

Week Six – March 25, 2018

The Sixth Commandment

Commandments are statements which direct us to do or, not to do something. Martin Luther tries to help us look at The Ten Commandments using positive language, as this is how we are to come to know the loving nature of God.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

Do not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We are to fear and love God, so that we lead pure and decent lives in word and deed, and each of us loves and honors his or her spouse.

Matthew 5:27-30

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.^[1]³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Matthew 15:10-20

Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand: ¹¹ it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” ¹² Then the disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” ¹³ He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴ Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind.^[e] And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.” ¹⁵ But Peter said to him, “Explain this parable to us.” ¹⁶ Then he said, “Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷ Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? ¹⁸ But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.”

Matthew 19:3-9

Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” They said to him, “Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?” He said to them, “It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.”

Pastor’s Commentary

1- As I said last week, it seems to me that in all the Commandments/instructions God gives concerning how we are to live together as human beings, the driving characteristic that God has in place is mercy, mercy in dealing with each other, treating each other as we would like to be treated, treating each other as God treats each of us, and this one is no exception. By the time of Jesus’ teaching, the Commandments had become, not a way of living so much, as it was a measuring stick to assess each other’s faith. “*Am I being a righteous Jew?*” Or better, “*Is he/she being a righteous Jew?*” The leaders were more concerned with outward

appearances than inward transformation (Jesus words in Matthew 23:27 “like white-washed tombs”, looking good, but dead inside. God gave the Commandments to teach us how to live together, not as a ladder from which to look down on others.

3- Sex either builds up or tears apart. In my thinking, and I have thought about and reflected on this a lot over my life... there is no such thing as pure sex for sex’s sake. The biological drive may become “satisfied”, but the rest of the person is left missing something, unsatisfied.

In Genesis, as God created the first humans, it says that the two shall become one flesh, and what God has brought together, let no one tear apart. This issue of “one flesh” has traditionally been understood as the act of sex. But sex is not just a physical act. It is emotional and spiritual as well. It is allowing someone else to know you intimately, trusting the other to care for you and respect the intimacy of the act to create or strengthen a bond that exists between the two. It is a vulnerability offered and accepted. And in this, two people become one. This is how each person, who is incomplete without the other, becomes whole. It is bigger than the physical union. It is, at its best, a giving of one to the other. And this is why adultery is forbidden... because it destroys a relationship between 2 other people... a separation that is very painful physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and life altering to the one cheated on.

2- Thinking on Luther’s explanation, loving and honoring my spouse includes being faithful to her. It means that I do nothing to break her trust. It means that I do not talk about her in negative ways to others, so as to damage her reputation with them. It means that I am faithful to her, not just sexually, but caring for her physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. So, how I am to treat my spouse is how I hope and expect to be treated by her. This type of relationship engenders and strengthens trust between the two of us.

3- In the passages above, Jesus talks about issues of the heart when questioned about adultery. Lust, the desire to “possess” someone is a matter of the heart. And Jesus says even looking lustfully at someone is being unfaithful.

4- Adultery is not being faithful to the one who has pledged fidelity and loyalty to you.

We are to fear and love God, so that we lead pure and decent lives in word and deed, and each of us loves and honors his or her spouse.

Ponder This

1- Does Luther’s explanation of this commandment help or confuse you? How/why?

2- How does forgiveness work with a spouse who is unfaithful in any manner, sexually, emotionally, physically, etc...?

3- How does Jesus commentary on lust in the Scriptures above, come into play with this commandment?

4- How does the descriptor in #4 apply to The First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods.”?

5- Using Luther’s 4 Strands of Prayer below, close out today’s exercise.

Luther’s 4 Strands of Prayer

1- *What is God trying to teach me here?*

2- *What does this passage make me thankful for?*

3- *Where have I fallen short and need God to help and guide me?*

4- *Pray.*