



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

October 2, 2011: Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time ***Felipe Salinas***

RCL: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20; Psalm 19; Philippians 3:4b-14; Matthew 21:33-46
LM: Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:9, 12, 13-14, 15-16, 19-20; Philippians 4:6-9;
Matthew 21:33-43

It is hard to think of a biblical passage more well-known than the Ten Commandments. They are so familiar that we run the risk of not really allowing them to speak to us after repeated hearings. When we consider fundamental readings like the Decalogue in the context of a world that still hungers for bread and justice, clearly we must reexamine and mine these readings once again. This passage is central in the narrative establishing the covenant between God and Israel. For the Israelites, the commandments gather together the core requirements of their side of the covenant.

A common approach distinguishes the first four commandments as focusing on the relationship of Israel to God, while the remaining six treat matters dealing with relationships within the community. Before Israel is admonished not to harbor false gods, they are reminded it is the Lord, their God, “who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that place of slavery” (v. 2, NAB) who is speaking to them. The context for all that follows is this fundamental act of redemption, the Exodus. Israel honors this redeeming God when it does not take God's name in vain and when it keeps the Sabbath day holy. They do this not simply because they are commanded to do so but because their relationship with God has been forged in the slavery endured in Egypt and in their subsequent freedom, done through the hand of God and not through any actions of their own. The initiative has been God's all along. Their worship should be an expression of gratitude and deepening intimacy. But their intimacy with God cannot be divorced from their relationship with one another, for the remaining commandments demonstrate what follows from a covenant relationship with God. If they are to be partners with God in this covenant, they are not to kill, to testify falsely, or to covet what others have. Doing any of these things not only destroys their human community but also breaks the covenant with God.

What do the commandments mean to us in a world where so many still lack food, clean water, and access to healthcare and basic education? Especially in view of the even more direct way in which Jesus connects love of God and love of neighbor, isn't our fundamental relationship with God compromised - rendered less than it should be - as long as we allow such fundamental affronts to basic justice to persist?

When our son Ben was in his early teens, he became intrigued by Heifer International, which provides farm animals to poor families around the world. These animals not only produce milk or eggs, but their offspring also are shared with neighbors to promote ongoing community development. As we approached the Christmas season, Ben decided to organize a family contribution to buy an animal for a Heifer International community, encouraging us all to remember others at that time of year. Ben e-mailed his uncles, aunts, and



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cousins with his plan, and on Christmas Day, at our family gathering, he proudly announced that they'd raised nearly \$100 and that the contribution would soon be on its way! Ben's effort reminded us that our prosperity and life are gifts we must use for others who still lack life's basic necessities, connecting love of God and love of neighbor.

The parable of the Wicked Tenants in Matthew's Gospel concludes an exchange between Jesus and Jerusalem's religious leaders concerning the source of his authority. Jesus' point in the parable is that it doesn't matter what you profess to believe if your actions don't conform to those stated beliefs. The issue is faithful stewardship: how do we use what God has entrusted to our care? Perhaps we need to take inventory; do we even recognize that what we think is "ours" really belongs to God? The chief priests and Pharisees realize that the parable is about them. Their response is to lie in wait, fearing the crowds that regard Jesus as a prophet.

Are we like these fearful leaders? How receptive are we to God's Word? Are we open to hearing the challenge to live faithfully, or do we instead choose self-interest and personal gain? Being a faithful tenant means recognizing our utter dependency on God's grace for all that we have and are. More than that, it also requires that we not squander the gifts we've been given, because, ultimately, God's gifts are to be given away in the service of God's people, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Children's Time

Written by Marc Miller

Explain to the children about the Ten Commandments-how the first four pertain to our relationship with God and the other six to our relationship with one another. You might even write these out on "tablets," with these headings: "Getting along with God" and "Getting along with others." Think through the "Getting along with others" tablet with them. What happens if we respect our parents? What if we don't? What happens if we steal, kill, envy, lie? What if we don't? It's all about living in peace with one another.

Ask what happens if people don't have enough food. Is there more of a chance that they might lie or steal if they're hungry or they have family members who are hungry? Fighting hunger and working for justice are keys to getting along with others. Remember, too, that getting along with God helps us in getting along with others. Through Jesus, God always gets along with us, even when we don't hold up our end of the relationship!



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Musical Suggestions

Prepared by Larry Hollar

God of Abraham and Sarah-NCH 20

Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation-GC 662

O Christ, the Great Foundation-NCH 387

How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord-PH 419

Reflection from Hunger for the Word, Year A

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