

Nothing Greater...Nothing More...

Աւելի Մեծ Պատուիրան Չկայ

Mark 12:28-34

Welcome to Rally Sunday. We introduce a major theme each year.

- **Get out of the Boat** was my theme in 2017
- **Connected with God and Each Other** in 2018
- **Living Right-Side Up in an Upside-Down World** in 2019
- **Be Still and Know that I Am God** in 2020

We introduce those topics by going over books from the Bible. James, John, 1st Thessalonians, Life of Joseph, The Beatitudes, The Lord's prayer, Philippians... We don't finish these topics. We don't graduate from those classes. We keep studying God's Word and we continue learning and allowing the Spirit of God to transform our lives.

This year, in 2021-2022 we would like to introduce this theme:

Nothing Greater... Nothing More...

We took these concepts from the Word of God.

Let me read the passage:

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹ "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:28-31 NIV11)

-This passage is not new to you. We have read it many times and have quoted it often. I love Jesus' response how he summarized the commandments.

Commandments, laws, regulations... those words sometimes make us uncomfortable.

I would like to preach in these coming months about **Ten Words, the Decalogue**, (as the Rabbis call it in the Torah). More commonly they are called the **Ten Commandments**. They appear in Exodus 20, and then again in Deuteronomy 5. These ten words were given to Moses on Mount Saini. They were given by God on tables of stone, inscribed by the very finger of God.

Laws, when we speak about laws, we can find three kinds:

Ceremonial laws, Civil laws, and Moral laws.

The Ten Words are under moral laws of God.

Are they applicable now? Oh yes. They were applicable then and they are applicable now...

-The Israelites were in Egypt for 400 years. That is not a joke, imagine how the Israelites needed a new orientation about **who God is**, and **how to live Godly lives**.

Philip Ryken says: "The Ten Commandments display the character of God. They reveal his sovereignty, jealousy, justice, holiness, honor, faithfulness, providence, truthfulness, and love."¹

Ten Words, or commandments express God's will for our lives, and the beauty of it is based on God's character.

-Some can say, "Haven't we passed beyond the age of **laws and commandments**?"

Strange, we misread Jesus. He came not to abolish the law; he came to fulfill the law.

When teacher of the law asked what the most important commandments is, Jesus said love God and neighbor; he was quoting from the Torah, the Pentateuch, (Deut. 6:4–5) and Leviticus (19:18), he was teaching the commandments.

-Illustration: You came to church today by car. On the road there were laws and regulations. What if each of us has decided to not obey to those laws. What if each person argues that those laws are not applicable to us? what if each person did whatever they wanted? I wonder if you would arrive here or to the Emergency Room...

Sometimes we think **law** and **grace** are against each other. The God of order and creation created us in His image so we can have a relationship with Him and each other. We sinned, disobeyed, fell short, and destroyed the relationship with Him and each other. God wants humans to have an intimate relationship with HIM. Thus, **law and grace** are not against each other. In fact, they are friends, says Jen Wilkin.

"The Christian faith is absolutely about relationships. But while that faith is personal, it is also communal. We are saved into special relationship with God, and thereby into special relationship with other believers. Christianity

is about the relationship with God and others, and because this statement is true, Christianity is also a new unapologetically about rules, for **rules** show us how to live in those relationships.”²

In the children’s message we heard the Ten Commandments. That is great. There was a time we memorized the Ten Commandments. It seems it is being done not anymore. If I ask you right now to say the ten commandments by memory, can you?

We live in an upside-down world. Moral laws are relative. There is no consensus about moral law anymore.

Here is a sample how new rules are given to us:

-I don't see the point in observing the Sabbath.

-I will steal from those who won't really miss it.

-I will lie when it suits me, so long as it doesn't cause any real damage.

-I will cheat on my spouse-- after all, given the chance, he or she will do the same.

-I will procrastinate at work and do absolutely nothing about one full day in every five.³

Those are based on moral relativism.

Funny, the world applies those standards, and that influences us too. How can we shield against those teachings?

Today, either we don’t care about the moral laws of God, we twist the laws according to our needs, or we think we keep the law, but we don’t live it.

Let me explain further from the Word of God:

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

¹⁷ “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

¹⁸ “Which ones?” he inquired.

Jesus replied, “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, ¹⁹ honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.”

²⁰ “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

(Matthew 19:16-20 NIV11)

Ok, the man had a question about getting eternal life. I will not go into details about the word “good.” Jesus answered him by saying, “Keep the commandments.” The man’s reply was strange, “Which ones?”

What do you mean, “Which ones?” Every Jewish person knows that the Ten Words are the commandments you learn by memory.

Jesus started reciting the Decalogue, but not from the beginning.

And the answer: “All these I have kept it”

OK, now what... **what is still lacking?**

J.I. Packer says:

“It seems this man was living on the surface and was largely out of touch with what was going on inside him. He had not yet become aware that God's law condemns not only lawless acts but also lawless desires and dreams and fantasies of law-breaking.”⁴

Friends, real neighbor loving does not depend on whether one likes the neighbor or not. Real neighbor loving **grows out of humility and gratitude toward God.**

So, what is lacking?

“Sell everything and follow me.” was Jesus’ answer.

Something was hindering this young man from worshiping and loving God.

Something was hindering him from putting God first and not other images or other priorities.

-Jesus is asking him **to live the commandments.**

-Jesus is asking him **to commit his life as a disciple of Jesus and follow HIM.**

You can memorize the ten words, you can learn those words, but if you don’t have a relationship with Jesus, nothing matters. You lost the joy of obedience to the commandments of God.

“Jesus himself is in fact the embodiment of the Ten Commandments, and living below the standard of service that his life sets is, quite simply, falling short in neighbor-love.”⁵

For unbeliever, keeping the Ten Commandments without faith in Jesus can take him/her to legalism.

without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. (Heb 11:6 NIV11)

This is so true in my life. Only when I met Jesus, things started to make sense, and I began to see things from a new perspective.

“These words bring life only to those who have been joined to Christ through faith. Our relationship has been purchased by the perfect obedience of Christ to the law. The life of Jesus fulfills the prophetic words of Psalm:

**I desire (delight) to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart.”** (Psalm 40:8 NIV11)⁶

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—
but my ears you have opened^[a]—
burnt offerings and sin offerings^[a] you did not require.

⁷ Then I said, “Here I am, I have come—
it is written about me in the scroll.^[a]

⁸ I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart.”

I invite you this morning to come to the Table of the Lord. I invite you to come in humility and adoration to our Lord Jesus Christ. I invite you to come in prayer and dedicate the coming year to Him.

In the coming weeks we will study the Ten Words. Be ready in faith to study those words together. Pray that God would equip me to teach you.

Amen

1. Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in the Stone*, p17
2. Jen Wilkin, *Ten Words to Live By*, p 13
3. Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in the Stone*, p13
4. J.I. Packer, *Keeping the 10 Commandments*, p17
5. *ibid* p 18
6. Jen Wilkin, *Ten Words to Live By*, p 18