

# Incline our Hearts to Keep Your Commandments

2018-03-03 - Year B - Lent 3 - The Rev. Christopher Klukas

Exodus 20:1–21; Psalm 19:7–14; Romans 7:12–25; John 2:13–22

## The Ten Commandments

- In the early Church, the 10 commandments were seen as vital to the formation of new believers in preparation for baptism (with the Apostles Creed and the Lord's Prayer)
- It is still one of the pillars of catechesis today.
- "The standards set by the Law reflect values and obligations that are, to some degree, impressed upon the consciences of all people (Romans 2:15). Yet God gave the Law in a clear and unmistakable way to his chosen people, Israel. Delivering them from slavery in Egypt, he established a covenant relationship with them at Mt. Sinai through Moses, giving them the Law" (ACNA Catechism, Intro to Part IV).
  - In some ways, the law is obvious, but it makes the obvious explicit.
- At its best, the law was seen to be a light to God's people, something to take delight in.
  - Psalm 19:7-11
- Many people see in these commandments the basis for all law in America and the Western world.
  - "We have no government with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."<sup>1</sup> John Adams, 2nd President
  - "The fundamental basis of this nation's laws was given to Moses on the Mount. The fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings we get from Exodus and St. Matthew, from Isaiah and St. Paul. I don't think we emphasize that enough these days. If we don't have a proper fundamental moral background, we will finally end up with a totalitarian government which does not believe in rights for anybody except the state!"<sup>2</sup> Harry Truman
- God gave us the 10 commandments (and the rest of the law) to show us what true morality looks like.
  - Continued reflection on the 10 commandments will convict us and show us the ways that we are falling short of God's best for us.
  - Music downloading
- Without the law, there was moral chaos as we can see from the biblical accounts of the pagan cultures surrounding ancient Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Wall of Misconception: Does the Separation of Church and State Mean the Separation of God and Govt* by Peter A. Lillback

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

## The Unkeepable Law

- When we look at Rom 7:7 we see another purpose for the law. The law shows us the depth of our sinful nature.
- Paul's example deals with coveting: Rom 7:7b-8. Not only did the law reveal that coveting was a sin, once it was revealed sin took over and caused coveting in response to the law.
- As humans we have an almost irresistible desire to push the red button. To do the one thing we are specifically asked not to do.
- How many of you have ever known what it is you should be doing, but have found yourself doing just the opposite?
  - David and Bathsheba - 2 Sam 11
- Take comfort in the fact that even St. Paul has felt this too. Rom 7:15, 18.
- This is what we mean when we talk about "the flesh". Paul is not so much talking about our physical bodies as he is talking about our sinful nature. This comes from the spiritual genes of our first parents, Adam and Eve.
- We are in the hopeless situation of lacking self-control. We know what is right but we can't seem to do it. It affects all of the places in our lives where we have choice. To exercise or not, to eat right or not, to follow our lenten disciplines or not, to follow God's commandments or not.
- Rom 7:21-23 - we are divided, we want to do good, but sin is always waiting for us.
- This can leave us feeling crushed, discouraged, and without hope.

## Incline our Hearts

- The law brings us to Christ
- Our only hope is in Jesus who died to pay the penalty for our sins.
  - Now, instead of being driven to despair, we can be driven to our knees asking God to forgive us because of what Jesus has done for us.
  - Romans 7:24-25
  - As we read through the 10 Commandments and are convicted of sin, we can cry out, "Lord have mercy upon us!" And he is faithful to do so.
- But there is more! Our hope is also in the Holy Spirit whom he sent to change us and make us holy.
  - Rom 8:10-11
  - Incline our hearts to keep this Law
- Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.
- Only God can reorder our affections and unite our wills to his will.
- *"Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave."* (Psalm 86:11–13, NIV84)