

Day Ten

Scripture:

Exodus 20:1-17

Reflection:

It is common to see laws and rules in mostly negative terms. They get in our way. They keep us from driving as fast as we want or from selling fresh milk to our neighbors. And yet, the Bible says that we should “delight in the Law of the Lord.” To many of us, that sounds as absurd as thanking God we got a speeding ticket or finding out we owe more taxes to the IRS.

In the years I spent in Brewerton, New York, it was common to have more than 100 inches of snow every year. The last year I was there, in fact, the town recorded 212 inches of snow. As you might guess, that is a lot of snow. Unless you lived in snow country, you might not realize how difficult it is to see the road. Sometimes, the only way to be sure you are still driving on the highway is to use the mile-markers, mailboxes and traffic signs. The trick is to keep the car centered between them. They are the outer boundaries of the road. You know if you drive too close to them, you'll be off the shoulder and in a ditch. Drive past them, and you're in a creek or a cornfield.

So, even though speed limit signs restrict some of your driving options, it is not hard to be thankful someone put them there. They make driving safer for everyone. Like I learned in blizzards in upstate New York, it is only by steering

between the boundaries that you stay safe and make it home in time for supper.

As you read through the Ten Commandments, think of them as boundary markers for our lives. They are like signs showing you where it is not safe to drive. No gods before God. No carved idols. Do not use God's name lightly. Keep the Sabbath day. Honor your parents. Do not kill or commit adultery or steal or bear false witness. And, do not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

These are not the "Keep Out" signs from a grumpy landowner who just wants to keep all the best places to fish for himself. These are the boundary signs put up by someone who does not want you to take a wrong turn and make a wreck of your life.

Jesus makes it clear he, like any devout Jew, delights in the Law of the Lord. He insists he has not come to do away with the Law, but to fulfill it. The Apostle Paul writes that Jesus is the completion of the Law (Romans 10:4). Jesus, Himself, is the perfect boundary marker and the visible signpost pointing us toward heaven. Jesus is what keeps us from having a wreck on our way home, just as He is the very home we want to reach.

Family:

If each family member were going to make two rules that everybody else in the family had to obey, what two rules would each person make? Ask them why and help them see if some of their rules would or would not really be good ideas in the long run. As they imagine some good things (I can sleep late and each ice cream), remind them that in such a family maybe nobody would buy any ice cream or cook

dinners or wash dishes. Would it really be a fun place to live or not? A family with no rules would be loud, messy, smelly, and no place they would want to live.

Point out that the Ten Commandments are ten of the most essential rules God has ever given to the whole human race. Ask them if they know any of the ten commandments. See if you can help them make a complete list. Ask them how each of the commandments might be good things that would make the world a better place to live.

The Jesse Tree Ornament for today is a small version of the Ten Commandments. Jesus will not only study the Law and love the Law, Jesus will perfectly obey the Law all of His life. In the New Testament Paul will tell people that Jesus Christ will be born from the Virgin Mary and will be born under the law (Galatians 4:4).

Prayer:

As you pray, go through and thank God for each of the Ten Commandments. As you praise God, think of one or more ways each of these ten laws has helped you or someone in your family or someone that you know. Focus on how following these commandments (or, at least the principles behind these commandments) has kept you and people around you from making wrong turns in life.