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Pentecost 5 (Catechetical Sermon 1)  
The Ten Commandments: Law of God

*Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it Holy. Honor your father and your mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

These are the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses and the Children of Israel on Mt. Sinai as they traveled through the desert. Today we begin a five week series on Luther's Small Catechism. Every so often every member of the church needs to go back and relearn what was taught when they were studying the Catechism so many years ago. Over the next month we will once again discover the rich heritage that we have being Missouri Synod Lutherans. Over the next month the sermons will be more didactic in style.

Our text is really both Exodus 20 and Matthew 23. Yahweh gave Moses two tablets in which the law of God was written on. Two tables of the law. One table of the law is summarized Love for God, while the other table is love for your neighbor. As Christ puts it in our Gospel lesson for today.

The Ten Commandments that our Lord gives us all relate to each other. Most notably from the first commandment, the other nine flow. Luther writes in the Large Catechism, "If the heart is right with God and we keep this commandment, all the rest will follow on their own." It is so true. The first commandment is the most important of the commandments "You shall have no other gods before me," our Lord commands us. What entirely does this mean? Luther tells us, "The word god is the term for that which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore to have a good is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart."

Where do we go to find refuge in all our need? Possessions, intellect, money, position, power. Perhaps we go right down the list of commandments do we find refuge in the way we talk? Do we find refuge by working seven days a week with no rest and no time for worship, do we find refuge in blatantly disobeying and disrespecting those in authority, perhaps we find refuge in our hatred toward someone else, or perhaps in any form of sexual behavior outside the boundaries of marriage, do you find it in taking things that don't belong to you or gossiping about others or perhaps even wanting something so bad that you would scheme to get it.

The guy on our screen really shows you these different gods that people clutch today: money, power, their own intellect, high position, or their possessions. Ultimately we

and put ourselves in the place of God in our lives. At the same time, we are to trust in the word and promises of God. We exchange the truth of God for a lie. The Bible says that ultimately, God gives folks like that what they think they want- a life, and an eternity, without Him.

And in this next illustration is meant to show you the main god that people worship in our culture. We even call it the almighty dollar, don't we? As though if we can only stack it high enough, all our problems will be solved. But it's an illusion isn't it? . As many lottery winners can tell you. Money truly cannot buy you happiness. This has been the main idol, the main god for as long as the world has been in history since the fall of man. It's why Jesus clearly says "you cannot serve two masters" both God and money. Luther even says it "There are some who think that they have God and everything they need when they have money and property; they trust in them and boast in them so stubbornly and securely that they care for no one else. They, too, have a god- mammon by name, that is, money and property- on which they set their whole heart. This is the most common idol on earth."

Our Lord clearly states to us "You shall not have no other gods before me." He even tells us "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind." That is the law of God staring straight in your eyes.

The law of God continues to stare at us through the other nine commandments as well. It's been said if you break one of them you have broken them all. James writes in his letter, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking it all." I use the example of David and the situation with Bathsheba and Uriah. There are two commandments that are clearly broken David committed adultery with Bathsheba and had Uriah killed. He also coveted his neighbor's wife and stole from Uriah. David bore false witness against Uriah. David used his power to deceive his people. By doing this David did not keep the Sabbath day holy, and through it, did not use the Lord's name correctly and finally he tried to cover up his sin by using himself to get out of it.

You see idolatry is a matter of the heart. It's not about things or building golden images it's about your heart and where you ultimately put your trust. If your heart is not focused entirely on the Lord, if you trust in other things or people you have broken this commandment. When you allow your heart to trust in other things, temptations will come your way and you will fall. You will break and do break the commands of God. You don't Love your God with all your heart, soul and mind. And you don't love your neighbor as yourself. You cannot keep these Ten Commandments. It's not possible.

Take out your hymnal and turn to page 321 and 322 and quickly glance at the Ten Commandments again. Every one of us has broken all these commands in one way or another. So based on that we are all destined to live in eternity away from our Lord. It's how we live today.

...ed man that I am; who will deliver me from this body  
... thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.+  
Remember Jesus Christ came to this earth to be human. There was a huge difference  
between our humanness and His. Jesus Christ was perfect. Jesus Christ never  
sinned. Jesus Christ came to fulfill the law. He says as recorded in Matthew 5, %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 away from the Law until all is accomplished.+ What is to be  
accomplished? Jesus salvific work. His brutal beatings, his demoralizing death, and his  
rejoiceful resurrection. Jesus fulfilled the law and followed the law perfectly. For he did  
as his Father commanded.

He Loved the Lord God will all his heart, soul, and mind. And he loved his neighbor as  
himself. He even died for his neighbor. He rose for His neighbor to give him life.

In the illustration that is before you on the screen, you see the commandments like a big  
balloon. And it is like that. As I've already quoted from James, %Whoever keep the  
whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking them all.+ Jesus  
stands behind the balloon. He hasn't released us from our commitment to God's law.  
Meanwhile the Holy Spirit is trying to remind us of the grace of God in Christ that makes  
us %fit for life+with Him. Unfortunately, all too often we're like the guy with his earmuffs  
on. He won't listen to the Spirit of God. The big %+ on his chest shows the orientation of  
his life. He's busily %pushing the envelope+so to speak of what God will allow and most  
certainly in danger of God's law.

We can't stand before our God alone. We need Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit along  
with us. In Acts 13 Paul speaks, %Therefore my brothers, I want you to know that  
through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who  
believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.+  
St. Paul even writes in Romans 10. %Christ is the end of the law so that there may be  
righteousness for everyone who believes.+

Jesus Christ is the only way we can stand before our Almighty God and be declared  
righteous. For on our own we are filthy wretched sinners. Because of Jesus. the law  
is fulfilled in our lives. Through Jesus the motivation and the fulfillment of the law is  
summed up in just one word. Love. St. Paul writes in Romans 13. %Love does no  
harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.+

The purpose of the law, for Christians, for the children of God, is to teach us how to live  
like His children, not to become His Children. We already are His, now we strive to live  
like it in response to all that He has done for us.

My dear family of God, Jesus loves us. He fulfilled the law for us. However, we are live  
like His children, abiding by these commands of God that are recorded in God's Holy  
and Inspired Word. These commands of God are guidelines for living for Him in His



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we are to treat our neighbors and also how to love

The Ten Commandments are just the beginning in our walk with Him. It's just the beginning in relearning what we learned in the Catechism recently or perhaps decades ago. It's also the beginning of our journey through relearning what we believe, teach, and confess as Missouri Synod Lutherans.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

*Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.*