

Exodus 19

New King James Version

Israel at Mount Sinai

19 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. 2 For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.

3 And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I [a]bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Exodus 20

New King James Version

The Ten Commandments

20 And God spoke all these words, saying:

2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of [a]bondage.

3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 5 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the

seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

13 "You shall not murder.

14 "You shall not commit adultery.

15 "You shall not steal.

16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

The People Afraid of God's Presence

20 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."

THE SECOND READING

Matthew 22

New King James Version

The Scribes: Which Is the First Commandment of All?

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

³⁷ Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Sermon: The Law and the Covenant

If you are a Jewish boy or girl; at age 13 you either Bar Mitzvah or Bat Mitzvah.

What does that mean?

It means you are now liable under the laws of God and your faith. Your parents are no longer responsible for when you fail to meet God's laws.

You are prepared for this event in a very defined process; you begin your Jewish education at age 5. Your father will have already begun teaching you the fundamentals of reading Hebrew.

At age six or seven—depending on your maturity—you're packed off to school.

There you are told the stories from the Tanakh, you must learn to read them yourself, out loud, using singing methods the cantors have for millenniums.

At age ten, Mishnah begins. Mishnah is learning the law, not just the Covenant of Mt. Sinai, but all the laws. What are your responsibilities to others and their possessions.

The child must understand what Jewish law requires regarding contracts, they must know how to write a Godly contract. They must know the rules of marriage, and how to end one without violating the laws of God.

The child must know who can sit on a tribunal to judge a monetary case. Who can sit as a judge in a capital case. What evidence is considered credible and what is not, and what happens if the judges cannot agree on a decree.

Of course, there's also ritualistic stuff, like how to perform the kosher slaughter of an animal.

Basically, the entire gamut of Jewish law in five years. Memorized until it's all on the tip of your tongue, with as much understanding as can be expected from a fifteen-year-old.

As Josephus, put it, if any Jewish child were asked about the laws of Judaism, "he will more readily tell them all, than he will tell them his own name."

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4028110/jewish/Jewish-Education.htm#Jewish

A Jewish child who completed Mishnah, might not always make Godly decisions, but they know what Jewish law required. Knowing that, ... they are now responsible in God's eyes, and that is the point of Mitzvah.

It isn't about *what if's*; it is about *thou shalt, or shalt not*.

If you have a child going through confirmation, use this story and they will realize just how easy they have it.

God made 4 covenants with the people of Israel: Noah's, the Abrahamic, the Davidic, and Jeremiah's new covenant.

Christians know that Christ is the fulfillment of all Covenants, most expressly however Jeremiah's. By his sacrifice, and our belief in him, we are granted grace.

In Matthew 22, Christ explains to us that there are two keys, in the Covenant of the Sinai given to Moses:

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these

two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Was God changing the rules from Sinai’s covenant? No, and in Matthew 5:17 we hear Christ enunciating that point:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. ...

Thus, there is no disparity between Matthew 5 and Matthew 22.

The laws of the Covenant of the Sinai can be seen as belonging to one of two types; 1.) our relationship with God, and 2.) our Godly relationship with each other.

The first 4 of these commandments are directly related to our relationship with God:

- 1.) “I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before Me.”
- 2.) “You shall not make false idols ...”
- 3.) “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.”
- 4.) “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

God is telling us what is required to have a faithful relationship with him.

The next 6 commandments, however, are quite different; they are about how we relate, in Godly love, to each other.

- 1.) “Honor your father and your mother

- 2.) “You shall not murder.
- 3.) “You shall not commit adultery.
- 4.) “You shall not steal.
- 5.) “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
- 6.) “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.”

In the broad view then, the commandments are how we fulfill Christ’s description of the commandments.

God forgives us, based on our faith in him, and prepares us to follow God’s laws, which strengthen our personal relationship ... with God.

This can be understood more clearly in Bonhoeffer’s book, the *Cost of Discipleship*. It is the contrast between what Bonhoeffer refers to as Cheap Grace, vs the Costly Grace that Christians should attempt to achieve:

Cheap grace is grace offered at a bargain—careless forgiveness, shallow comfort, empty sacraments. It is grace treated as the Church’s inexhaustible resource, handed out freely without any questions or conditions.

It is grace without a price, without sacrifice! It assumes that because the price was paid long ago, everything is now free. Since the original price for grace was infinite, it must now be an infinitely exploitable resource.

After all, what would grace even mean if it weren’t cheap for us?

*This cheap version reduces grace to nothing more than a doctrine, a principle, a system. It presents the forgiveness of sins as a general truth and the love of God as **merely** a Christian idea.*

In such a (scenario), the world finds an easy cover for its sins—there is no need for real sorrow or a genuine desire to be freed from sin.

Cheap grace, in the end, is a denial of the living Word of God—the Incarnation of God's Word. Cheap grace means the forgiveness of sin without the transformation of the sinner. It is the idea that grace does everything, so nothing in life needs to change. "Our actions don't matter," it whispers, and the world carries on as usual.

Ultimately, this is what cheap grace means: grace that justifies sin without justifying the sinner. It does not lead to true repentance or a life that turns away from sin, because it is not the kind of forgiveness that frees us from sin's power.

It is grace without discipleship, without the cross, without the living presence of Jesus Christ.

Costly grace, on the other hand, is like the treasure hidden in a field, for which we would gladly sell everything to obtain. It is the pearl of great price, worth more than all a merchant's goods.

It is the call of Jesus that leads a disciple to leave his nets and follow Him.

This grace is costly because it calls us to follow, but it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it demands our very lives, but it is grace because it gives us true life in return.

It is costly because it condemns sin, but it is grace because it forgives the sinner. Most of all, it is costly because it cost God the life of His

Son—"you were bought at a price"—and what cost God so much cannot be cheap for us.

Yet, it is grace because God did not consider the life of His Son too high a price to pay, but gave Him up for our sake. Costly grace is the grace of God becoming human, the Incarnation itself.

<https://www.modernsaints.com/blog-1/bonhoeffer-costly-grace>

Summarizing the points of our sermon today:

Christ gave us the key to seeing the commandments as two essential elements: that we should love God with all our heart and mind, and that we should love each other as we would love ourselves.

That we should think of these two commandments as composing all the Laws and the Prophet's messages to us.

Christ also reminds us that God's Laws and Covenants were not revoked but embodied in Christ. That he is the fulfillment of those laws.

The final portion of this sermon is to remind you that our lives in Christ are truly fulfilled not only by our faith, which offers us Grace and Salvation, but also by attempting to abide by God's Laws, which then raises our relationship to Costly Grace.

A gracious call to follow Jesus, offering forgiveness to the afraid and broken-hearted. It is costly because it demands that we submit to Christ's yoke and follow Him, but it is grace because, as Jesus said:

"My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Let us pray:

Dear Lord,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. He chose us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame through his grace and his love.

He chose to adopt us as sons and daughters of Jesus Christ. According to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He accepted us.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

Amen

Ephesians 1:3