**November 1, 2020 Exodus 20:1-20**

***To Love Like God***

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:1-20

*(1)And God spake all these words, saying,  (2)I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.  (3)Thou shalt have no other gods before me.  (4)Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:  (5)Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;  (6)And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.  (7)Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.  (8)Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.  (9)Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:  (10)But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:  (11)For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.  (12)Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.  (13)Thou shalt not kill.  (14)Thou shalt not commit adultery.  (15)Thou shalt not steal.  (16)Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.  (17)Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.  (18)And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.  (19)And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.  (20)And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.*

**Notes:**

1. The Ten Commandments are about, ***honoring*** God.
   1. The first five commandments were related to our ***relationship*** with God Himself; and the second five were related to our ***relationship*** with everybody else.
   2. Jesus made it very simple; we can please God if we could just ***love*** the way God does.
2. What does it mean to ***Love*** God?
   1. If we truly love God, we will not let anything be more ***important*** than God.
   2. They will know that we are ***Christian*** by our words and deeds; by our love.
   3. we need to take a day and set it aside to ***Sabbath***, to rest in the ***presence*** of God;
   4. God calls us to ***honor*** fathers and mothers, step parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, mentors and role models.
3. ***Love*** God! ***Love*** your neighbor!
   1. We will not say or do anything that would bring harm to our ***neighbor*** in any way,
   2. We must hold our ***neighbors*** in high regard;
   3. We should watch out for them and ***protect*** their property in their absence.
   4. We will not gossip about them and may even stand in their ***defense***,
4. Our relationship with neighbors must ***extend*** ***God’s*** ***love*** to them,
   1. These last five commandments, are a ***continuation*** of the first five commandments,
   2. We love God by ***honoring*** him and loving his ***children***,
5. God ***desires*** to be the most important thing in your life,.
   1. Pursuing God’s will, we will find ***contentment***, ***fulfillment***, and ***love*** that lasts through eternity,
   2. Jesus knocks at the door, will you ***let*** ***him*** ***in***?

**Script:**

One of the things I remember about growing up in the church was memorizing bible verses. Verses such as: “Jesus wept.”; “For God so loved the world that He gave is one and only son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”; and then there is the 23rd Psalm, the Lord’s Prayer, and we all have heard the Ten Commandments.

I personally had a difficult time with the Ten Commandments, perhaps it was too much information to digest in one sitting; perhaps, it was the topic at hand, these are rules to live by and they can be so confusing. Or perhaps, I was just lazy. No matter, I struggled with memorizing these rules.

We all have heard of the Ten Commandments. There has been controversy over whether they should be displayed in public; especially in government facilities, but when is all is said and done, they were placed in these buildings in order to display the morals of our country and the basis for them.

So if you haven’t guessed it by now, we have reached the section of the book of Exodus where God gives the Ten commandments to Moses. Turn with me in your Bibles to Exodus 20:20 and stand with me as we share in the reading of our sermon passage today.

*(1)And God spake all these words, saying,  (2)I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.  (3)Thou shalt have no other gods before me.  (4)Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:  (5)Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;  (6)And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.  (7)Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.  (8)Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.  (9)Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:  (10)But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:  (11)For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.  (12)Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.  (13)Thou shalt not kill.  (14)Thou shalt not commit adultery.  (15)Thou shalt not steal.  (16)Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.  (17)Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.  (18)And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.  (19)And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.  (20)And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. Exodus 20:1-20*

A Pastor travels to Jerusalem on a trip. While he is there, he needs to change hotels and finds that the hotel he is moving to has a Shabbat Elevator. What in the world is a Shabbat Elevator you may ask; and I am glad you did. The word Shabbat means sabbath and it turn out that a Shabbat Elevator is an elevator that automatically stops at every floor to take on and release passengers. But you do not need to push buttons because you know that the elevator is going to automatically stop at your floor. Why would anybody design such a thing, by pushing buttons you could skip past all of the unnecessary stops and that would be faster and better, right?

As I said, he is in Jerusalem and there are many Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem and they take God seriously. One of the commandments that we read today says that we should not work on the sabbath; so, the Orthodox Jews interpret that to mean what it says, no working. They believe pushing buttons on elevators is work, therefore they created Shabbat Elevators so they did not have to work on the sabbath.

Some of us cannot imagine living like that. We are glad that we don’t have to observe those kinds of laws. We are glad we do not need Shabbat Elevators. But I would like to ask you to consider the Shabbat Elevator from a different perspective. Orthodox Jews build hotels with Shabbat Elevators so they might obey the Law and keep the Sabbath holy. They choose to stay in hotels with Shabbat Elevators so they may honor God. They live all of their life to honor God. I wonder do you do the same, do you make an effort to honor God in ALL of your life? Orthodox Jews Honor God by keeping the Sabbath holy, by their prayers, by the food they eat, the clothes they wear and by the way they instruct their children. Everything about the way they live their lives is to honor God. This reminds me of the 150th Psalm:

(1)Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! (2)Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! (3)Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! (4)Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! (5)Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! (6)Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Praise the LORD! Psalms 150:1-6 NRSV

This is what the Ten Commandments is really all about, honoring and praising God. When we think of the commandments, we think of the image of Charlton Heston holding up the stone tablets in the movie The Ten Commandments; but we also think of the rules that many of us were taught as youngsters, thou shalt not do this and do that. It took me years to realize that the first five commandments were directly related to our relationship with God Himself; and the second five were related to our relationship with everybody else.

But when I read them, I am always reminded of the young man who asked Jesus in the gospel of Matthew 22:36, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” to which Jesus replied, (37)“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' (38)This is the greatest and first commandment. (39)And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (40)On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus Made it very simple; we can please God if we could just love the way God does. If we would ; love God the way that He loves us, with everything He has; and love others in the same way. If we could do that, loving God and others the way that God loves us, we would have no problem fulfilling any of the other commandments of the law. If you have been around me enough, you would have heard me say that before. If we can keep the greatest commandment, all the others will fall into line.

So what does it mean to Love God? If we loved God, what would that look like? What would we do? The Ten Commandments tell us that:

If we truly love God, we will put no other gods before him. Money won’t be more important than God; sex won’t be more important than God; hobbies won’t be more important than God; entertainment won’t be more important than God; food won’t be more important than God; drugs won’t be more important than God; friends won’t be more important than God; even family won’t be more important than God; but especially I wont hold myself as being more important than God. We will not let anything be more important than God.

If we truly love God, we will not make any idols in our lives. We won’t worship idols made of word; we won’t worship idols made of stone and we won’t worship idols made of politically-correct language. We won’t worship television personalities or athletes; we won’t worship political leaders and political parties; and we won’t worship the things we have or would like to have..

If we truly love God, we will not use his name disrespectfully. In our culture, that has come to mean not using the words God and damn together. But honoring God’s name means much more. We are God’s children. We honor his name when people can look at us and say, “There goes a Christian. Isn’t it wonderful what God has done for them!” They will know that we are Christian by our words and deeds; they will know we are Christian by our love.

Here is the tough one; if we truly love God, we will rest from our labors on his day. That is not easy to do in a world that demands that we work days, nights and weekends. And the more we engage in life the harder it is to do this and still not be legalistic. There is debate as to when this sabbath should be observed. Jews observe the sabbath on the seventh day of the week which is our Saturday. Christians traditionally have observed the Sabbath on Sunday with the exception of a few other denominations. However, I will state, “As one who works nearly every Sunday, we need to take a day and set it aside to Sabbath, to rest in the presence of God; to commune with him, to hear him and seek his will. Does the actual day of the week make difference? If you are in God’s will, that is what is important.

If we truly love God, we will honor our parents; that is right, we will honor our father and mother; no matter who they may be. God calls us to honor our Heavenly Father, and he also calls us to honor our earthly fathers and mothers. May I take this a step further; for those who may have been raised in a difficult situation; I believe this includes those who have stepped in for parents when yours were not able to; step parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, mentors and role models. All of these people have played a role in helping to develop you into who you may be; they need to be shown the respect of their actions.

Love God! Love your neighbor! What does it mean to love our neighbor? What would our lives look like if we truly loved our neighbor? The last five commandments tell us about that. If we love our neighbor, we will not murder her or him. We will not damage their physical body, we will not tear down their reputation. We will not say or do anything that would bring harm to them in any way, physically, emotionally, not even to their reputation.

If we love our neighbor, we will not commit adultery with our neighbor’s husband or wife. This includes entertaining the thought in any way. We must hold our neighbors in high regard; we must not do or say anything that may risk breaking their trust with you or others.

If we love our neighbor, we will not steal from them. We will not steal their car or stereo or anything else that belongs to our neighbor; not even a postage stamp. In fact we should watch out for them and protect their property in their absence. Some may say, that is what neighbors do; we look oyt for each other.

If we love our neighbor, we will not tell lies about her or him. We will not gossip about them and the situations they may find themselves in. And when we hear others doing so we may even stand in their defense, especially when it is not true. If we are to be a good neighbor we must do it always, not just in their site but also in their absence.

If we love our neighbor, we must not allow ourselves to pine for our neighbor’s belongings; we may like their house, but we should not want to have their house, and that goes for all the neighbors things, their spouse, their car, their clothes, their job, bank account,or anything else that belongs to them. Oh I am sure it is good to like what they have, and it may be okay to desire to have similar things; but that should not be the focal point of our relationship. Our relationship with our neighbor must be to extend God’s love to them, in our actions, words, and with our time.

In a sense, these last five commandments, which focus on our neighbor, are a continuation of the first five commandments, which focus on God. We love God by honoring him directly, and we love him indirectly by loving his children, who are our neighbors. How can we say we love the Lord our God and turn around and do not love our neighbors?

You are responsible for your actions. Only you can control the attitude you have towards God. Only you can control your attitude towards your neighbor. God invites each of you to enter into a relationship with him. You choose if you will enter into that relationship. God desires to be the most important thing in your life. But you must let him in. God will not break down the door to enter in. You have to open the door.

We all have opportunities to do this, we all have moments in out lives when God is knocking at the door. We all have needs and desires; but, if these desires and needs are not in the center of God’s will in our life, they will be a short lived phase we go through. Yet when we live our lives pursuing God’s will, we will find contentment, we will find fulfillment, and we will find a love that lasts through eternity. I end today with one of my favorite passages and images; Revelation 3:20, “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.” NRSV Notice that the door has no door handle on the outside to gain entry, Jesus knocks at the door of your heart today, will you let him in? Jesus wants a real relationship with you today, not a superficial one like we have with so many people in our world; but a real relationship where you desire to share everything about your life with Him, won’t you let him in today.