

Sermon: 3rd Sunday in Lent

Text: Exodus 20:1-17 (v.2)

Theme: The Lord loves us and gives us His Commandments

Goal: God shows His love for us through the Commandments, preventing us from damage.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: We live in a time that everything must be polite and politically correct. It seems that there are no absolute truths anymore, but everything is relative. *Our generation makes our excuses and justification to the point at which nothing is categorically wrong, except perhaps saying that something is wrong* (Phil Brandt). So, if you are asked if something is wrong or right, you probably will answer: It depends... We experienced this at our last Bible Study when we discussed what can be done inside the church...

What about the Ten Commandments? Are they still valid? Or are they just suggestions, guidelines that can be followed or not, depending on the circumstances? They are very strict, and they don't give an alternative: You shall not! You shall not! You shall not!

One of the reasons why our society is morally degenerating is because sin is no sin anymore. What was a terrible sin in the past is fashion now; and many churches are conniving at that.

We believe that the Word of God is unchangeable, and that the Ten Commandments are still valid as they were when God gave them to Moses and when Jesus reinterpreted them in the New Testament. Our attitude toward them determines how close or how far we are from trusting God's Word and His good plans for us.

I – God saved us

First of all, the Ten Commandments are not just a set of rules established by Moses to control the people. They are the will of God, who introduces Himself saying: "I am the Lord your God, who

brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” He is not one God among many. He is not like the gods of the Egyptians, worshiped with high respect that time, but who are now nothing but part of the Ancient History. He is the living God, who showed His power and His love for His people, bringing them out of the slavery in Egypt with a mighty hand and marvellous signs, and is worshiped by us till now. He accomplished the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to deliver His people and to give them the Promised Land. Now, (He says), that you are free, walk in my ways!

Maybe we can make a comparison: If some of you adopted a street child, what would happen? The kid never had a warm bed, a good shower, regular food on the table... He will need to change his habits, and this is a process and takes time. But the child is not just a new pet at home that can be ruled: You shall not, you shall not... He will need lots of love, hugs, kisses, patience... to be sure of your intentions and to trust you. After a while he will pick up the pace, not forced by the law, but out of love for you, who rescued him from the street ... or not!!! Maybe he will miss the false freedom he had, he will rebel against you and will run away.

Can you see the history of Israel in this comparison? How many times they despised God’s love and ran away from Him and from His Commandments, going back to the dirty streets of this life? – Or, a better question: Can you see your (my) own story in this comparison when you go astray, despising God’s Commandments? - What happened to Israel happened to us in a much better and bigger sense: Jesus rescued us from the slavery of sin and from eternal death by His death on the cross, and brought us to His Father’s house and family. Now, He expects us to live a good family life, with all privileges, loved by Him and being heirs of His eternal treasures. He expects us to love the Father and to love our fellow adopted siblings.

And what do we do? We just go out sometimes in the darkness of the night to do what we want, and not what our Father wants... The Father is concerned about His children who go astray. They can get shot... they can become sick... they can become weak and blind and may not find the way back home again... The Father is waiting...and waiting at the door for the prodigal son to come back...

II – God’s Covenant is good

The Commandments are not a chain to hold us bound at home. We are free to leave...for our disgrace. Therefore, “he who has ear, let him hear” (Revelation 2:29). They show God’s love and God’s good will toward us. “In keeping them there is great reward” says the Psalm for today (Psalm 19:11). They are not relative, but they are absolute truths. Just consider what happens to people who disobey them: You shall not murder: You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal... Jesus became upset with the people who dishonoured the temple, His Father’s house, - a sin against the Third Commandment, - as we hear in the Gospel (Jo 2:13-25). Children who don’t honour their father and mother call disgrace upon their family.

- God made a good Covenant with His people in the past, a Covenant still valid for us, His people now through faith in Jesus. He knows that it is impossible for us to obey His will 100 percent– as it is impossible for our children to obey our will perfectly at home. But He doesn’t stop loving us, as we never stop loving our children, in spite of what they do or did. His heart is always open to forgive and to receive His children back home when they come repented and trusting in His love in Jesus. How great is God’s patience and love to receive us again and again? I don’t know... but surely it is far greater than our patience. He wants our best and therefore He shows us what is right and what is wrong and says: Follow this way! You will be blessed! My Son, Jesus walked this way for you through His perfect life of

obedience, and His death and resurrection. He knows the way to my home. Follow Him!

Conclusion: We've just bought a new microwave oven. I was amazed at the number of warnings in the owner's manual: 18 different warnings, several "do not... never...cautions...precautions..." I got almost scared of the device. But at the second part of the manual all the advantages were listed and how to use it correctly. What is the intention behind the many warnings? It is to prevent hazard to the owner, to keep the owner safe.

- The Bible, and specifically the Ten Commandments, are not just an owner's manual, as even some churches use them: Do this, don't do that. They are "Law Directed" people, but they try to follow their own way to heaven through obedience. - The Bible and the Ten Commandments are much more than that: They are the full expression of God's love to His children, wanting the best for us and giving us the Big Brother – Jesus – to walk with us. On the cross He paid for every single sin we commit, and He intercedes for us before the Father to forgive us. He knows our weaknesses and therefore He promised to be with us each and every day of our lives till the end. He knows that by ourselves we are not able to walk the good way. Therefore He gives us His Holy Spirit and gathers us in the Holy Christian Church, where we walk in the fellowship of our brothers and sisters, redeemed from the slavery of sin to a new life in Gods family. Therefore we can say with the Psalmist: "The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward" (Psalm 19:8-11). Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 08 March 2015