

Appendix: Ten Commandments

Diagnostic Questions

By Rev. Bryan Wolfmüller

One of the great gifts of the Ten Commandments is insight into our own failures.

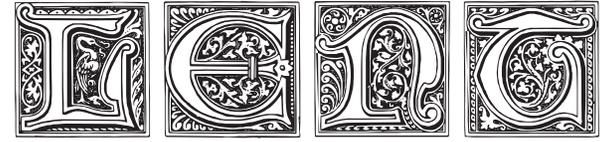
Like a doctor who tells us the bad, hard, and necessary news of a sickness diagnosed, the Ten Commandments show us the sickness-leading-to-death of our own sin.

For generations Christians have meditated on the Ten Commandments to consider their own life, and prepare for communion.

Here is my abbreviated list, one question per commandment, to get us going.

1. What am I afraid of?
2. How are my prayers?
3. What is my attitude towards worship?
4. What is my attitude toward authority?
5. Am I angry?
6. Am I chaste?
7. Am I greedy?
8. Am I lazy?
9. Am I bitter?
10. Am I happy?

After all this, it is important to know that you are forgiven, that Jesus came for sinners.



with the

Lord's Commands



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Lent with the Lord's Commands

2019 Lenten Devotions

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Easter Sunday – The Resurrection of our Lord

"Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." — Mark 16:6-7



he Lord is risen! The benefits of Jesus' resurrection are many. He lives to continue being our Lord and Savior. By rising He has restored to us the hope of eternal life and removed from us the fear of death. He still defends us against all danger and intercedes for us with the Father.

Jesus has also risen to declare us righteous, as it says in Romans 4:25 that He "was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification." Jesus lives to give us His innocence, to forgive our sins, to apply to us the benefits of His salvation.

The angel mentions Peter separately in the announcement to the women: "tell his disciples and Peter." This does not mean that Peter is no longer among the disciples. It means that the Lord desires to see the one who denied Him three times. "Tell his disciples and Peter" means that the Lord wishes to overlook sin, to put it away in His wounds, and to declare Peter righteous with His righteousness.

This comforting Word for Peter is a comforting Word for all who have sinned against God and grieve over sin. When Peter denied Jesus the third time and the rooster crowed, "Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept" (Mark 14:72). But Jesus does not leave Peter weeping. Jesus graciously receives Peter and assures him of His mercy. A dead Jesus couldn't do this, but a living Jesus can, and still does. His living voice sounds forth in the Absolution, forgiving our sins, killing the old Adam, and bringing us forth as a new creation by the power of His resurrection.

Dear Jesus, You live and reign to all eternity. Forgive our sins eternally and keep us faithful to You all our days. Amen.



*For the
Evangelical Lutheran Church
wherever she may be found*

And for the Glory of God

“The Empty Tomb” — An angel informs the women that Jesus has risen from the dead.

Foreword

APRIL 20

A disciple of Christ is always learning the Word of God. Catechesis as we Lutherans call it is not just some two- or three-year phase of life where we learned the Small Catechism. Catechesis is for life. It is lifelong, but as a play on words catechesis also brings life.

In each of the coming years we will take up a portion of the Small Catechism. This year, as the Catechism starts, so we cover the Ten Commandments. Lent is a great time for more fervent learning, but also in this case a great time to reflect upon the Commandments. Each week we will walk through one or more commandments, talking about what they mean as well as seeing from Scripture how our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled them. Of special note to the head of the household is the coverage of the Sixth Commandment, to which you will want to read before you use it in your devotions in order to make sure it will fit all the members of your household. We have tried to cover the commandment while maintaining some boundaries as to language in order to allow parents to decide when to discuss more sensitive topics.

Each week wraps up with a primer for confession on Saturday. The series of questions that the authors have put together are meant to help you understand how the teaching of those commandments from that week apply in your consideration of your station in life. These questions are meant to encourage you to make private confession and hear the absolution from your pastor. They are meant to help you prepare for receiving the Lord's Supper on Sunday. May you be blessed in considering them.

Lent is a wonderful time to attend church. No devotion can replace that which is given each Lord's Day through the Divine Service. Make attending church services in your congregation a priority this Lent, both on Sundays and other times (midweeks, Holy Week). This is God's way of serving you through the Word and Sacraments. By those things the Holy Spirit has made you a Christian and continues to keep you with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

As always this voluntary work is done by the authors out of love for the truth and in order to encourage and help Lutherans live out their faith in their homes, congregations, and communities. May you be blessed in the use of this devotional.

In Christ,
Rev. Joshua V. Scheer
Editor-in-Chief, Steadfast Lutherans

Holy Saturday

So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard. — Matthew 27:66

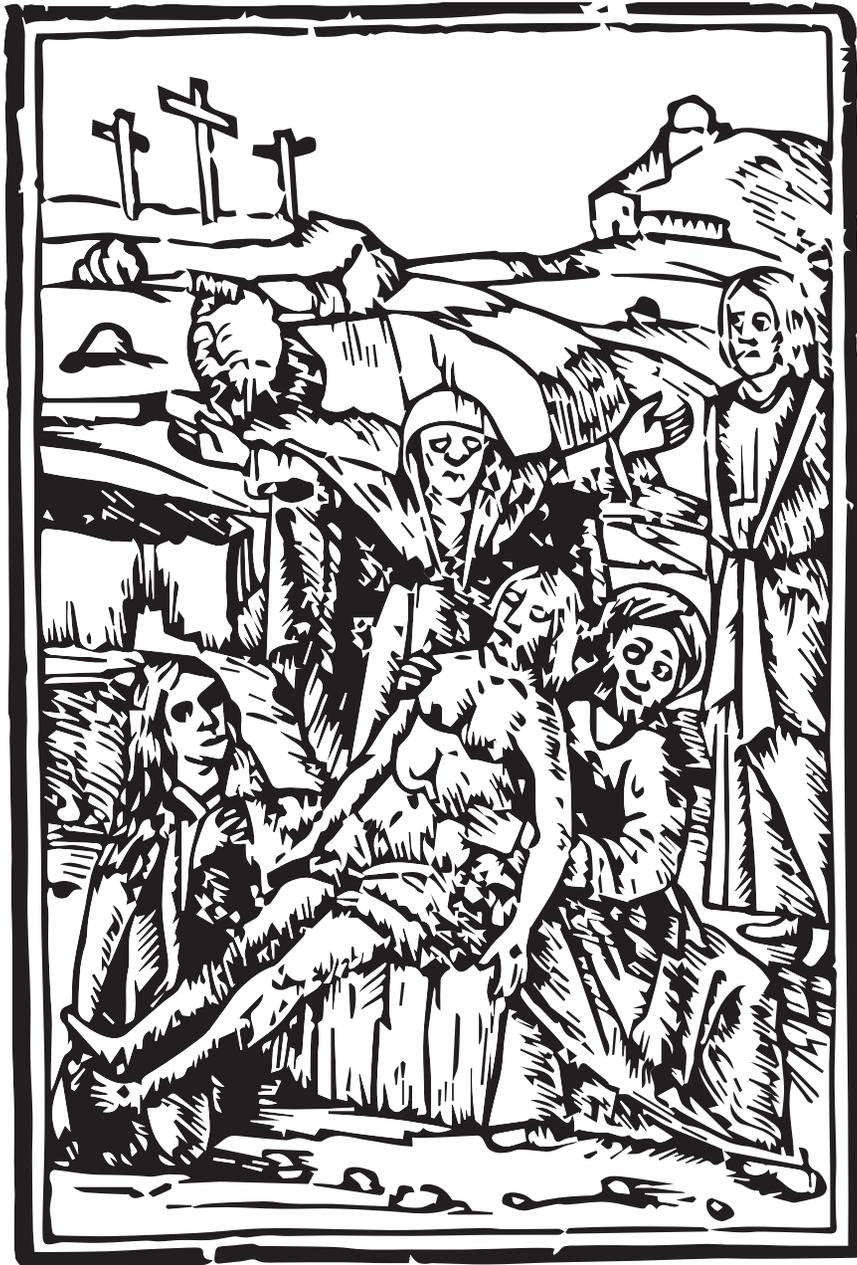
 In the Sabbath day, the enemies of Jesus, who claim to be righteous in God's sight by their works, show no regard whatsoever for the Sabbath. The chief priests and Pharisees are busy. They are afraid that the disciples will come steal Jesus' body and fake a resurrection. They slander Jesus, calling Him an "impostor" (Matthew 27:63) and accusing Him of committing "fraud" (Matthew 27:64). They hustle and bustle about the tomb in anxiety, boastful in their words, but uneasy in their hearts. "'The wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'" (Isaiah 57:20-21).

Meanwhile Jesus keeps the Sabbath and fulfills it. Jesus' rest in the tomb recalls the first Sabbath: "And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done" (Genesis 2:2). As Jesus said in His dying breath: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). He came to redeem mankind, and He has brought that purpose to completion.

The wicked are never finished with their schemes and plots, because they can never accomplish any of them. The wicked therefore have no rest. But in Jesus we find rest and peace. We have this rest not by sitting idly about, but by hearing the Holy Word of Jesus. His Holy Word makes a holy day. His Holy Word gives rest to our consciences that are troubled by sins and rest to our souls that are harassed by our enemies.

On the Sabbath "you shall not do any work," as the Lord said when he pronounced the Third Commandment (Ex. 20:10). The outward observance of this commandment has been fulfilled by our Lord in the tomb, but the spiritual meaning remains: resting in the Word and work of Jesus, we cease from the labor of trying to become righteous by the Law. All has been done, praise be to Christ.

Dear Jesus, give rest to our consciences and souls by the work that You have finished. Amen.



“The Burial of Jesus” — Jesus is buried by Joseph of Arimathea.



A depiction of the horned Moses with the tablets of the Ten Commandments. The image is from second edition of an early sermon by Martin Luther (1483-1546) on the Ten Commandments.

During the Middle Ages, Moses has been depicted with and without horns. The depiction with horns is based on the Latin Vulgate translation of the word “cornuta” to mean “horned” in Exodus 34: 29-30, 35 when Moses receives the Ten Commandments a second time. The term is now interpreted to mean “shining” or “emitting rays” (somewhat like a horn). (Source: Wikipedia.org)

Ten Commandments



"Golden Calf" — Israel worships the golden calf as Moses receives the Ten Commandments. Upon seeing such idolatry Moses breaks the tablets. An illustration of the violation of the first commandment. The artist of this engraving is the Monogamist HA.



"The Crucifixion of Jesus" — This woodcut derives from Lucas Cranach, the Elder (1472-1553), and is taken from the last printed leaf of the third Wittenberg printing of *On Good Works*, one of Luther's most important early treatises. It shows the Apostle John, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and a group of three soldiers gathered before the cross. This woodcut was created by Lukas Cranach the Elder.

Good Friday

After [Pilate] had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber. — John 18:38-40

Barabbas was "among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection" (Mark 15:7). Barabbas broke many of the commandments, but most of all the First Commandment. Barabbas shook his fist at God in defiance, and therefore suffered imprisonment and faced death. In Barabbas we see all mankind, ourselves included.

Next to Barabbas Pilate places Jesus. Three times Pilate publicly declared that he found no fault in Jesus (John 18:38, 19:4, 6). Now Pilate offers to release one of these two men. One shall be regarded as a lawbreaker and suffer punishment. One shall be regarded as righteous in the sight of the law and go free. We know who has kept the law and who has broken it. "We daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment," while Jesus "committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22). Pilate wanted to release Jesus. God had something else in mind.

Through the authority that He had given Pilate, God released Barabbas and convicted His Son. Jesus "was numbered with the transgressors and he bore the sin of many" (Isaiah 53:12). He bore our sin so that He would be condemned by the Law and we would go free. By this exchange we are counted as righteous in the sight of God. What the Law was powerless to do because of our sin, Jesus has done: "by his knowledge shall the Righteous One, my Servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11).

The sinless Son of God must die in sadness;
The sinful child of man may live in gladness;
Man forfeited his life and is acquitted; God is committed.

Dear Jesus, since You have borne our sins in Your body on the tree, grant that we die to sin and live to righteousness. Amen.

Ash Wednesday

"Yet even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. — Joel 2:12-13

This is the Old Testament lesson you should be hearing today at church. Return to the Lord is a very Lenten theme. This text speaks of repentance, that is of godly sorrow over sins (contrition) and also faith in the Gospel that for Christ's sake those sins are forgiven. The Scriptural distinction between the Law and the Gospel is evident here in repentance.

This series is intended to take us back to the basics of our Faith as we know them in the Ten Commandments. Here, in the Commandments we have a clear statement of God's will. Here we have a proper mirror to show us our sins against God. Our return to them is itself a humble action. We do not have them mastered and can always stand to learn them again and consider them in our lives. In fact, that is the daily life appointed for us as Christians.

In the Preface to the Large Catechism, Dr. Luther points this fact out to us: God Himself is not ashamed to teach these things daily. He knows nothing better to teach. He always keeps teaching the same thing and does not take up anything new or different. All the saints know nothing better or different to learn and cannot finish learning this. Are we not the finest of all fellows to imagine that if we have once read or heard the catechism, we know it all and have no further need to read and learn? Can we finish learning in one hour what God Himself cannot finish teaching? He is engaged in teaching this from the beginning to the end of the world. All prophets, together with all saints, have been busy learning it, have ever remained students, and must continue to be students. (LC Preface, par 16)

Dear Jesus, help us to humbly return to You in true repentance during this season of Lent. Bless our study of Your Commandments. Amen.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

“What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” — Romans 7:7-12



he Law convicts us of sin. In today's world, something that convicts us or makes us feel guilty is considered bad. This is not true in the case of God's Law. God's Law is not bad. Sin is bad. It's evil and reaps the wrath of God. The Law is from God and therefore it is by nature good.

St. Paul says that without the Law he would not have known sin. The law's chief function and use is to reveal sin. It shows us the actual sins of commission and omission in our lives and thus reveals the rotten fruit that the corruption of Original Sin produces. This is vital for us as Christians, for Christ came to save sinners. The Law does its good and godly work of revealing the evils we have done to our Creator.

It's time to realize the fact that guilt can be a very good thing if it comes by God's Law revealing our sins to us. If the Law convicts us of sin, then we are aware of our need for someone to rescue and deliver us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. No matter how poorly catechized the world around us gets, we as God's people should hold onto His Word of Truth, both Law and Gospel.

Dear Jesus, help us to regard Your Law as holy and righteous and good. By Your Spirit, work in us using that Law to show us our sin. By the Gospel of Your work of salvation for us grant us to trust in You for the forgiveness of our sins. Amen.

Maundy Thursday

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



oday is called Maundy Thursday. The word “maundy” comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, which means “commandment.” On this Thursday before His death, Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment.

At first glance this commandment may seem no different from the Second Table of the Law. The Second Table is summarized, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But now instead of “as yourself,” Jesus says, “as I have loved you.” His love for us not only causes a slight shift in wording. His love for us leads to a completely “new commandment,” as Jesus says. This new commandment is not a summary of the Law, but the fruit of the Gospel. It is new because it is based on Jesus' sacrificial death. Jesus explains in John 15:12-13, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

Notice that Jesus does not present this new commandment as something we do in order to earn something with Him. He presents this new commandment as something He does, and therefore we do too. John highlights this in 1 John 4:10-11, “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

It is significant that Jesus gave this new commandment when He instituted the Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper Jesus gives us His love. First, He shows it to us by forgiving our sins, and second, He imparts it to us to show to others. Thus, after we receive the Sacrament, we give thanks to Jesus “for this salutary gift,” and we ask that he would strengthen us through this same gift “in fervent love toward one another.”

Dear Jesus, give us Your love, that we might love one another. Amen.



“Last Supper” — Jesus and his Disciples break bread at the Passover meal.



“Ten Commandments” — Moses receives the Ten Commandments as Israel looks on. The artist of this engraving is the Monogamist HA.

*These are the holy Ten Commandments
God gave to us by Moses' hands
When high on Sinai's mount he stood,
Receiving them for our good.
Have mercy, Lord!*

Friday after Ash Wednesday

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 5:17-20

Christ Jesus did not come to abolish the Law. He came to fulfill it and to provide a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes and the Pharisees had become convinced that they could keep the Law of God and by it gain eternal life. They had then done damage to the Law by relaxing certain things with their own laws. They violated the Second Commandment by coming up with their own rules and saying they were God’s commands. They had violated the First Commandment because they trusted in themselves.

The righteousness they could produce by such sins was horrible. They were respected in their communities and people thought they were the most pious ones. Jesus corrects this by rightly brandishing the true Law, which showed them that their righteousness was worthless. The righteousness that allows a person to enter the kingdom of heaven is far beyond anything that can be produced by the will of man. The only righteousness that does such great things is the righteousness that Christ produced by fulfilling it. This is the righteousness that is counted to us when we believe in Christ. Jesus is encouraging the righteousness of faith in His rebuke of the failed righteousness of man. May we never trust in our works for entrance into heaven, but solely trust in Christ to provide that as He has promised to do.

Dear Jesus, thank You for fulfilling the Law. Help us to guard and keep it. Guard our hearts from trusting in our works and keep us ever-trusting in You for our righteousness. Amen.



“Arrest of Jesus” — Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane while the disciples sleep. In the background, soldiers arrive to arrest Jesus.

*“Our works cannot salvation gain;
They merit only endless pain.
Forgive us, Lord! To Christ we flee,
Who pleads for us endlessly.”*

LSB 581:12

Holy Wednesday

And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. But turning to them Jesus said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’ For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” — Luke 22:27-31



As Jesus processes to Golgotha accompanied by mourners, He turns and warns them about the destruction of Jerusalem, which would happen in 70AD. The people may have been grieved by human injustice when Jesus received the death sentence, but they didn't trust in Jesus. The apostles would preach in Jerusalem and meet the same opposition Jesus did. The “daughters of Jerusalem” did not care a whit for God's Word, and Jesus warns them that their punishment will be even worse than what they see Him suffering. Even one of God's greatest blessings, namely children, will become to them a source of woe. Nursing mothers, encumbered by their babies, will be unable to escape the city before the Romans besiege it. The barren wombs will die, but at least they won't have to watch their children die first.

Jesus spoke these words as He was bearing God's wrath in His passion and preparing to drain the cup of God's wrath fully on the cross. When people refuse Him as Savior by refusing to believe His words, they are forsaking their only refuge and stirring up wrath against themselves. It is never safe to disregard the Word of Jesus and try to justify our sins. Then we meet with a wrathful God, as the utter destruction of Jerusalem testifies. But it is always safe to heed the Word of Jesus and confess our sins. Then we meet with a gracious Lord, as His Gospel and Sacraments testify.

O God, have mercy on us, spare us from Your just wrath, and forgive our sins for the sake of Christ. Amen.

Saturday After Ash Wednesday

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” — 1 John 1:9-10



Each Saturday during this Lent our devotions will take the Commandments from that week and relate some questions to help us as Christians to examine our life and conduct according to the Word of God. This will reveal our sins to us. So what do we do with such knowledge? We confess our sins. We do this because of what St. John teaches us in the lesson above – the faithfulness of God to forgive our sins.

There are two very great gifts that God has given to you to help with this. This matter of personal examination according to the Commandments is helpful to make confession. This can be the public confession of sins that we make each Sunday morning, but it can also mean the private confession that is made with our pastor. Both of these have the beautiful purpose of making sure that you can hear the absolution, that is, forgiveness from our pastor as from Christ Himself.

The second great gift that God will use this examination for is the faithful reception of the Lord's Supper. Hopefully you can receive that gift tomorrow in God's house among God's saints. This is a great blessing for you because Jesus has promised that in His supper He gives forgiveness of sins, life, and eternal salvation.

Lastly, as you examine your life according to the Commandments, may God spare you from the arrogance of thinking you have not sinned. This is a grave sin as St. John says, it is actually an accusation that God has lied and proof that God's Word is not in us. Save us from this dear heavenly Father.

Dear Jesus, help us to examine ourselves according to Your commands. Help us to confess our sins and receive Your gifts of absolution and Holy Communion faithfully. Amen.

First Commandment

APRIL 16



"First Commandment" — Illustrating the violation of the first Commandment, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me." The faithful worship the crucified Jesus, while others worship an idol.

14

Holy Tuesday

Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same. — Mark 14:29-30

It is easy to see the chief priests, elders, and scribes as sinners. They called for God's death, though He had done them only good. But even those who trust in Christ are not sinless during Jesus' passion. When Jesus was arrested, "they all left him and fled" (Mark 14:50). Peter denied Jesus three times (Mark 14:66-72). They did these things because they were afraid of what men would do to them if they were associated with Jesus. We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We should fear God's wrath and not do anything against his commandments. The chief priests, elders, and scribes had their sin, but the disciples also had their own: they feared men more than they feared God.

Now the point here is not to fixate on everyone else's sins. The point is to realize that the Law saves no one, not even the saints. This is because all people, ourselves included, transgress the Law. James writes, "whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it" (James 2:10). The chief priests, elders, and scribes sinned. The disciples sinned. And as we've reflected on the Ten Commandments during Lent, we have realized how much we've sinned as well.

Yet if we are sinners, then we have the promise that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). If we are sinners, then Jesus' passion is for us. And thus as we hear the events of Holy Week unfold, we're not merely hearing of men's evil, or of sin heaped upon sin. We are hearing of our salvation. We are hearing comfort for the troubled conscience, thanks be to God.

Dear Father in heaven, make us to see our own sins more than the sins of others, and grant us assurance of salvation in Your Son. Amen.

Sunday of Lent 1

Again, the devil took [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’ ” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. — Matthew 4:8-11

You shall have no other gods. What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” But who or what is a god? In the Large Catechism, Martin Luther answers, “A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress. So, to have a God is nothing other than trusting and believing Him with the heart.”

All people have a god, for all people have someone or something to which they look for blessing, help, and comfort. But it is not good enough to simply have a god. The First Commandment is not, “You shall have a god,” but, “You shall have no other gods.” In this commandment the one true God teaches that He alone is to be trusted and believed with all the heart.

Other gods may provide some measure of help or comfort. Satan may very well have given Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. But whatever benefit comes from a false god is fleeting, and the one true God threatens to punish all who reject Him with the penalty of eternal wrath.

Our Lord Jesus, perfect Man, did not have another god. He did not fall down and worship Satan, despite his promise of earthly reward. Instead, Christ confessed, “You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.” By His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has revealed the one true God to us, who alone is our salvation.

Lord God, give us Your Holy Spirit, that we would fear, love, and trust in You alone; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



“Peter Denies Jesus” — Peter denies knowing Jesus, as a rooster crows near him. Beside Peter are his keys to Heaven and a book. Includes the monogram of the woodcutter, Christoffel van Sichem II (1577-1658); his son, Christoffel van Sichem III (1618-1659), may have collaborated with him on these images. The image also includes an engraver’s knife at the feet of Peter.

Monday of Lent 1

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:18-20

It is no accident that the Small Catechism begins with the First Commandment, “You shall have no other gods.” For the true faith and the true God go hand-in-hand. If you wish to have the true faith, you must have the true God. But in order to have the true God, you must know who that God is. Unfortunately, the word “God” has become so generic that it is not sufficient to say, “Believe in God.” Which God? We cannot simply assume that every mention of “God” we come across in our world today is a reference to the one and only true God.

We, however, do know who the one true God is, for He has been revealed to us by His Son Jesus Christ. Before His ascension, Jesus clearly revealed the one true God in the commission given to His apostles: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” In this verse we have a clear revelation of who the only God is: He is the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And from the rest of Holy Scripture we come to confess that He is three distinct Persons in one divine Being.

We are indeed to have no other gods, but the one true God has not left us in the dark to figure out who He is. He has revealed His Name to us through His Son Jesus, that through faith alone in Him, we would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

© God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, grant us a right confession of Your Name, which alone saves. Amen.



“Jesus Predicts His Death” — Jesus predicts His death, saying that a kernel of wheat must die to produce many seeds.

*“You have this Law to see therein
That you have not been free from sin
But also that you clearly see
How pure toward God life should be.”
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:11

Holy Monday

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” — John 12:27-28

Judas complains when Mary the sister of Martha anoints Jesus’ feet with expensive ointment: “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” The Evangelist notes, “He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it” (John 12:6). Judas often broke the Seventh Commandment, “You shall not steal.” He was greedy for earthly gain.

In his love of Mammon, Judas went to the chief priests and asked, “What will you give me if I deliver Him over to you?” (Matthew 26:15). They paid him thirty pieces of silver, because they wanted Jesus dead. The chief priests loved power and vainglory and saw Jesus as a threat.

Sinners joined league with other sinners and broke God’s commandments as if it were a sport. And what was the result? Their plot did not succeed. Jesus died, but rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Judas destroyed himself according to prophecy. The faithless religious leaders suffered even greater punishment when Jerusalem was destroyed a generation after Jesus’ resurrection, according to Jesus’ Word.

What do we learn from this? When man breaks God’s commandments, he harms himself, but he cannot harm God at all. In the midst of men breaking the commandments of God, Jesus prays that the Father would glorify His name. In other words, Jesus asks that the Father would uphold His own nature, character, and purposes, regardless of man’s sin. And the Father promises that He will do so. This is a comfort for us. As the world sins and rebels against God, we take heart that nothing can hinder God’s gracious will toward us in Christ.

Heavenly Father, glorify Your name, and save us through Your Son. Amen.

Tuesday in Lent 1

“So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” — Matthew 10:26-28

The explanation of the First Commandment says, “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” And we may rightly ask about each one of these words, “What does this mean?” What does it mean to fear God above all things?

There are many who assume that the fear of God is an outdated notion. Even Lutherans might think that to fear God is to fall back into medieval superstition and forget the Gospel. But Jesus very clearly commands us to fear God. Why? Because he can destroy both soul and body in hell. In fact, He has said that He will do so. God threatens to punish all who break His commandments. Therefore, we should fear His wrath and not do anything against them.

However, to fear God is not to forget the rest of the Bible. While fearing God we also believe that Jesus Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross, suffering the wrath and punishment of God that we deserved for breaking His commandments. As Christ suffered for us, we who believe in Him are declared righteous in the sight of God.

Nevertheless, God remains holy, and His Law remains true. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, but it does not give us license to continue in sin. As Christians, we are to continue in the fear of the Lord, fleeing from temptation lest we sin, and fleeing to Christ alone when we sin, in whom alone we find forgiveness, mercy, and everlasting life.

○ God, may we rightly fear You above all things, that repenting of our sins, we find our righteousness in You alone. Amen.

Wednesday of Lent 1

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” — Matthew 22:34-40

he First Commandment means that we are to love God above all things, along with fear and trust Him. Indeed, the whole Law is fulfilled in that one word, “Love.” As Jesus taught, the summary of the first table of the Law is, “Love the Lord your God,” and of the second is, “Love your neighbor.”

Neither love of God nor love of the neighbor comes naturally to us. Due to the corruption of original sin, we are far more prone to love ourselves than any other. We would seek our own good, we would desire our own honor, we would pursue our own interests. But God is love, and He shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. By this, the sacrificial and willing death on the cross of Jesus Christ, we know love, we see that God is love, and the true nature of His love is revealed to us.

This love, writes the Apostle Paul in Romans 5, has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. We now love because God first loved us. We love God in willing and worshipful obedience to his commandments, and we love our neighbor in glad and willing service. Jesus tells the Pharisees that these two commandments are like each other. We have seen and known both the love of God and the neighbor perfectly in the cross of Jesus Christ, His Son.

Lord Jesus, as You have loved us and gave Yourself for us, may we love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

Palm Sunday

And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” — Matthew 21:9

he First Commandment flows through all the others. If you have the right God, then virtue and obedience follow. However, if you have the wrong god, then vice and rebellion follow. We see this very clearly on Palm Sunday. The crowds go out to Jesus and hail Him as God: they fear, love, and trust in Jesus above all things. Because they have the right God, they also use God’s name rightly: they pray, “Hosanna! Save!” and they praise, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” During Holy Week these crowds listen to Jesus, hold His Word sacred, and gladly hear and learn it: “all the people were hanging on His words” (Luke 19:48). Even as their Lord is condemned and killed, none of the Christians defy authority or murder. Rather, Joseph of Arimathea respectfully asks Pilate for the body of Jesus so that he might bury him (Matthew 27:57-59). Peter sheaths his sword at Jesus’ Word and does not draw it again (Matthew 26:52).

But the chief priests, Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, and elders of the people refuse to recognize Jesus as God. Their heart does not fear or love Him. They mock Him and hate Him. Because of this, they misuse God’s name by accusing Jesus of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65). They profane the Sabbath, both according to the letter of the law by busying themselves with their schemes on the day of rest (Matthew 27:62-66), and according to the spirit of the law by despising Jesus’ Word. They do not respect Pilate, who is a legitimate authority from God, but they seek to manipulate him (John 18:30, 19:7) and they threaten him (John 19:12). They murder (Matthew 27:22-25). They bear false testimony (Matthew 26:59).

Those who have the right God keep all the commandments. Those who have a false god cannot keep a single commandment.

O God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, keep us faithful to You, and keep us from trusting other gods. Amen.



"Triumphal Entry" — Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey to the waving of palm branches.



"Trinity" — God the Father holds the dead body of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is represented in the form of a dove above.

*"I am alone your God, the Lord;
No other gods shall be adored.
But you shall fully trust in Me
And love Me wholeheartedly."
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:2

Thursday of Lent 1

Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me free. The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes. — Psalm 118:5-9



he last thing that the First Commandment requires of us is to trust in God above all things. This takes us back to very definition of a god. Again, as Luther wrote in the Large Catechism, “A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress.”

How many people live their lives in misery because of their misplaced trust in a false god! As Psalm 146 teaches, “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.” Any trust outside of trust in God will ultimately prove futile, for God alone is eternal and has salvation. All other helpers will inevitably disappoint and fail.

But the one who trusts in the Lord is never disappointed, for He never fails. He is the Giver of all that is good, and He does so freely and abundantly. In this life He gives us body and life, food and drink, health, protection, peace, and everything else that we need. More than that, He has abundantly provided for our souls in the means of grace, His Word and Sacraments, which deliver to us the salvation won by Jesus Christ in His death on the cross.

Indeed, it is God alone from whom we receive all good and by whom we are delivered from all evil. Let us therefore trust in Him and gladly do what He commands.

Almighty God, You are the Giver of every good gift. Help us to trust in You above all things. Amen.

Saturday of Lent 5

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. — 1 John 1:9-10



he wall art on sale at the store said, “I don’t repeat gossip, so listen well the first time!” We should rightly cringe at the disregard for and humorous misuse of the Lord’s Commandment. The Law of God shows us our sin. It does not excuse it. Sin is no joke.

Have I told the truth in court or in school before authorities or before my parents? Have I been afraid to bear witness when it was necessary to speak up against a wrong-doer or for a victim? Have I gossiped, excusing myself by saying that I only spoke the truth? Have I gone to others to make peace if I wronged them? Have I flattered others, slanted stories to my benefit, or deceived others by withholding evidence? Have I explained, in the best possible way, words or actions of others that hurt me? Have I learned to bear with the weaknesses and faults of others and been faithful in keeping secrets entrusted to me in confidence?

Have I longed for the lives of others? Have I been selfish with my money, trying to keep up with others? Have I tried to make the property of others my own? Do I keep wishing for things I do not have before I can work for them? Have I lived in discontent with God has given me, neglectful of what I do have?

Have I wanted my neighbor’s property? Have I tried to win the affection my neighbor’s spouse, children, or friends? Have I urged friends, spouses, and workers to go back to their vocations (marriage, friendship, family, and work)? Have I fostered discontent with the congregation, its pastor or leaders, and failed to urge members to stay and do their duty in worship, praying, giving and serving?

Heavenly Father, forgive us our trespasses against Your commandments as we forgive those who trespass against us, lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil in the name and for the sake of Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Friday of Lent 5

If it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. — Romans 7:7-8

It bothered me when I first heard someone say, “I covet your prayers.” I was taught “God forbids coveting, that is, having a sinful desire for anything that belongs to our neighbor.” I would much rather hear, “Please pray for me,” or “I humbly ask for your prayers,” because the word “covet” is colored by its connection to the sin the Lord forbids in the Ninth and Tenth Commandments.

The Lord calls us to have a holy heart. St. Paul rightly diagnoses his own sinful condition and ours, too. If God forbids something, it is sinful by definition. The Lord defines his own terms, like with “covet.” The Lutheran confessors did so. In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (II 47) we hear: “Defects and concupiscence are both sin and punishment.”

“Ignorance of the law is no defense.” The ancient Romans said it as well: Ignorantia juris non excusat. (Ignorance of the law excuses not.)

Jesus’ holy desire is for our salvation because he loves us. Jesus does not compel his would-be disciples to follow him. He suffers himself to be rejected. For example, in Luke 9:59 Jesus said to a man, “‘Follow me.’ But he said, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’” Was this man’s father dead? Had he been buried a first time and the son wish to help transfer his father’s bones to an ossuary? Either way, following Jesus is of prime importance.

As sinners, we are so spiritually dead that we cannot even give our hearts to the Lord. He creates new ones in us!

Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Cast us not away from Your presence, and take not Your Holy Spirit from us. Restore to us the joy of Your salvation, and uphold us with a willing spirit. Amen.

Friday of Lent 1

Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. — John 8:49-55

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law. As true Man, Jesus Christ lived under the Law. But, as our Lutheran Confessions teach, “Christ is not man alone, but God and man in one undivided person. Therefore, He was hardly subject to the Law (because He is Lord of the Law).” (FC:SD III:15)

Yet for our sake Jesus willingly submitted Himself to the Law, obeying the Commandments, including the First. He honored God His Father. He confessed His knowledge of God. He kept His Father’s Word. And He did this for us. Because of His perfect obedience of the Commandments, Jesus Christ was truly the perfect Sacrifice on the cross to pay for our sins and the sins of the whole world.

Therefore, our Confessions continue, “So, because of this complete obedience, which He rendered to His heavenly Father for us by doing and suffering and in living and dying, God forgives our sins. He regards us as godly and righteous, and He eternally saves us.”

Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You, for Your obedience is credited for our righteousness through faith alone. Amen.

Saturday of Lent 1

And God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. “You shall have no other gods before me. “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. — Exodus 20:1-6



Have I expected all good and taken refuge in God alone? Have I trusted and believed Him with my heart? Have I praised other gods when things are well? Have I looked for help from other gods when things are not well?

Have I confessed the one true God alone—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Have I—even by my silence—acknowledged the authority of false gods?

Have I feared God above all things? Have I regarded His holy commands and righteous punishment? Have I treated his commandments lightly? Have I dismissed His threats toward those who break His commandments?

Have I loved God above all things? Have I loved my neighbor in word and deed? Have I loved God in worship and obedience? Have I sought my own good at the expense of God and my neighbor?

Have I trusted God above all things? Have I looked to Him alone for every good gift? Have I trusted in earthly authorities or things to help me?

Have I looked to Jesus Christ alone for my salvation? Have I trusted in my own works and obedience to merit eternal life, even in part?

Gracious and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, forgive our sins of idolatry, and grant us to fear, love, and trust in You above all things; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Thursday of Lent 5

And you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. And you shall not desire your neighbor’s house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.’ “These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. — Deuteronomy 5:21-22



Deuteronomy means “a second telling of the Law” because Moses reads the Ten Commandments to the generation that grew up during Israel’s forty years in the wilderness.

The Lord brought his people out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery and is the same Lord who brings us out of bondage to sin, guilt, death, and Satan.

The Lord gave this people manna and quail and sustained them for a generation in the wilderness. Our Lord Jesus gives us our daily bread, all that we need to support this body and life.

They, like us, broke the Tenth Commandment. In our sinful hearts, God’s good gifts can become targets of jealousy, rivalry, sinful desire, and an occasion to break all of the commandments. The Ninth and Tenth Commandments target our hidden heart, known only to ourselves and to our Lord. If we look good on the outside, we can still be hypocrites inside. Husband or wife, land, employees, animals, and property can all become occasions for idolatry, murder, adultery, lying, cheating, and stealing, sins against God and neighbor.

As Dr. Luther reminds us, God gives us gifts of creation, the First Article of the Creed, “out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me,” as daily bread, “without our prayer, also to all the wicked, but we pray in [the fourth] petition that He would lead us to know it and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.”

Lord, grant us repentance for our covetousness and misuse of Your gifts of daily bread. Grant that we may fear, love, and trust You alone; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Second Commandment



"Blasphemer Stoned" — The son of Shelomith is stoned for blasphemy as an illustration of the violation of the second commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The artist of this engraving is the Monogamist HA.



"Ninth Commandment" — Illustration of the violation of the ninth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet your neighbor's wife."

*"You shall not crave your neighbor's house
Nor covet money, goods, or spouse.
Pray God He would your neighbor bless
As you yourself wish success."
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:10

Many of us learned Luther's "What Is This?" of the Ninth Commandment in this way:

"We should fear and love God that we may not craftily seek to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, nor obtain it by a show of right, but help to be of service to him in keeping it. St. Paul's words to Timothy direct Christians to godliness and contentment. Since the Lord provides a variety of gifts, including spiritual gifts for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7), we can be happy for what the Lord provides our neighbor and content with what the Lord has given us.

Lord God, thank You for Your gifts of inheritance and house. Bless us with contentment with what You provide to us in Your timing according to Your good and gracious will. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Sunday of Lent 2

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.
— Matthew 15:21-28

he gospel appointed for this Sunday reveals to us what Christian perfection is: "Christian perfection is to fear God from the heart . . . and to trust that for Christ's sake we have a God who has been reconciled, to ask of God, and assuredly to expect His aid in all things that, according to our calling, are to be done." The Canaanite woman interceded for her daughter, which was her calling. She kept the Second Commandment; she called upon God's name in her trouble. She kept the Third Commandment; she desired and cherished the crumbs of Her Master's gifts. Nothing deterred her. She trusted despite her lineage, despite the Lord's silence and despite His harsh words. Both commandments are fulfilled by faith; how shall we call upon Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall we gladly hear His Word if it is foolishness to the natural man?

O Christ, You marveled at the faith of the Canaanite woman. Bring Christian perfection to us through Your Holy Word and Sacraments, so that we may call upon You in every trouble and cherish the crumbs of Your Word. Amen.

Monday of Lent 2

And Jephthah made a vow to the Lord, and said, "If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering." — Judges 11:30-31

Jephthah illustrates the spiritual condition of his age: a devout faith nestled in the husk of superstition. God blessed him and raised him up from the dung heap of illegitimacy and placed him as head over Gilead. We see God's Spirit working in and through him as he defeated Ammon. But Jephthah abused God's name in a way that the effects would ring down through the ages. Jephthah made a rash vow, which consigned his daughter, his only child, to a nunnery and to a perpetual state of virginity in the tabernacle. This deprived Jephthah of grandchildren and denied his daughter the God-given estate of wifery and motherhood.

There was a way out of this rash, evil oath. Leviticus 5:4 says that a thoughtless oath can be forgiven by means of the sin offering. Jephthah was either ignorant (an unlikely possibility, given his through knowledge of the Scriptures) or he believed that the force of his oath overrode the primordial commandments of God. To bind one's self to a silly vow is reminiscent of paganism. This incident sheds light upon the low state of spiritual life at that time and reveals in what manner vows were made and kept. The customs and traditions of the fathers had become warped and externalized.

The tragedy exerted such an impact upon the nation that it became a custom in Israel that the young girls were sent away for four days each year to lament the fate of Jephthah's daughter. O Father, protect us from the profaning of Your name!

Lord, guide our hearts and tongues to let our yes be yes, and our no, no. Save us from silly vows and bring us to repentance when we abuse Your Holy Name. Amen.

Wednesday of Lent 5

But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. — 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Sinful desire motivated those that coveted the Lord's vineyard in Isaiah 5:8-12. King Ahab, ruler of the northern kingdom, Israel, is an example of this sin. He coveted the vineyard of a man named Naboth and obtained it, but only in a way that seemed right. When Naboth refused to sell, Queen Jezebel told people to lie about Naboth, accusing him of a capital crime. Ahab got the vineyard after Naboth was executed for an imaginary crime. His coveting had led to breaking other commandments as well.

Jesus himself condemned the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:14 (KJV) for pretending in their long prayers and for devouring the estates of widows. They craved the attention and the property of others.

In all these cases, people who should have known better failed to keep the Ninth Commandment in addition to failing to obey God's command to be holy as He is holy in Leviticus 19:2.

(continued on next page)

Ninth Commandment



"Jacob's Flock Prospers" — Jacob places striped branches before Laban's unspotted sheep and goats in order to increase the number of spotted and dark colored animals in his own herd. The image is used here to illustrate a violation of the ninth commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's house. This woodcut is associated with the monogram HA.



"Second Commandment" — Illustrating the violation of the second commandment, "You shall not misuse God's name" or "take God's name in vain." Two figures approach a king on throne.

*"Do not My holy name disgrace,
Do not My Word of truth debase.
But you shall fully trust in Me
Which I Myself say and do."
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:3

Tuesday of Lent 2

Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me . . . If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. — John 8:49, 54-55

Jesus kept the Second Commandment in so many ways that to list them all would fill the whole world with books. One such way that our Lord kept the Second Commandment was by teaching and keeping true, pure doctrine. The Jews claimed that God was their Father, but they showed by their teaching and by their life that they didn't even know God. In fact, they were children of the devil and followed their father's activities of lying and murdering. They placed heavy burdens on men and yet would not raise a single finger to lift it themselves. They painted over God's law with man-made loopholes and cared more about the tithes of cumin than about love and justice. Pride and precedence of place meant more than ministry, that is, serving one another. In short, these men who were supposed to be defenders and promoters of God's name lied about God. That's what false doctrine Isaiah False doctrine is lies about God which are worse than refuse; they are poison.

But Jesus was not a liar like these men. Our Lord knew His Father in heaven from all eternity. He knew Him and loved Him. To deny that would be to lie and Jesus is no liar. He knew His Father. And He kept and guarded His Word in His teaching, preaching, and life. This true teaching honored the Heavenly Father because it was true. This is why true doctrine is so necessary. It not only saves souls, but it also honors God's name.

Lord Jesus, You honored Your Father in heaven by true and right teaching. Help us so to study Your Holy Word that we too might glorify Your name among those who would dishonor You by false and pernicious teaching. Amen.

Bigger than lies, partial truths, misleading information, and celebrity silliness is the biggest and most dangerous kind of lie of all: lies about God. Jesus addresses false teaching and false teachers and false accusations against himself. May God keep our tongues from such sin.

Lord Jesus Christ, govern and preserve us now and evermore in body and soul. Amen.

*“Bear no false witness nor defame
Your neighbor nor destroy his name,
But view him in the kindest way;
Speak truth in all that you say.”
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:9

Third Commandment



"Third Commandment" — As a congregation gathers for Christian worship on Sunday, a man works outside in violation of the third commandment: "Thou shalt remember the Sabbath." The artist of this engraving is the Monogamist HA.



"Trial of Elders" — The elders are convicted of bearing false witness against Susanna by the prophet Daniel. This is used to illustrate the violation of the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

Lord, keep us unstained from the world, and grant us bridled tongues, that we may be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, yet equipped to speak when we must; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Monday of Lent 5

[Unto the wicked God says:] “You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son. These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. — Psalm 50:19-21



he Eighth Commandment takes a beating in social media. It is also true that the Eighth Commandment is not properly employed on occasions when we should speak up. Dr. Luther’s Large Catechism is a great way to receive proper teaching on this matter:

“In the first place...This applies to the public courts of justice, where a poor, innocent man is accused and oppressed by false witnesses in order to be punished in his body, property, or honor” (paragraph 257).

“Next, this commandment extends very much further, if we are to apply it to spiritual jurisdiction... For wherever there are godly preachers and Christians, they must bear the sentence before the world that calls them heretics, apostates, and indeed, instigators and desperately wicked unbelievers. Besides, God’s Word must suffer in the most shameful and hateful manner, being persecuted, blasphemed, contradicted, perverted, and falsely quoted and interpreted...” (paragraph 262).

“In the third place...this commandment forbids all sins of the tongue [James 3], by which we may injure or confront our neighbor... Here belongs particularly the detestable, shameful vice of speaking behind a person’s back and slandering, to which the devil spurs us on, and of which much could be said... To avoid this vice we should note that no one is allowed publicly to judge and reprove his neighbor—even though he may see him sin—unless he has a command to judge and to reprove...” (para. 263-265).

“We should never deprive anyone of his honor or good name unless it is first taken away from him publicly. False witness,’ then, is everything that cannot be properly proved” (paragraphs 270-271).

Wednesday of Lent 2

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. — Hebrews 10:24-25



here is no distinct dividing line between the Second and Third Commandments. Both deal with God’s name and His Word. Both speak of the individual’s private and public confession. The Third Commandment, however, introduces something not really enunciated by the preceding commandments. It has a public and corporate character.

Right worship must be private and public. The public exercise of religion consists in a pious concern for the maintenance of true religion, in going to church and hearing the Word (Acts 15:12), in public prayers (1 Timothy 2:1 f.), and in the use of the sacraments (1 Corinthians 11:18-19). Private worship consists in domestic discipline (Proverbs 1:8), the exercise of piety among children (Proverbs 22:6), in innocence of life (James 1:27), in household harmony (Romans 12:18). How is this done? By reviewing the Word preached publicly, the study of the catechism, the searching of conscience, and by confirming our amendment of life.

Public and private worship must grow together, or they will wither apart. Public worship apart from private worship degenerates into externalism and religious hypocrisy. Private worship apart from public worship is schism, that is, a rending of the body of Christ. This isn’t just “me and Jesus.” If you are in Christ, you are connected to the rest of His body, that is, the Church. It is also a refusal to obey God’s command and receive the gifts He gives in the public service of the Word and Sacraments.

Private worship is dependent upon public worship. This is why our Lord Jesus instituted the public preaching office, so that we might be baptized, taught God’s Word, hear the absolution, and receive Jesus’ body and blood under the bread and wine. May God draw us to the public service of the church, so that we might be fruitful in our private devotions as well.

Heavenly Father, bring Your Kingdom among us through faithful ministers of the Word, so that we might believe and lead godly lives. Amen.

Thursday of Lent 2

And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built. — 1 Kings 6:7

Ring Solomon's greatest achievement was the construction of the temple. Following the plans of David, Solomon procured the choicest cedars from the gentile believer, King Hiram. Gold overlaid the Holy of Holies and the floors of both the inner and outer sanctuary. The choicest stone was quarried for the foundation. The walls had carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. All in all, it took Solomon about seven years to complete this massive project. The cost of the temple was so high that King Solomon gave Hiram twenty towns in Galilee as payment. What ruler today would trade people and territory in order to build a permanent house for the Lord of Hosts?

All of this, of course, reveals how King Solomon kept the Third Commandment. He contributed toward the maintenance of the Church. But this passage for today's meditation shows how precisely Solomon revered God and His house. No avoidable sound was heard within the walls of the temple out of reverence for the Lord of Hosts.

This pious and faithful act of Solomon ought to also inform the way in which we conduct ourselves in God's house. The following advice, of course, does not apply to the very young or the simple. When we enter the nave, the ship of Christ, we would do well to be silent, for doesn't God say: "Be still and know that I am God?" We are surrounded by a commotion of noise in society. God's house is the place where all noise ceases, for God is not the Author of confusion but of peace. God's house is set apart because His Word is preached and His sacraments are administered there. Therefore, as the hymn says: let all mortal flesh keep silence.

Heavenly Father, King Solomon built a house for Your Great Name, so that Israel might receive the forgiveness of sins. Teach us to value Your house as a place where our sins are forgiven and help us to show heartfelt reverence toward You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Sunday of Lent 5

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." — John 8:42-45

A pastor once taught that the most dangerous thing we will ever encounter is a pastor who doesn't tell the truth. Those who heard Jesus in John 8 claimed Abraham as their father, yet were spiritually children of the father of lies, the devil. In order to protect their status, their teaching, their position, these leaders had to deny who Jesus is, what He could do, and how He did it. They can't even stand to listen to Jesus!

A theologian of the cross calls a thing what it is. Sin is condemned as sin. Righteousness is commended and is to be imitated. The theologian of glory looks for answers beyond the revealed word of God, calls sin "righteousness" and calls true righteousness "sin." If you have any doubt we live in a fallen world, consider how much culture in our nation has changed for the worse in your lifetime.

Faith, informed by the Word, and by the power of God the Holy Spirit confesses, "Jesus Christ is Lord." Even if we remained silent, the stones and all of creation would cry out, "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Lord Jesus, forgive us for Your own sake. Amen.

Eighth Commandment



"Susanna's Trial" — A depiction of the trial of Susanna as an illustration of the violation of the eighth commandment: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." The artist of this engraving is the Monogamist HA.



"Third Commandment" — Christians gather to hear the preaching of their faith, thus illustrating their obedience to the third commandment to sanctify the Sabbath.

*"You shall observe the worship day
That peace may fill your home, & pray
And put aside the work you do,
So that God may work in you."
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:4

Friday of Lent 2

27 And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." — Mark 2:27-28

In this passage, the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of profaning the sabbath by plucking kernels of wheat and eating them. To the legalist, this is a gross breach of the ceremonial Law. But Jesus smashes the legalism of the Pharisees and ours by examples from Scripture.

First, Jesus pointed them to David's eating of the shewbread. As we know, David had a place in salvation history. This position was greater than any ritualistic ordinance. It was therefore the duty of the priests at that time to preserve the lives of David and his attendants on account of their calling. This must apply to Jesus and His disciples in a greater measure. Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. And the disciples will be sent to preach the saving gospel to all the nations. They too occupy a place in salvation history, just as David did.

Matthew includes another argument that Jesus used. Here, Jesus points to the priests. On the Sabbath, besides the regular sacrifices, they had to sacrifice two lambs, a grain offering, and a drink offering. They are enjoined by God's Word to break the Third Commandment! If the priests are thus guiltless, how much more must this apply to the disciples who were in the service of Him Who is greater than the temple!

Jesus thus revealed the Pharisees' ignorance of the true and real Word of God in the Word. The Sabbath is for us. It was a day of bodily rest, but, more importantly, it was a day of spiritual nourishment through the Word. May God remove both our legalism and our laziness, so that we might use the Sabbath as it was intended!

O Jesus Christ, You are the Lord of the Sabbath. You have given us the Sabbath day for our good, so that we might rest in You both in body and in soul. Keep us from legalism we pray and give to us true knowledge of Your Will through Your Word. Amen.



"Seventh Commandment" — An illustration of the violation of the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." As one man sleeps on his bed, another removes coins from his moneybag.

*"You shall not steal or take away
What others worked for night & day,
But open wide a gen'rous hand
And help the poor in the land."
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:8

Saturday of Lent 4

“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.” — Psalm 51:3-4

Recognizing that marriage and human sexuality are gifts from God, given by Him and in the order that He has established, we can ask ourselves:

Have I failed to love my spouse as God has intended, living instead for myself? Have I lived an unchaste life in thought, word, or deed? Have I engaged in physical actions reserved for marriage with a man or woman to whom I am not married? Have I ridiculed marriage by my ambivalence to divorce, cohabitation, same-sex “marriage,” or infidelity? Have I engaged my eyes, ears, mind, and members to things which are not in keeping with God’s design for my body or for chastity? Have I failed to pray for my spouse?

Recognizing that all I have, my goods and property are all gifts from God as my neighbors’ possessions are to him, we can ask ourselves:

Have I stolen from my neighbor, either explicitly or by deception? Have I cheated my neighbor? Have I been lazy in my work and thus robbed from my employer his money and time? Have I paid what is fair to those who I owe? Have I been silent when I have known others have stolen? Have I stolen information from other people’s work (plagiarism or breaking copyright law)? Have I been negligent or close-fisted when it comes to giving to the Lord? Have I failed to help my neighbor when he is in need when I have been given the opportunity and the ability to help?

O Lord, have mercy upon us! You see we live in the midst of so many sins. We have abused the gifts that You have given and lived for ourselves and not for our neighbor. We beseech You to have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us in the way of life-everlasting. Deliver us for the sake of the all-atoning death of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Saturday of Lent 2

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. — Exodus 20:7-8

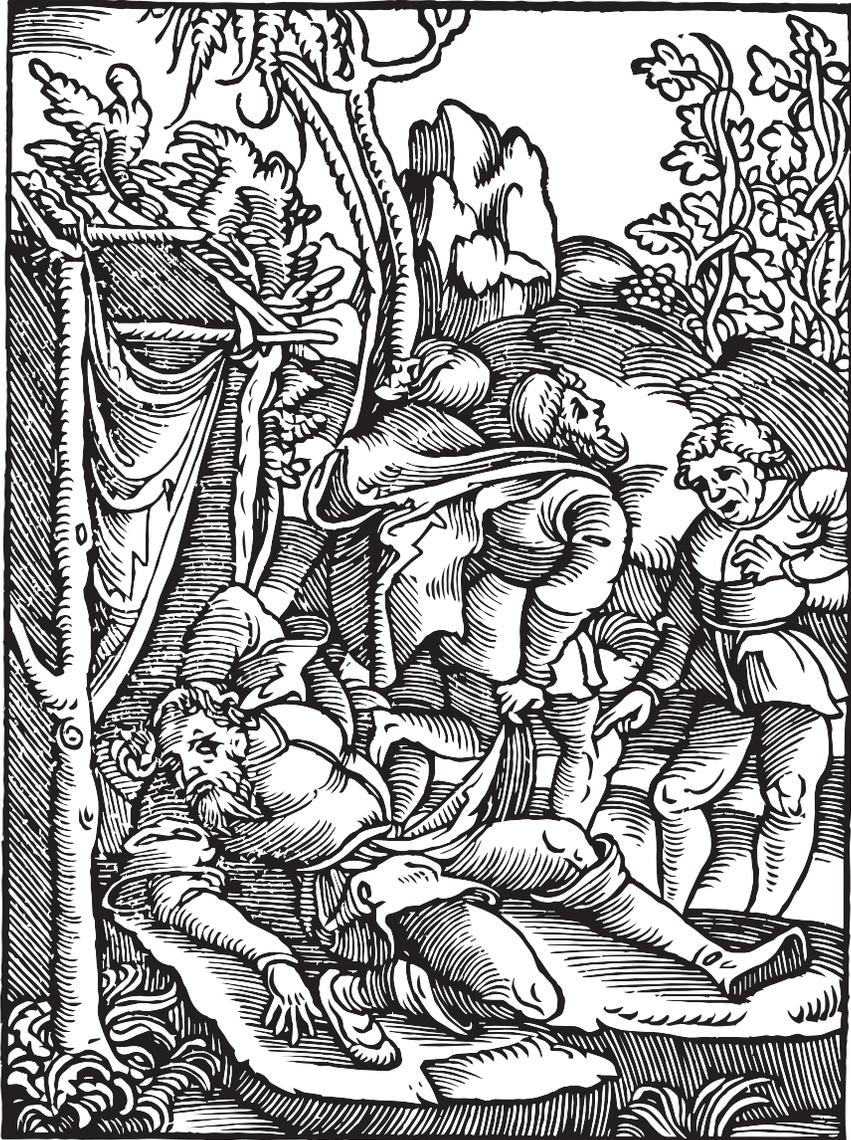
Have I used holy words or holy names in a light-hearted way? Have I used them in anger, in mockery, thoughtlessly, or for superstitious reasons? Have I sworn carelessly or falsely? Have I taken oaths frivolously or even lied under oath intentionally? Have I kept my vows (baptismal vows, confirmation vows, marriage vows)? Have I received the holy absolution or the holy sacrament of the altar unworthily (mindless of the gift and my need for it)? Have I listened to and read God’s Word diligently? When the precious Name of Jesus is not used rightly, it is misused. Have I properly called on my heavenly Father through His only Son Jesus Christ and had faith that He hears and answers my prayer? Have I called on His Name wrongly through false worship?

Have I neglected the reading of the Bible thinking that hearing it on Sunday is enough? Do I let other daily activities take precedence over prayer and meditation on God’s Word? Have I kept every day holy with the reading and meditation upon God’s Word? Has the hearing and reading of God’s Word become boring and meaningless to me? Have I despised the preaching of His Word by not coming to church as regularly as I should? Have I let my mind wander when I am at church and become distracted by my thoughts? Have I been an unfaithful witness to others in our congregation by my absence from the Divine Service? Have I gone to church only out of habit, or because I was forced? Do I get bored with the sermon, the holy liturgy, or the celebration of the sacrament?

O Lord Jesus Christ, We humbly repent of all evils we have done against Your name and against Your Word. We repent of all the good we have not done in praying, confessing, or hearing Your Word gladly. O Lord, have mercy! Wash us with Your Holy blood and grant us Your Holy Spirit so that we might amend our lives. Amen.

Fourth Commandment

APRIL 5



"Noah's Drunkenness" — Ham dishonors Noah by pointing out his nakedness, but Shem and Japheth cover their father with a sheet. This illustrates the breaking of the fourth commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother." The artist of this engraving is the Monogamist HA.

Friday of Lent 4

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich. — 2 Corinthians 8:9

What is grace but the undeserved favor of God, given to us as a gift? Grace is free for us, but that does not mean that grace is not costly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is seen in what He gave for us. For our sake, though rich, He became poor. That is, on our behalf He in fact took the debt that we owe for our sin. It was credited to His account so that what is His, His righteousness and holiness, might be credited to us. That is the true riches that we have as Christians: the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. It comes to us free of charge, by grace, though it cost our Lord everything. But such is the love of God shown to us in the Son, Jesus Christ. And that love of God is perfect. He keeps the commandments for us perfectly. He loves His neighbor, you, in not stealing from you, but supporting you with all you need for your body and soul by His sacrificial death for your sins. Now we, who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, have all our earthly goods and riches, whatever the Lord may bless us with, for the sake of the atoning sacrifice. True, God gives these things to all people, even without our prayer or knowledge of Him, but we, who are in Christ Jesus, know why we have what we have. It is all for the sake of Christ. We therefore receive it with thanksgiving and seek to love our neighbor in supporting and helping him in his need.

Lord God, heavenly Father, though Your Son was rich, yet for our sake He became poor, giving Himself into death for our sins. Grant that we may ever be mindful of His great love to us, receive our daily bread with thanksgiving, and love and support our neighbor in his need. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Thursday of Lent 4

But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? — 1 John 3:17

Everything you have is a gift from your Father in heaven. This includes your possessions, however great or small. These are to be received as such, with thanksgiving and with the realization that you deserve nothing that you have been given. Your money and goods are given to you as a gift and as such they are protected by the Seventh Commandment to not steal, that is, to “not take our neighbor’s money or possessions or get them in any dishonest way.” Yet there is even more to this commandment than the prohibition to not steal. When we recognize that God has given us all that we have, to be stewards of these possessions, we also see that God has given us these things so that we might use them to serve our neighbor. We know this is what we ought to do, not simply refraining from taking our neighbor’s things but also to love him by helping and being of service to him in keeping them. What then keeps us from doing this? It is our selfish fear. It is our doubt that God really does provide all things and will continue to keep us in both body and soul. We must repent. We have failed to love our neighbor as ourselves when it comes to this commandment. In fact, we will never love enough or give enough to keep this commandment perfectly. But Christ has. He, who gave Himself for our sins will graciously forgive our sins. We are now free to love and provide for all people and especially for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, for such is not our love, but the love of God which abides in us.

O God, the Giver of all good things, grant that we recognize your mercies, give thanks for your abundant blessings, and help our neighbor in times of need, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Sunday of Lent 3

But [Jesus] said, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” — Luke 11:28

Today we hear of Jesus casting out a mute demon and He is accused of casting out demons by Beelzebul (v. 15). After Jesus explains that “a divided household falls,” a woman from the crowd says, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!” Jesus turns her, and our, attention not to His mother Mary, but to those who hear the Word of God. For even Jesus’ mother submitted herself to the Word of God spoken to her by the angel (see Luke 1:38).

Today we turn our ears away from the ramblings of the world to God’s Word. As God says through Moses: you “shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:7). The Ten Commandments of God still stand today. We are blessed, not because we are able to keep the Law of God, but because of Jesus who keeps them in our stead. Now we can treasure God’s Word, including the Ten Commandments that show us our sin and our need for a Savior. For not only does the Word of God bring terror by the knowledge of sin, it also shows us the Savior. By His Word He casts out demons and by His Word our sins are forgiven, cast out as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12).

Jesus does what we cannot in keeping the Law of God perfectly. He honors His mother Mary and heals those who are sick and in need of mercy, caring for their bodies as well as their souls. He gives us our daily bread, all that is needed for the support and needs of the body, and by His Word He gives us the bread of life that forgives us all our sins.

Gracious Lord, You give us Your Word that declares us righteous. Grant us to treasure in our hearts all that Your saving Word gives us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Monday of Lent 3

And they did not understand the saying that [Jesus] spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. — Luke 2:50-51

he Fourth Commandment says, “Honor your father and your mother.” Jesus’ mother has the great distinction and blessing of being the Mother of God. Joseph had the privilege of being the guardian of God’s only-begotten Son. Luther writes in the Large Catechism: “To the position of fatherhood and motherhood God has given special distinction above all positions that are beneath it: He does not simply command us to love our parents, but to honor them...For it is a far higher thing to honor someone than to love someone, because honor includes not only love, but also modesty, humility, and submission to a majesty hidden in them” (LC I:105).

Jesus submits to Mary and Joseph. He does not despise or anger them even though He is God in the flesh. He honors them and submits to them. In every way Jesus puts Himself under the Law of God so that even at 12 years old, He submits to them. In Mary and Joseph and in every mother and father the majesty of God is hidden. He has placed mother and father alone to be the authority and caregivers of children, those to whom God has blessed their union with such a gift. All other authority in this world has its basis in the blessed estate of holy matrimony. Only in the union of man and woman as husband and wife does the rest of fallen creation have order. It is under the headship of the father to guide and teach his children the Word of God. As Luther heads each section of the Small Catechism, “As the house father should teach it in a simple way to his children.”

Heavenly Father, You give authority to fathers and mothers and hide Your divine majesty within them, honoring them. Give to each of us humility that we would always honor those whom You place over us, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday of Lent 4

“And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” — Luke 19:1-10

here are a couple of things missing from that Sunday School song about Zacchaeus, the wee little man who sought to see Jesus. It misses that Zacchaeus received the Lord joyfully at His invitation, that he believed in the Christ and it was counted to him as righteousness, and that, being thus justified by faith, Zacchaeus bore fruit, keeping the Seventh Commandment by helping and being of service to his neighbor in regard to wealth and possessions. The Lord came to seek and save the lost, and He did just that with Zacchaeus. He called sinners to repentance, and this small-of-stature tax-collector was called also to faith in Christ. He was a son of Abraham by faith and he was an heir of the promise of everlasting life.

We as well have been called by our Lord. He calls us to repentance for our many sins. We may not be tax-collectors, but we have all sinned. We are guilty of breaking the Ten Commandments as much as Zacchaeus, but just like Zacchaeus, we have a Savior in Christ Jesus, who makes us children of God through our baptism into Christ. As children of God, the riches of His grace are poured upon us, we receive not what we deserve for our sins but we receive His grace and favor. And so we too, like Zacchaeus live as the children of God by loving God and our neighbor, bearing the good fruit and doing those good works that God, in His Word, has prepared for us to do.

O Lord, as Your Son once called Zacchaeus to repentance and faith, may Your Holy Spirit work in our hearts that, repenting of our sins, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Seventh Commandment



"Achan's Sin" — Joshua confronts Achan about taking spoil from battle (foreground), Achan hides the spoil (background right) and is stoned for his sin (background left). This illustrates the breaking of the seventh commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." The artist of this engraving is the Monogamist HA.



"Fourth Commandment" — The son who washes the feet of his father renders obedience to the fourth commandment, "You shall honor your father and your mother."

*"You are to honor and obey
Your father, mother, ev'ry day,
Serve them each way that comes to hand;
You'll then live long in the land."
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:5

Tuesday of Lent 4

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. — Ephesians 5:25-27

Marriage is a picture of the perfect love that Christ has shown to His bride, the Church. The Church upholds the sanctity of marriage and keeps the Sixth Commandment both in teaching and in living because it is good, and it upholds this image of Christ and His Church. When husbands fail to love their wives and when wives fail to love their husbands, when marriages fail and when we live our lives outside of this set order that God has given, we sin, and we mar this image of Christ and the Church. We of course cannot live up to the standard that we see in Christ, but we are called to fidelity and to daily contrition and repentance. We turn to Christ and see in Him not only an example of love and fidelity, but also our Savior from sin. Where husbands have been faithless and failed to love their wives as they should, Christ's faithfulness and love covers their sins. In fact, whenever anyone sins (husband, wife, son, daughter) the blood of Christ covers their sins. Our love fails, but the love of Christ succeeds, and His merit is imputed to us so that we are presented in splendor, without any spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish on account of Christ's love shown to us. Thus, we live as ones redeemed, loving one another, and husbands loving their wives, as Christ has loved us and given Himself for us.

Heavenly Father, in marriage You have given us a beautiful image of Christ's love for His Church. Grant us fidelity in our love and a never-ending trust in Christ's love toward us in giving Himself for our sins. Through the same, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday of Lent 3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." — Ephesians 6:1-3



The Law offers no promises, except the Fourth Commandment. Older versions of the Small Catechism included this promise as it is in Exodus 20:12 and in the text for today. Newer versions of the Small Catechism do not include this promise (may it be restored!). The understanding of this commandment is simple: parents are to teach their children how to survive and live in a fallen sinful world and children are to heed their parents' instruction by honoring it. When this occurs and children learn those lessons and obey their parents' wisdom, they do survive and are blessed with a long life.

Parents teach their children to look both ways before crossing the street. If this simple wisdom is not heeded by children, even when they are grown, getting hit by a bus will greatly increase the chance of not living a long life. Knowledge and wisdom passed on from one generation to the next continues to honor those who have gone before us. Since this is true of worldly wisdom, how much more so those who have gone before in the faith? Parents, especially fathers, are to teach the faith to their children. When that heavenly wisdom is heeded, eternal life in the presence of Jesus is the promise. The baptismal rite in Lutheran Worship included the phrase to parents and sponsors: "give your counsel and aid that they be brought up in the true knowledge and worship of God and be taught the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer; and that, as they grow in years, you place into their hands the Holy Scriptures, bring them to the services of God's house..." (LW p. 200). May this be true for our households as well.

Lord God, Your Word is a light to our path. Give parents wisdom to teach their children Your heavenly wisdom, the foolishness of the cross, and thereby gain eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Fifth Commandment



"Cain and Abel" — Cain murders Abel after God favor's Abel's sacrifice over his own as an illustration of the violation of the fifth commandment: "Thou Shalt Not Kill". The artist of this engraving is the Monogamist HA.



"Sixth Commandment" — An illustration of the violation of the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

*"Be faith to your marriage vow;
No lust or impure thoughts allow.
Keep all your conduct free from sin
By self-controlled discipline."
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:7

Monday of Lent 4

[Jesus] answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." — Matthew 19:4-6



he Sixth Commandment protects the gift of human sexuality and marriage so that we might "lead a sexually pure and decent life in what we say and do and husband and wife love and honor one another" (Small Catechism). We need this commandment, for in our sin we do the opposite. We live in a world darkened to these truths of marriage and sexuality, a perverse world. We of ourselves are not exempt from the evils of this world but are prone to lust and all sorts of depravity. Even those who think they do well must be on guard. The good gifts of marriage and sexuality are constantly under attack from without and from within. They are misused and abused. Be it homosexuality, cohabitation, divorce, or any number of things, be they subtle or explicit, whenever we stray from God's teaching we do wrong. Marriage and sexuality are God's to define and His to give. He does so from the very beginning, at creation. That is where Jesus also directs our attention, for these things are good, good for the man, good for the woman, good for the family, and good for society. It is God who creates and makes these things. Where we have sinned in this regard we are to repent, seek His forgiveness for Christ's sake, and strive to live chaste and decent lives in what we say and do and to love one another.

O Lord, You are the creator and the giver of all gifts. Preserve the gift of marriage among us. Guard us from temptations to misuse and abuse Your gifts. Forgive us when we fail and keep us all in chastity and purity all the days of our lives, that we might live lives wholly pleasing to You, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday of Lent 3

Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" — Genesis 4:8-9



he murder of Abel is compounded by the lie of Cain. He poses his own question to God that is echoed today: "Am I my brother's keeper?" The short answer is: yes, you are. God is the giver of life and so God guards and protects all life with the Fifth Commandment. The life of men is unique in all aspects. Only man is formed by God from the dust of the earth; only man had the breath of life breathed into his nostrils by God; only man (and the woman taken from him) is given a special status to commune with God.

Many people become more worked up or upset over the death of a puppy or a kitten than of a human life. The horrors of abortion, murder, suicide, doctor assisted suicide, euthanasia, and now infanticide, all show how people still ask the question of Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" St. John takes it a step further: Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer (1 John 3:15, see also Matthew 5:21-22). It's not just physical acts of death but also that murder comes from the heart (Matthew 15:19). Any hatred or physical harm to the neighbor is a sin against one whom God has created and for whom Christ has died.

Life is what is protected by the Fifth Commandment, from conception until natural death. God would have us protect our neighbors' physical well-being before our own. You are indeed your brother's keeper. When someone sins against us by causing us physical harm or hates us, we remember the words from the hymn: "Abel's blood for vengeance Pleaded to the skies..." (LSB 433:4). Genesis doesn't say that. Abel's blood could also be pleading for mercy. "But the blood of Jesus For our pardon cries." Of that there can be no doubt.

Holy Lord, You give life and You take life. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Amen.

Friday of Lent 3

And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. — Luke 22:50-51



In the night when our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed the disciples took along two swords (Luke 22:38). One of those swords was put to use as the soldiers came to arrest Jesus when Judas betrayed Him with a kiss. Peter used a sword to cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. We even know the servant's name: Malchus (John 18:10). Peter attacked Malchus and caused physical harm to him. Jesus would have none of it and rebuked Peter and healed Malchus. Even at the time of His betrayal, Jesus performed a healing miracle like He had done for so many throughout the Gospels.

Jesus helps us in every physical need, as He did for Malchus. Peter tried to defend Jesus with the sword, but Jesus' kingdom is not of this world or He would have twelve legions of angels sent to defend Him (Matthew 26:53). None would speak up to defend Him as He stood before Caiaphas and Pilate. None would come to Jesus' aid on the cross. And it's a good thing too because Jesus' innocent suffering and death is the means that God used to purchase and redeem us lost and condemned creatures.

Jesus kept the Fifth Commandment in our place even as He was betrayed; He healed Malchus and went willingly to the cross to lay down His life (John 10:18) for the sake of the whole world, that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Lord of life, as You once breathed life into the dust of the earth to form man and gave him life, so You continue to give life, knitting children together in their mother's womb. Give us the courage to speak for those who cannot that all life may be defended from the wiles of the devil who does not want anyone to turn to You and live. Beat down Satan under our feet that we would always overcome and obtain the victory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Sunday of Lent 4

“When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, ‘This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!’ Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.” — John 6:14-15



People's perceptions and expectations of Jesus and who He really is are often vastly different. After Jesus miraculously fed the crowd they marveled at His great deed and thought Him the Prophet, a new Moses who could provide for them as Moses had done for their fathers in the wilderness. They sought to take Him and make Him their king by force. But our Lord would have none of that, for He does the will of His Father. He is the Prophet and the King, but not at all how the way the people wanted. He is the Prophet who faced rejection and the King who is enthroned upon a cross. But in going to the cross, He has provided something greater than manna in the wilderness or temporary sustenance. He has won forgiveness and eternal life for the world. For Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh” (John 6:51). From Jesus' own lips we know who He is and what He came and still comes to bring. He provides for all our needs of body and soul.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Sixth Commandment



"David and Bathsheba" — As David looks down from a palace balcony, Bathsheba bathes in a pool, accompanied by her attendants. It illustrates the commandment against committing adultery. The artist of this engraving is the Monogamist HA.



"Fifth Commandment" — Illustration of a man violating the fifth commandment, "Thou shalt not murder."

*"You shall not murder, hurt, nor hate;
Your anger dare not dominate.
Be kind and patient; help, defend,
And treat your foe as your friend."
Have mercy, Lord!*

LSB 581:6

