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**What’s Wrong With The Ten Commandments?**

**March 4, 2018**

**Exodus 20:1-17**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one who fulfilled the Law, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, amen.

I’m so confused. The Ten Commandments have been under fire in our country for a long time. They’ve been removed from courthouses and other public spaces. What is it about the commandments that sets people off? Why are they so offensive that we’ve had to remove them from our public consciousness?

Is it the first commandment, that bothers us? That we should have no other Gods? Perhaps. But then again, aren’t we told that we all worship the same God? Why would people be so offended by a commandment that asserts there is only one God? Maybe it’s the second commandment that offends… Wait, What? Have we become sympathetic to the foul-mouthed people of the world? We tolerate and maybe even enjoy swearing and cursing in the workplace and everywhere else? And when we go to court do we really want to have people with no spiritual scruples against lying to testify against us? I don’t think so… How about the Third commandment. Remembering the Sabbath Day... the day of rest. What’s the problem? Who doesn’t like weekends? This commandment is what called weekends into existence. The Jews, following this command observed the sabbath on Saturday, and Christians, on the Lord’s day, Sunday. So, the weekend is a gift to humanity that originated from this commandment we now seek to eliminate. Do we really want to give up our weekends? Perhaps it’s the forth commandment that raises our ire. “Honor your father and mother,” it says. Apparently, we like bratty kids. We want all children to grow up to become a bane and burden to society. Children that have no respect for authority. I’m just saying… Maybe it’s the 5th commandment that gets our goat. Do we despise the way it puts value on human life? Do we want murder to be legalized? Nobody seriously wants their neighbor to be free to come over and murder them whenever they feel like it! Then there’ s the 6th commandment. Honoring the life-long commitment of a man and a woman to love each other and be faithful to one another. Do we favor husbands being unfaithful to their wives and wives being unfaithful to their husbands? No one relishes the sorrow and pain of wasting a lifetime of learning to love one person in exchange for moments of pure lust. No one likes the way the hearts of children are broken over the divorce of their parents? Nope I don’t think anyone wants any of that. 7th Commandment... Protection of personal property? What’s the beef with that? We don’t want people to be free to steal our stuff… Who would relish the idea of roving bands of thieves breaking into people’s houses and making off with their flat screens? Without this Commandment we’d look forward to being taken for a ride by swindlers and cheats. Nobody wants that! 8th Commandment... Protects people’s reputation. I see nothing wrong with that? Do you enjoy people making libelous remarks against you? Do we revel in being slandered and laughed at in public? Even considering FaceBook, I’d still say nobody wants that! 9th and 10th Commandment.... You shall not covet you neighbors stuff or spouse. These Commandments call upon people to not live a life of envy. Apparently, some would like it when people hate them for driving a better car than they. Some apparently love it when envious people foment class warfare and hate. I think not!

It is clear to me and probably clear even to those who do not believe in God, the commandments are merely a description of mankind at its best. It’s what we could be; it’s what we should be. The world would be a happier, more joyful, more content, and a more loving place if all would simply obey these commands. The majority of what we see in the commandments is codified into our secular laws. Why are the prohibitions against murder, stealing, slander, and the like acceptable when it’s in our man-made law, but not acceptable in the commandments? You’d think our nation, would welcome an earlier and far more ancient iteration of the same laws we enforce... I mean they add thousands of years of precedence. Yet we’re doing just the opposite… So, we return to the big question of the day: What’s so wrong with the commandments?

I think we find our answer in verse 1 of the text: “And God spoke all these words ....” There it is! That’s the problem. Did you see it? It’s not so much a problem with the Law that has caused people to expunge the commandments from the public record, it’s with the one who spoke them. Just a couple of weeks ago Joy Behar from the View said Christians who talk to God are Okay, but when you hear God talking, that’s a step too far and you must be mentally ill…

People today cannot bear to see the commandments and think about them for the same reason Adam and Eve could not bear to stand in God’s presence after they sinned. They and we are guilt ridden and embarrassed. Getting rid of the commandments is just another way to hide from the God who created them. It’s another way to avoid thinking about the fact that we are accountable to God. It’s another way of burying their guilt.

So, how is it that ***we*** are so different? Like anybody who hears them, we certainly do feel the force of the commandments, but we do not seek to do away with them. Not in the least! We specifically teach them to our children. Before I recommend a young person for Confirmation they must repeat the Ten Commandments in the Lutheran order word for word, by memory. We put up posters on the wall that list the ten commands. Yes, we have one it’s in the adult Sunday School room. They aren’t just for the kids to know and keep. Unlike the apparent sentiments of many in our country, we like the commandments. We revisit them; and study them again and again. They guide our ethics and our decision making. We like them. How can this be?

We like them because we see them from the perspective of those who are forgiven and saved by Jesus. If we didn’t have Jesus, these commandments would resound in our ears like hammer blows nailing our coffins shut. Because we haven’t kept them! We have broken every one of them; if not with our actions, with our words or in our thoughts. We might have lived up to the letter of the law, but none of us can say we’ve fulfilled the spirit and intent of the law. That’s one of the things the Law is meant to teach us. It’s meant to teach us we have not done it; we have not lived as God would have us live. We know we haven’t done it. We know we can’t do it. We know that, on our own, we’re lost and without hope and for this exact reason, Jesus came.

The timing was perfect. The story of Israel had reached its sad and bitter conclusion. Long, long ago, God gave them the Law. God gave them a beautiful land to call their own. He led them, he blessed them, he protected them. He gave them his Word through the prophets. Everything they could possibly need, God provided. Would they ultimately succeed in bringing righteousness back to humanity? No! Humans can never be perfect as only God is perfect. We all fail. No human being can be his or her own Savior. We need something more, something other than ourselves; that’s why Jesus came. God saw we could not save ourselves. We see we cannot save ourselves. It’s no big secret, after all. So, we turn our hopes heavenward to a God who is merciful and he is merciful in Jesus.

When it comes to the Law, Jesus saves us in two ways. First, he did what we couldn’t do. He kept the law; not just the letter of the law, but also the spirit and intent as well. As God’s representative of all humanity, he kept the law for all of us. Second, there is the other side of the law, the punitive side. God is just and he will not allow sins against the law to go unanswered. This is why Jesus died. He endured what we deserved. His suffering and death there on the cross... was because of our sins. Jesus saves us by both his life and by his death. He saves us also by his resurrection. The resurrection proves his death did indeed pay the full price for the sin of humanity.

We can imagine a world without hatred, war, murder and perversion. We imagine a world of peace, joy, and love. We can imagine this better place and we long for it. The Ten commandments offer a description of it. May what was first fulfilled in Christ, ultimately be fulfilled in us as we make this world a little more like that perfect place called for in the Ten Commandments. May these Commandments do their job and drive us to cling to our Savior Jesus Christ and not to our law keeping for our salvation. AMEN