

Exodus 20:17, John 13:34-35  
“Ninth & Tenth Commandments”  
Maundy (Holy) Thursday

April 6, 2023  
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.  
Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”*** (John 13:34-35).

Now, this commandment is not exactly new. As we have learned throughout these Lenten midweeks, we are to love God and love our neighbor. This is commanded of us in the Ten Commandments. In Leviticus 19:18, God says, ***“You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”***

But there is something new here. What Jesus says here is fresh, it is of new quality. Here, Jesus is teaching His disciples that they are to keep loving each other and practice this love in the light of the cross. Jesus has brought in a new love to the world, a love that is not only faultless and perfect, but a sacrificial love.

On this Maundy Thursday, Christ showed His almighty power with a bowl of water and a towel. He showed His disciples who God is: God is who came not to be served, but to serve. In following Christ’s example, we show we are His disciples by loving one another. This is sacrificial love. So, where one member of the body of Christ is lacking, another member fills that void.

Tonight, we conclude our study on God’s revealed Law with the Ninth and Tenth Commandments: ***“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”***

Now, is it wrong for you to want a house? No! But it is wrong to want your neighbor’s house! So, if you are scheming to get your neighbor’s house, that is coveting.

These last two commandments are for the heart. We may be able to say that we have followed commandments four through eight, since we tend to focus on those as outward acts. Coveting is wanting what you don’t have. This wanting is a sin of the heart. It’s like saying, “I don’t trust that God will provide for me, so I want what my neighbor has.”

Coveting begins in the heart. One such example of coveting comes from 1 Kings 21. There, King Ahab desired his neighbor's vineyard. It was a beautiful vineyard. At first, the king was going to offer money to his neighbor to sell. But his neighbor says that he would not sell. Instead of moving on, Ahab is annoyed and frustrated – he won't even eat – as he pouts and cries to his wife Jezebel.

Jezebel says to him, ***“Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard”*** (1 Kings 21:7).

And she did. She set into motion the death of the neighbor as she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, so that this neighbor would be charged as cursing God and the king. Soon, this neighbor would be stoned to death – and all for a king coveting his vineyard. It sure is great to be king!

It all started with coveting. But instead of stopping there, so many other commandments were broken – the First (no other gods), the Second (misusing God's name), the Fifth (murder), the Seventh (stealing), the Eighth (lying) – and all from coveting.

Another example of coveting is found in a popular song from 1981 that reached number one on the Billboard Hot 100: “Jessie's Girl” by Rick Springfield.

*Jessie is a friend  
Yeah, I know he's been a good friend of mine  
But lately something's changed that ain't hard to define  
Jessie's got himself a girl and I want to make her mine.*

*You know, I wish that I had Jessie's girl!  
I wish I had Jessie's girl!  
I want, I want Jessie's girl!*

The singer's heart and voice just wants what he does not have. “If I could only have Jessie's girl.”

Instead of being content with what God has given, so often we look to our neighbor's things, or our neighbor's status, or our neighbor's reputation. “If I could only have that!”

Not only does coveting happen to us personally, it is also so common in the church and in society. In the church, we might hear, think, or even say things like: “If only we could have more money” or “If only we could be like that other church down the street.” In society, we hear, think, and say things like: “No one should have that much wealth, or that much stuff” or “The rich really need to pay their ‘fair share.’”

No matter where it happens, or when it happens, or who says it, the sin is still the same. You and I have a problem with being content with what God gives us – whether it’s house or spouse, goods or kids, members or monies. These two commandments shine the light of truth on us good, religious people. They show us for the discontents that we really are. And this all goes back to where we began on Ash Wednesday with the First Commandment: we really don’t trust God and how He chooses to take care of us.

The only way out of the coveting trap is by God’s giving to us – *His daily bread* – and by His forgiving. Because of Jesus crucified and risen, we have a gracious God. Because of His dying and rising, we have God’s good favor. God is content with you because of His Son. That’s how God is forgiving. And we have God’s promise that He knows what you really need. We have God’s promise that He always sees your needs. So, you have what you need and your neighbor has what he needs.

Throughout these Lenten midweeks, we have focused on the two tables of the Law: loving God and loving our neighbor. We also learned that every commandment goes back to the First Commandment: You shall have no other gods, since without proper fear, love, and trust in God, we cannot love God and love our neighbor.

In the Commandments, we have the most precious teaching. And since it comes from God, no one could improve upon it. But we also have our hands quite full in trying to keep these commandments for these commandments keep us rooted in our everyday actions of faith in God and love toward our neighbor.

But too often, we fail to live up to God’s commandments for us. Now, God demands that we keep each commandment perfectly. If we had no Savior, we would certainly despair, since the Lord is a jealous God, who visits iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Him by not keeping His commandments.

But we don't despair, since we have a Savior! So, where you fail, lay all your commandment breaking onto Jesus who kept each commandment perfectly. Repent and confess that sin and receive God's forgiveness.

On this Maundy Thursday, we recall Christ's commandment: ***“Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”***

Again, Christ showed this love by serving His disciples.

On this night, Jesus not only washed His disciples' feet in serving them by making them clean, but He also instituted the Lord's Supper, which is His true body and blood under the bread and the wine for us to eat and to drink to which He serves us the forgiveness of sins.

In this Sacrament, we receive a great treasure: the forgiveness of our sins. We receive what Christ won when He suffered in His body on the cross and shed His blood to redeem us. Because of this, we are content as we receive life with God now and salvation everlasting. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +**