

The Law and Jesus

3rd Week of Lent – Exodus 20:1-17 – John 2:13-25

When Moses received the Ten Commandments from God, he was given much more than a list of rules. Moses was given a framework for a way of life that defines our relationships. The commandments outline the relationships we are to have with God, and with those we love and with the rest of the world. The commandments, ultimately, are to lead us to an encounter and a relationship with Christ who is the fulfillment of the Divine Law.

The first three commandments define our relationship with God, outlining that **“I the Lord, am your God...You shall not have other gods besides me.”** This commandment is number one on the list because it is the most important. God is very clear that nothing else stands before God’s supreme sovereignty. The second and third commandments reinforce and give us focus for this relationship. The name of God is not to be misused or abused lest we lose track of God’s original supremacy. Worship is one of the two positive commands. **“Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.”** This is a positive directive designed to give us access and direction for this relationship with God to grow. We must suspend human activity on the Sabbath so that we take time to give God glory for the rest of the week.

The fourth commandment, **“Honor your father and your mother”** is the second positively stated command, giving parental authority and family the highest value to the second strata of commandments. The human family and the human person take on a value that God conveys to us as an important relational way to live one’s life. We cannot be a person of God without pursuing the well-being of others. We must respect and love the humanity that God has entrusted to our care.

The last six commandments lift up the dignity and importance of the human person. We are called to understand that God is outlining what leads to wholeness and holiness. The rights of others are to be put before our own needs if our relationship with God is to be right.

How does the giving of the commandments in the first reading relate to Jesus’ cleansing of the temple in the gospel? Quite simply, Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Law. Jesus is cleansing the temple of a less than perfect relationship that has developed. Jesus overturns the abusive nature of what he sees. **“...stop making my Father’s house a marketplace.”** The merchants and the moneychangers have made the relationship between the people and their God a way of doing business. There is no room for a relationship with God if the sole purpose of one’s actions is for self-preservation and financial gain. The money changers were unjustly profiting from the people’s desire to worship by charging (especially the poor) inflated amounts for the sacrificial animals. Sound familiar?

Lent is a time for us to scrutinize our own relationships. We are called to a time of prayer, fasting and alms-giving, not for personal improvement but as a way to correct all our relationships in light of our relationship with God. Lent is a time when we are called to a new way of living. This new way is not to be abandoned at the end of 40 days, but rather, our Lenten practices should lead us to a transformed way of relating to God, and to those we love and to the rest of the world.

Jesus has come as the new Law, the final and complete covenant. Jesus is the fulfillment of our relationship with God. We are called to live in relationship with Christ, obeying the commandments and loving our neighbor, thereby being in right relationship with God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Happy Lent!
Sue Schettler

