

The 10 Commandments – Brief Reflections

(a shared sermon time)

1 – *“You shall have no other gods before me.”*

I wonder, how might we honor and worship above everything else this all-powerful Love whose voice we experience in our lives?

- We can worship the Love of God with our living.
- We can worship God by keeping Love at the forefront with a refrain such as “Where is love in this decision right now?” or “Love is stronger than my current circumstances.”

2 – *“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.”*

I think that my wondering is informed by my time in seminary and before that in bilingual education. I think my response is informed by some indigenous ways and ways of some Spanish language speaking groups of people. **So I wonder, how might we craft physical reminders of the Love of God that remind and focus our hearts on worshipping God?**

- An altar area at home or a hand-crafted representation of God’s Love can strengthen our embodied experiences of worship.

3 – *“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.”*

In response to the word “wrongful,” I wonder, **how might we make rightful use of the name of our God?**

- By naming a felt presence of the empowering Love of God in our lives – just naming it out loud to ourselves and in spaces with our loved ones.
- By naming the Love of God as motivation for acting with compassion or toward justice.

4 – *“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work.”*

I wonder, how might we keep the Sabbath holy in our lived experience?

- By exploring, identifying and committing to individual and collective rituals that lead us deeper into resting with utter trust in the Love of God.

5 – *“Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.”*

This commandment energizes me as I think of how All Saints Sunday is approaching and is one of my four or five favorite days in the circle of the church year. When challenged to honor our father and mothers, **I wonder, how do we honor our ancestors (immediate and further back, other parental figures, and others who have influenced us)?**

- By emulating and carrying forward what we discern to be the best of them.
- By honoring their contributions and efforts even if needing to diverge from their ways.

6 – *“You shall not murder.”*

If we shall not murder or end life, I wonder, how do we give life to others (instead of taking it away)? And I do think (I’ll just put it out there) that I think this commandment is probably the most relevant and important to our congregation right now. How do we give life instead of taking it away?

- By paying full attention to another (seeing and hearing all that is revealed) such that we remember and later recall and reflect back to someone their unique worth.
- By sharing the truest, most alive aspects of ourselves, being vulnerable and available to developing relationships in which we trust one another with whatever matters most to us.

7 – *“You shall not commit adultery.”* You shall not cheapen your promises.

I wonder, how do we live in covenant with one another, faithfully honoring and mutually appreciating one another? This is possibly the second most important to our congregation right now in my mind. How do we do this?

- By demonstrating with behavior (meaning action) that we are true to our word.
- By putting our own needs or priorities in second place (sometimes) in order to fully honor the needs and priorities of others.

8 – *“You shall not steal.”*

So how do we instead give of ourselves (materially and otherwise), developing an ethic not of closed fistness but of generosity?

- By resisting fear-based scarcity mentality in these ways:
 - By practicing gratitude as we draw on the resources already available to each of us.
 - By becoming more resourceful by releasing our tight grasp on some forms of security that we know we have.

9 – *“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”*

So I wonder, how do we bear true witness in solidarity with and about our neighbor?

- By paying steady enough attention to one another’s behavior to be ready to name the positive efforts a neighbor makes and the impact they have on our lives.
- When naming a hurtful behavior by a neighbor, sharing not our assumptions about motive (for them) but our own experience of the behavior’s true effect on us.

10 – *“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, male or female slave, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”*

If commanded to not covet our neighbors’ possessions, relationships, experiences...

I wonder, how do we cultivate a sense of gladness for all that the other has, while we remain unattached to their wealth?

- By inviting ourselves to reject culturally dominant patterns of comparison and competition by which we understand ourselves to never have or be enough.
- By recognizing the good that we and our neighbors experience through what we do already have.

Rev. Clare Gromoll (shared sermon time)
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Exodus 20 (selected verses)