

## Week Eight

### The Eighth 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 EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.

#### *What does this mean?*

We are to fear and love God, so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense speak well of them and interpret everything they do into the best possible light.

#### What Scripture has to say

**Matthew 12:33-37** - “Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. <sup>34</sup> You brood of vipers! How can you speak good things, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. <sup>35</sup> The good person brings good things out of a good treasure, and the evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure. <sup>36</sup> I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; <sup>37</sup> for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

**Ephesians 4:25-32** – “So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and do not make room for the devil. <sup>28</sup> Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. <sup>29</sup> Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, <sup>32</sup> and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

**Colossians 3:8-11** – “But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive<sup>[d]</sup> language from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup> In that renewal<sup>[e]</sup> there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!”

**Luke 10:25-29 (30-35) 36-37** – “Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” <sup>27</sup> He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” <sup>29</sup> But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ... (**Luke 10:30-35 – The Parable of the Good Samaritan**)... “[Then Jesus asked]<sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

**Matthew 7:12** - “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

## **Pastor's Commentary**

1- This commandment and its meaning help us to become better human beings and better members of a faithful, loving community by establishing that truth and honesty is imperative in all relationships. Luther, in his Large Catechism, he explains the necessity of establishing and protecting one's "good name" as a sacred treasure. One's reputation establishes a person's place in the community, and likewise can cause estrangement from the same.

2- Luther's thoughts on this extend beyond not just lying, not telling "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth", but confronts us in our silence, when we remain quiet whilst knowing that a lie is being told about someone, a people, or a particular situation. He says we are to speak up in defense of and protect the reputation of our neighbor.

3- And we are to "put the best construction" on our neighbor's actions and decisions, giving them "the benefit of the doubt" regarding the things that they do and say. But he also says, it does not excuse lying or causing harm to others, and thus stand for the victim and less powerful.

4- Luther, as well as St. Paul includes gossip as an evil act that violates this commandment. Gossip can "murder" another person's character, their reputation, their life. Gossip is nothing short of evil manipulation of others against someone for the gossip's own sense of power.

## **Ponder This...**

1. Have you ever been the victim of gossip? How did it feel? How did it effect your life?
2. How hard is it to put the "best construction" on someone else's choices? Can you think of a time when someone did not do so with you? Did it get resolved, and if so, what had to happen to get it resolved?
3. What one way can you try to put this commandment into effect in your life, and how will you hold yourself accountable?

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## **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.*