

Sunday September 6, 2026

Exodus 20: 17

17 You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Romans 6: 12-23

Therefore, sin must not reign over your mortal bodies so that you obey their desires. 1 And do not present the parts of your bodies to sin as weapons for wickedness but present yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life and the parts of your bodies to God as weapons for righteousness. For sin is not to have any power over you, since you are not under the law but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Of course not! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, although you were once slaves of sin, you have become obedient from the heart to the pattern of teaching to which you were entrusted. Freed from sin, you have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your nature. For just as you presented the parts of your bodies as slaves to impurity and lawlessness for lawlessness, so now present them as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. But what profit did you get then from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit that you have leads to sanctification, and its end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are that family of sinners, seeking Redemption

We begin our readings today with Exodus exhorting us to not covet. The verse states “thy neighbor’s” but as Christians, we know that is a broad and encompassing term; literally everyone is our “neighbor”.

The verse ends by announcing that what we are not to covet is also all-encompassing; anything that is “our neighbor’s.”

To be even more clear, let’s define the word covet:

1: to wish for earnestly

To covet an award

2: to desire (what belongs to another)

inordinately or culpably

The king’s brother coveted the throne.

Coveting is probably the most common sin you can conceive of man doing to man.

In 1976, the then Governor of Georgia, did an interview with a “men’s magazine”. He was running for President, and after disclosing previously, that he was, in fact, a “born again Christian”, he had been assailed by various media organizations for his faith.

The interviewer for the men’s magazine asked him if he had ever sinned. To what the Governor admitted that he had from time-to-time coveted women, other than his wife, in his heart.

Now I would be surprised if that were the only sin that the future President Carter committed. After all, he had been a submariner in the Navy, a notoriously “rowdy group”.

The point of bringing this up, however; is rather, to point out how universal coveting is.

Perhaps it might be best conceived that coveting is the result of not acknowledging all the blessings WE have received.

It also is a denial of other individuals' right to receive blessings as well.

Christ reminds us that there is nothing in this world that we might gain that will provide for us without our faith in him: Mark 8: 34 – 37

“If anyone wants to be My follower, he must give up himself and his own desires. He must take up his cross and follow Me. For what does a man gain if he acquires all the world and loses his own soul?

What can a man give to buy back his soul?”

We live in a world today that gives us so many blessings. Yet it is so common to find people who are so lost in their coveting of more. Especially those things that others have that they want for themselves.

Blaise Pascal wrote a book that was published in 1670 named *“Pensées”*, which was a defense of the Christian religion. In that book, he has a quote:

“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there, the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words, by God himself.”

In modern semantics that is referred to as the **“God-shaped hole”**.

I suspect that most of us have either witnessed this in others, or in ourselves. That no matter the supply of “things” we cannot fill this with worldly items.

The verse in today’s second reading in Romans takes us deeper into the journey about our worldly life. It reminds us that Christ *“raised us from dead in sin”*, to alive in the Grace we received through his sacrifice.

Romans reminds us that we became obedient slaves to our own worldliness.

We can, however, choose to serve righteousness instead.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In my last sermon, I discussed Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s book; *The Cost of Discipleship*. I talked about the ideas of Cheap Grace vs Costly Grace, wherein we should remember that *“you were bought at a price”*—and what cost God so much cannot be cheap for us.

Today I’d like to talk to you about another Bonhoeffer book: *“Life Together”*. This book is a reflection on how Christian communities can help us to live in the joy of Christ’s grace:

He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone.

Christians, without corporate worship, prayer and fellowship, may still be left to their loneliness.

The final breakthrough to fellowship does not come because we have fellowship with one another as believers and devout people.

It occurs because we worship and serve each other as sinners, who seek repentance.

The fact is that all are sinners, confronting that truth requires acknowledging this.

In doing so we find that God has been waiting for us:

*“A great, desperate sinner; now comes, as the sinner that we are, ... to a God who loves us. He wants all of us as we are; He does not want anything from you – he wants **YOU**. “*

“My son, give me your heart.”

Sin demanded that we be alone. It withdrew us from the community.

It needed to remain unknown, to shun the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed, it poisoned the whole being.

<https://faithreflections.org/he-who-is-alone-with-his-sin-is-utterly-alone/>
<https://faithandlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Life-Together.pdf>

I asked Leah to listen to this sermon, and she felt my first draft was a tad heavy.

I was pretty flummoxed by this, as it is hard to walk around that subject when your sermon **IS** the 10 Commandments.

There is a reason I stand here, hopefully finding enough inspiration to admit to you what brought ME to Christ and faith. That wasn't perfection, but instead, ... the imperfection of who I am.

Being here with you gives me peace and allows me to build on my relationship with Christ, who has given me his grace.

The cross of Jesus Christ shatters all pride.

In acknowledging our faults, we break through to the genuine community of Jesus Christ. We experience the cross of Jesus as our deliverance and salvation.

Life within the church of Christ provides me, and I believe all of us, a place where we can see ourselves honestly, and commune within a fellowship of others, who share our faith in Christ's grace.

The hymn "Bless be the Tie That Binds", seems to portray that vision of fellowship we yearn for;

*Blest be the tie that binds
 our hearts in Christian love;
 the fellowship of kindred minds
 is like to that above.
 Before our Father's throne*

*we pour our ardent prayers;
 our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
 our comforts and our cares.*

*We share our mutual woes,
 our mutual burdens bear,
 and often for each other flows
 the sympathizing tear.*

*From sorrow, toil, and pain,
 and sin, we shall be free;
 and perfect love and friendship reign
 through all eternity.*

Let us pray:

Lord Heavenly Father,

*Give us wisdom and spiritual strength to avoid
 covetousness.*

*May we never be anxious to acquire the possessions of
 others.*

*Create purity in our hearts and extinguish any evil
 desires that might arise in our minds.*

*May we experience continual gratitude for all of the
 things that you have so graciously given us.*

*We thank you for the many blessing we receive, and
 we ask and pray you open our hearts, minds and ears
 to Your will.*

In your Holy Name we pray.

Amen.