind.*”<sup>5</sup> When we lie and make false oaths, that’s closer to what Luther means when we break this commandment.

3. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 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. 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.

“*Keeping the day of rest means to keep it holy.*’ What is meant by ‘keeping it holy’? *Nothing else than devoting it to holy words, holy works, and holy living.*”<sup>6</sup> Luther writes.

Surprisingly, 500 years ago he wasn’t concerned with a legalistic following of laws where we

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pp. 304

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 305

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 311

close up shop and make sure the malls aren't open on Sundays. *"God wants it to be holy for you. So it becomes holy or unholy on your account, depending on whether you spend it doing something holy or unholy. How does such sanctifying take place? Not when we sit behind the stove and refrain from hard work, or place a garland on our head and dress up in our best clothes, but, as has been said, when we make use of God's word and exercise ourselves in it."*<sup>7</sup>

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

Here we shift gears. Luther writes *"So far we have learned the first three commandments, which are directed toward God. Now follow the other seven, which relate to our neighbor."*<sup>8</sup> He spends several pages talking about this commandment. It makes me wonder what parenting problem he encountered during this time to make it so long. Then Luther shifts from talking about the role of a parent-child relationship to that of a citizen-government. It was critical for Luther that people understand that our role as citizens is to be one of faithfulness to God.

5. You shall not murder.

Summarizing this commandment he writes *"First, we should not harm anyone, either by hand or deed. Next, we should not use our tongue to advocate or advise harming anyone. Furthermore, we should neither use nor sanction any means or methods whereby anyone may be mistreated. Finally our heart should harbor no hostility or malice against anyone in a spirit of*

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. pp. 312

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. pp. 314

*anger and hatred.”<sup>9</sup> If that wasn’t clear enough, Luther goes even further, “This commandment is violated not only when we do evil, but also when we have the opportunity to do good to our neighbor and to prevent, protect, and save them from suffering bodily harm or injury but fail to do so.”<sup>10</sup>*

It wasn’t just a sin when we inflicted harm, but we also broke the commandment when we FAILED to do good, too.

6. You shall not commit adultery.

Regarding this commandment Luther writes: *“Where nature functions as God implanted it, however, it is not possible to remain chaste outside of marriage; for flesh and blood remain flesh and blood, and natural inclinations and stimulations proceed unrestrained and unimpeded, as everyone observes and experiences. Therefore, to make it easier for people... God has established marriage...”<sup>11</sup>*

7. You shall not steal.

Stealing is more than taking something from a store without paying for it. Luther writes *“For to steal is nothing else than to acquire someone else’s property by unjust means.”<sup>12</sup>* And again *“We are forbidden to do our neighbors any injury or wrong in any way imaginable,*

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp. 329

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. pp. 329

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. pp. 334

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 335

*whether by damaging, withholding, or interfering with their possessions and property. We are not even to consent to or permit such a thing but are rather to avert and prevent it. In addition, we are commanded to promote and further our neighbors' interests, and when they suffer any want, we are to help, share, and lend to both friend and foes."*<sup>13</sup>

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Dr. Luther writes *"No one shall use the tongue to harm a neighbor, whether friend or foe. No one shall say anything evil of a neighbor, whether true or false, unless it is done with proper authority for that person's improvement. Rather, we should use our tongue to speak only the best about all people, to cover the sins and infirmities of our neighbors, to justify their actions, and to cloak and veil them with our own honor."*<sup>14</sup>

9 and 10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

*"These commandments... forbid anyone, even with an apparently good pretense and excuse, to harm a neighbor by intending or scheming to take away anything that belongs to this neighbor... above, the seventh commandment (which) prohibits seizing or withholding someone else's possessions to which you have no right. But here it is also forbidden to entice anything*

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pp. 340

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp. 346-347

*away from your neighbor, even though in the eyes of the world you could do it honorably, without accusation or blame for fraudulent gain.”<sup>15</sup>*

These are the Ten Commandments, they shape us as a community, when we follow them and when we break them... May they be forever written on our hearts. Amen.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. pp. 349