

THE WITTENBERG WAY

PASTOR'S PAGE

June 2020
Volume 13, Issue 5



Dear Grace Family,

As we emerge from the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, our nation and city have been hit by a tidal wave of cultural unrest, looting, and violence. Emotions are running high, to say the least, in the wake of George Floyd's death. One senior parishioner called me to ask, "Pastor, why did they burn down my Vons and local bank?" I can assure you, as I did her, those specific evil actions had nothing to do with racial inequality or systemic police malpractice. Welcome to an election year

in America where the polarization of our citizenry is increasingly hostile and unable to even speak to one another in an honest or compassionate manner, let alone provide even a spark of willingness to hear from someone who doesn't already share their ideology. It doesn't help matters that media outlets on both sides fan these flames through mischaracterization and the telling of half-truths, but such is the world that we live in.

In contrast to the kingdoms of this world, the church is to stand apart as the counter-cultural family of God by proclaiming the Good News of Christ Jesus for all. As St. Paul put it, the Gospel frees us from being enslaved to cultural prejudices and divided by skin color, economic status, or gender: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:27-28). In other words, the Gospel is a message of love that results in concrete actions of love. My prayer is that despite the struggles brought about by this pandemic, societal upheaval, political divisions, and the fearful uncertainty of what the rest of this year may bring, Grace Lutheran Church would stand unified in our love of God and love for one another. After all, we are a family and the waters of Holy Baptism are actually thicker than blood.

To help in this endeavor, I will be preaching throughout the summer on the Ten Commandments. These commands provide great insight into God's original design for His creation and what behaviors should mark our lives as we seek to glorify God through our love and service to one another. I've included an article in this summer edition to provide some further background on the Ten Commandments and I encourage you to read it as it covers some topics that I will not have time to dig into on Sunday mornings.

There are signs of hope that this pandemic is easing as businesses and industries begin to restart after a three-month pause. I am grateful for your continued support of our mission as we reopened our doors fully at the end of May. We will continue with two services for the time being throughout the summer. Our leadership will continue to monitor the situation and make adjustments as necessary for the health and well being of all. Change is inevitable in this life, but I am grateful that Jesus Christ remains the same "yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Prayerfully Yours,
Pastor Thomas

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COMING SOON

SUNDAY SCHOOL-FALL 2020
SEPT. 13 TO NOV. 22



A Conversation on Religion & Politics

Join Pastor Thomas and guest lecturers this Fall for our adult Sunday School as we discuss a Lutheran view of church and state. We will examine historic Christian teaching regarding the purpose of government and propose constructive ways in which we can participate as Christian citizens for the betterment of our world.



10 WORDS TO LIVE BY: UNDERSTANDING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

BY PASTOR BRIAN THOMAS

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This summer I will be preaching through the Ten Commandments on Sunday mornings, so I thought I would kick off this summer edition of the newsletter with a little background. I'm calling this series, "10 Words," because that is the emphasis of the Hebrew in Exodus 20:1, that God spoke as He delivered the law to Israel at Mount Sinai fifty days after the Exodus from Egypt. God then carved the these Ten Words onto two tablets of stone, which he gave to Moses, however, Moses smashed the first set of tablets after witnessing the idolatry of the golden calf incident. God then carved them again onto a second set of tablets, which were subsequently placed in the Ark of the Covenant.

God created the world with ten utterances. There were then 10 generations from Adam to Noah, and another 10 generations from Noah's son Shem to Abraham, whose progeny would be saved from Egypt by 10 plagues and go on to accept the Ten Words at Sinai. See a pattern here? The entire purpose of creation was to set the stage for the stewardship of this world through humanity as God's vice regents. If these Ten Words were upheld from the beginning, there would be no need to write them down. Imagine a world without the need for police, armies, divorce, or court rooms?

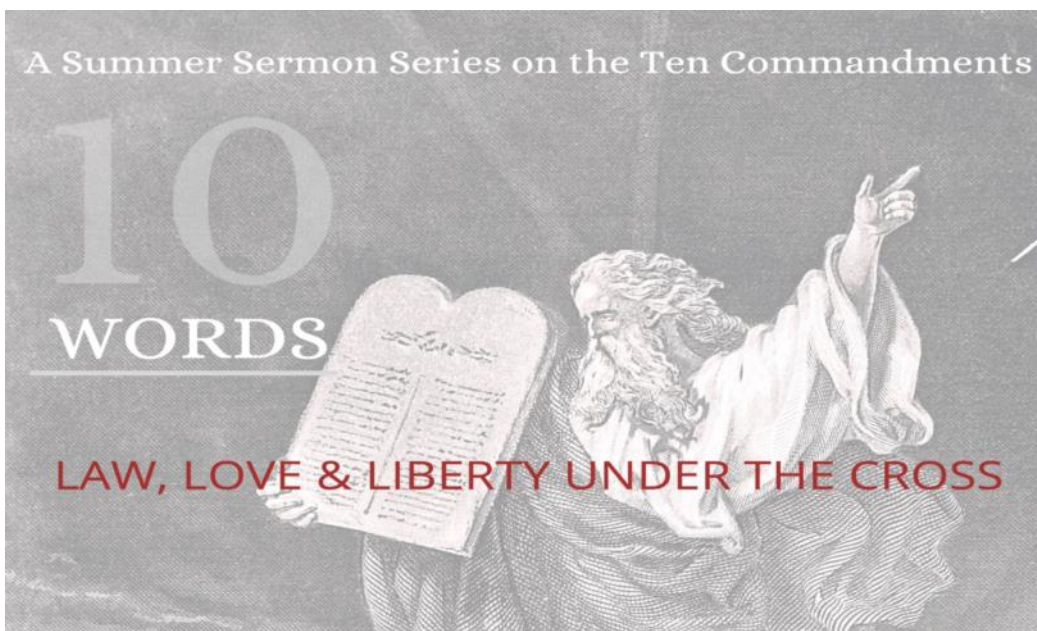
The Ten Commandments are not the entirety of God's will for His people, but contain a summary of the virtue that should be indicative of those "who fear, love, and trust God before all else," as Luther put it in his Small Catechism. Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments by condensing them to one word: LOVE. "Love God and love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30—31). As Jesus transforms the commandments, He reveals a deeper level of interpretation for all of God's law as demonstrated by His willingness to sacrifice His life so that we may live.

Love, as we will see in this study, is far more than an expression of our feelings, but results in concrete actions. We do not keep the commandments for our own pleasure or benefit. Rather, we keep them as a way to love God and serve our neighbor. And just in case you didn't already know, your neighbor is everyone who is not you.

The Ten Commandments occur twice in the Old Testament (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5). The major difference in the two versions of commandments comes in the motive clause of the Sabbath commandment.

In Exodus, the motive for keeping the Sabbath is based on God's blessing and will for creation: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it" (Ex 20:11).

In Deuteronomy, the motive for keeping the Sabbath is based on Israel's experience of rescue from bondage: "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15). The former emphasizes the Sabbath as blessing, the latter emphasizes the Sabbath as an institution of justice—the first fair labor law.



In this history of Biblical translation, the numbering of the Ten Commandments has unfortunately varied, resulting in three primary ways of dividing and numbering them, which the following chart on the next page depicts.

I wish the early the church fathers had simply followed the Jewish tradition on this matter, because it is how Jesus and the New Testament writers understood them. For our sermon series, I will be using the Jewish order. Additionally, each sermon title will emphasize one word as a positive affirmation of the commandment.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

NUMBERING THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Jewish	Catholic, Lutheran, Orthodox	Reformed, Anglican, other Protestants
1. I am the Lord your God		
2. No other Gods (and no graven images)	1. No other Gods (and no graven images)	1. No other Gods
		2. No graven images
3. Do not misuse God's name	2. Do not misuse God's name	3. Do not misuse God's name
4. Keep the Sabbath	3. Keep the Sabbath	4. Keep the Sabbath
5. Honor father & mother	4. Honor father & mother	5. Honor father & mother
6. Do not murder	5. Do not murder	6. Do not murder
7. Do not commit adultery	6. Do not commit adultery	7. Do not commit adultery
8. Do not steal	7. Do not steal	8. Do not steal
9. Do not bear false witness against a neighbor	8. Do not bear false witness against a neighbor	9. Do not bear false witness against a neighbor
10. Do not covet your neighbor's spouse or house	9. Do not covet your neighbor's spouse	10. Do not covet your neighbor's spouse or house
	10. Do not covet your neighbor's house	

Many look negatively at the commandments. They hear a “thou shalt not” and think only of the prohibition. But in Luther’s genius, he emphasizes the positive aspect of each command in his Small Catechism. Yes, the commands have a “don’t” but they also present a “get to” opportunity. For example, the command to “not steal” provides an opportunity to love your neighbor by protecting and valuing their property.

The following will serve as an outline of this sermon series:

1. **Liberty**— I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
2. **Love**—You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, nor any manner of likeness of anything that is in heaven above, that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them, nor serve them.
3. **Respect**—You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
4. **Rest**—Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord your God.
5. **Honor**—Honor your father and mother, so that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God gives you.
6. **Sanctity**—You shall not murder.
7. **Loyalty**—You shall not commit adultery.
8. **Stewardship**—You shall not steal.
9. **Truth**—You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. **Contentment**—You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his manservant, his maid-servant, his ox, his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.

The Structure of the Ten Commandments

A dual structure can be seen in the previous Ten Words. Commandments 1—4 deal with our relationship to God. Commandments 6—10 deal with our relation to each other. The 5th Word, that of honoring one's parents, forms a sort of bridge between the two primary authorities in our lives.

While the Bible itself provides no indication of how the "words" of the commandments were distributed on the actual stone tablets, it is generally assumed that they stood five on one tablet and five on the other. Some commentators have seen a correlation between the five commandments opposite each other on each of the two tablets. So, for example, murder is an injury to God as man is created in His image, apostasy is equivalent to marital infidelity, stealing will lead to lying, the Sabbath violator attests falsely that God did not create the world by resting on the seventh day, and the person who covets his fellow person's wife will end by fathering a child who rejects his true parent and honors another.

Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and the Law of God

In the Ancient Near East, treaties between kings was common. These were treaties drawn up among equals and mostly outlined agreements to honor each other's boundaries, to maintain trade relations, and return indentured servants. These treaties are preserved in the Mari Tablets and in the Amarna texts.

Another type of treaty was drafted between a superior and his inferior. If the relationship was familial or friendly, the parties are referred to as "father" and "son." If the relationship is bereft of kindness and intimacy, the parties are referred to as "lord" and "servant," or "king" and "vassal," or "greater king" and "lesser king." The greater king is the suzerain and the lesser king is a prince, or a lesser lord in the service of the greater king. The lesser lord is a representative of all the people who are under the protection of the greater king. He enforces the treaty among the masses.

These Suzerain/Vassal treaties open with two sections:

1. The identification of the Suzerain by his name and titles;
2. The historical survey of the Suzerain's dealings with the vassal.

The purpose is to illustrate to the vassal how much the Suzerain has done to protect and establish the vassal who therefore owes submission and allegiance to the Suzerain. These two sections are referred to as the "Preamble."

The next section of these treaties list the "stipulations." What the vassal is required to do is spelled out in principal and detail. This section is often concluded with the requirement that the vassal deposit his copy of the treaty in his temple, where he is to occasionally read and study it to refresh his memory concerning his duties. Hence, the Ten Commandments were placed in the Ark of the Covenant, which sat behind the holy of holies in the Temple.

The last section of these treaties contains the blessings and curses of the Suzerain. If the stipulations are met by the vassal, he will receive the Suzerain's blessings, which are listed. If the vassal fails to meet the stipulations, he will receive the Suzerain's curses, which are also listed.

The Suzerain would keep one copy of the treaty and the vassal would keep one copy of the treaty. A number of ratifying ceremonies were used depending upon the era and culture. But the most widely used rite was that of cutting the bodies of animals in halves and placing them in two rows with enough space between for the two parties of the treaty to walk side by side. As they walked between the pieces, they were vowing to each other, "May what has happened to these animals, happen to me if I break this covenant with you." We find an example of this between God and Abraham in Genesis 15.

Most scholars believe that God mimics a Suzerain treaty in giving the law at Mt. Sinai. For example, Exodus 20 can be outlined as such:

(1-2) "Yahweh" is the Suzerain who delivered this Preamble to Moses, the vassal-lord who represents the people under the authority of the Suzerain.

names & titles = "I am the Lord, your God."

historical prologue = "Who brought you out of Egypt..."

(3-17) Stipulations with selected blessings and curses.

stipulations = the 10 commandments;

blessings and curses = (5b-6); (7b); (12b).



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The entirety of the book of Deuteronomy is structured around this type of treaty.

The most important thing to remember from this treaty is that God first establishes the relationship with Israel in the preamble. Only then does God make a claim on our behavior.

There are two crucial points here—and please do not miss them.

First, God does not give the law as a means to salvation. To use the law to earn salvation is like trying to make asparagus taste good. It's not possible! And neither is it possible to earn salvation through the law. God does not give the law as a way to establish relationship with the people. God establishes the relationship by His grace and then gives the law.

Second, the commandments are not really about “you,” per se. God does not give you and me the law in order to perfect us or even to make us a better “you” or a better “me.” Once again, the law is about living under the mercy of our crucified Savior and the emphasis of this cruciform life is love. In other words, we keep the law to honor our God by loving our neighbor.

May God bless us as a community of people bound together in Christ's life and love as we study His commandments this summer.

GOD SPEED AND FAREWELL

San Diego is one of the most transitory cities in America due to our military, numerous colleges, and great year-round weather. I want to say God Speed and farewell to the following members:



Pastor Gleason and Deaconess Doris Snashall resigned their calls on June 5th after a decade of service at GLC. They had planned to retire at the end of the year, however, the difficulties of the past three months led them to the decision to start their retirement earlier than expected. I am so very grateful for the many years that I had to serve alongside them both. They brought a passion for God's word, Lutheran catechesis, and the liturgy that is rare to find. Grace would not be where it is today without them.



The Brown family has been a part of Grace since 2009 when Paris and Natalie were married here. Their four boys - Josiah, Amadeo, Christian, and Angelo - were all baptized here too. Paris has accepted a job offer to teach and coach in Marietta, Georgia, not far from Atlanta. Paris has served several terms as an elder at Grace and I am very sad to see their family depart, but excited about the new opportunities before them.



Tajy George has been a member of Grace Lutheran since 2008. She is the daughter of Jack and Judy George. Tajy continues to work for my old company, Sentek Global, as an analyst for the U.S. Navy. She is transferring to the D.C. area for a new position and will be attending Immanuel Lutheran, which is a really solid parish. Our loss will be their gain.



LTJG Dylan Jensen has been a part of our parish since his graduation from the Naval Academy two years ago. He recently departed for South Carolina to attend nuclear power school, which is an extremely difficult program to get through, but I have no doubt that Dylan will have no trouble. I am hoping he will find follow-on orders back here in San Diego, so he can join us once more.

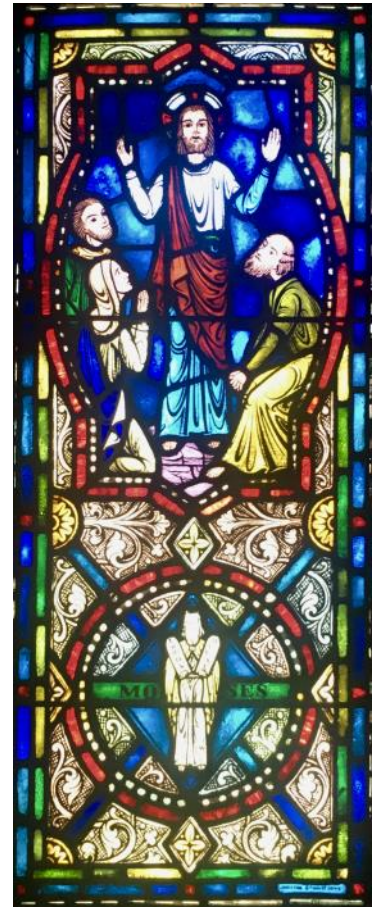
CAN YOU FIND THIS WINDOW?

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Moses and the Sermon on the Mount

The lower section of this stained glass window depicts Moses and the giving of the Ten Commandments to Israel. In the upper portion, we see Jesus preaching that same law to His followers in Matthew 5-7, popularly known as His "sermon on the mount." Throughout His sermon many interpreters find Jesus expanding the ethical horizon of the moral law as he pulls back the curtain on the issues of anger and murder, lust and adultery, marriage, and divorce. But in light of Jesus' announcement that He has not come to abolish the law and the prophets in the least (5:17), it is perhaps better here to see Jesus illustrating the moral perfection the law has demanded all along, overriding previous distortions that sought to dull the law's sharp edge. Jesus is not enlarging the circumference of Torah, but demonstrating how it judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart. The law is more than a list of do's and don'ts—it is the perfect will of God for man which describes his relationship to God and his fellow man within the context of a covenant relationship.

The Gospel of the sermon on the mount rings most loudly when Jesus reveals the reason for his coming; He has come to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matt 5:17). These are the most comforting words of the entire passage. The law is holy and inviolable, leaving us with no place to hide as it brings its penetrating indictment. Jesus' purpose is not to abolish but fulfill (plerōsai). Since He is holy and perfect, He does not need to fulfill the law for Himself, but does so that his perfect obedience may be imputed to those who are unable to keep what the law demands, which happens to be perfection (cf. Lev 11:44; 1 Pet 1:16). As David Scaer notes, "The message of the Sermon is not a demand, driving the Christian to impossible moral perfection, but it comes to the Christian as a demand fulfilled already in Christ and which is now made possible for believers since it has first reached its demands in Christ."



Baby Bottles

Grace has bottles available on the desk in the hallway. Our members have filled quite a few and continue to support CAPS. You can return your filled bottles to the church office or drop off at the CAPS College Area Clinic! Give us a call at 619-337-8080 to let us know you are coming and when you have arrived and we will come out to your car for a curbside drop off.



Prayer

Prayer is the cornerstone of all we do and directly impacts the clinic and the women and couples we serve.

Sign Up For Prayer Text Alerts!

Go to friendsofcaps.org to sign up and see additional ways to

CAPS Walk For Life

Our walk this year will be a bit different, but it couldn't be easier! Simply pick a day, a time and a route you prefer. Then during the week of August 3-8 walk and pray for CAPS. Register at capswalk.org to receive a set of prayer points and other details including a virtual tour of all the CAPS clinics. *We have a matching grant!* You can help CAPS raise \$15,000 toward 20% of a new ultrasound machine and training for nurses for the new Mesa Area clinic!

FLOURISH - CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL GALA

Grace Lutheran has several members who work for the Cambridge School. Cambridge is an amazing Christian classical school where several of our member's children also attend. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, they were unable to hold their annual gala fundraiser. Instead, they got creative and held a virtual gala that was emceed by our very own Jeff Yoder.

Pastor Brian and Rachel hosted the small gala party for staff members and donors who support the school in our upstairs fellowship hall. Entertainment was the beautiful voice of Eden Yoder. The theme of this party was "No Corona" as evidenced by the many signs and Tecate piñata.





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The Reverend
Brian W. Thomas

Music Director
Michael Burke

Office Manager
Gretchen Jordan

Divine Service
8:00 am & 10:00 am

Nursery available

IT'S EASY TO DONATE TO GLC

Scan the QR code below with your phone or text a dollar amount to 84321 to donate. Give through your online banking, use your giving envelopes or just drop your donation in the offering plate.

Thank you!



Hearing Assistance is now available in our sanctuary.



Please see one of our ushers who will be happy to provide you with a listening device.

PRAYERS

Today and every day include some time for prayer . . . for yourself, for your church family, and for those in need.

Praises to Our Lord: The upcoming baptism of Nolan Lorenz Joost.

Prayers for strength: Pr. Ken Licht, Buffey, Daniel, Walt, Alice, Shannon, and Phyllis and for our military and first responders.

Prayers for our missionaries: Rev. James May (Kenya), Daniel Conrad (Central America), Rev. Dr. Ron and Mary Anne Rall (Papua New Guinea), Rev. Dr. John and Melinda Bombaro (Latvia)

Prayers for the military: Thomas Abbott, Nathaniel Beaver, Andrew Bund, Andrew Burke, Christian Cole, Jon Feazel, Jonathan Fisch, Brenda Fonseca, Tajy George, Jack Lynn George, Jr., Joseph Jindrich, Jack Ogden, Matthew Morgan, Eric Mitchell, Jacob Neuberg, Rhett Nowotney, Heath Russert, and Andrew Warren

Prayers awaiting the arrival of a child of God: Adam & Kim, Jeremy & Alma

Prayers for those unable to come to services: Lorna Winterstein, Mary Jane Robinson

BIRTHDAYS

JUNE

14- Gabrielle Moore
17- Carolyn Hansen
20- Lily Newton
20-Thomas Gertz
22- Renee Thompson
23- Natalie Brown
24- Tony Mezzadri
28- Marge Foelber
28-Fran Willis
30- Lily Robillard

JULY

5- Scott Weselis
8- Natalie Lukaesko
11- Steve Paylor
12-Brandi Burke
13-Andrew Burke
13- Peter Gertz
16- Mike Burke
16 - Chris Latham
16 - Carolyn Hansen
17-Josiah Brown
20- Ivy Moore
21- Brian Thomas

22- Quinn Weissman
26-Judy George
29- Conner Russert
31- Kris Fillius

AUGUST

5- Virginia Torres
11- Erin Dorris
12- Brandon Schroeder
14- Joyce Rochester
15- Heather Janiak
20- Josh Jensen
24- Jackson Huntley
30- Maggie Jacobs

If we missed your birthday email the church office at gjordan@gracesandiego.com

FACES OF GRACE



Jared Mindel received First Holy Communion this past month. He has been attending Grace for several months and studies economics at the University of Michigan.

Leo Fullam helped celebrate Lorna Winterstein's 100th birthday with his parents by following social distance. He sent his birthday wishes with a chalk drawing outside her home.

