

**Lent 3B**  
**Mar 7, 2021**  
**Grace Lutheran Church**  
**Lakeland, FL**

**Exodus 20:1-17**  
**Psalm 19**  
**I Cor 1:18-25**  
**John 2:13-22**

Grace to you and peace from God and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Please pray with me....

When I walk in to the house of my friend Lilly, there is a large wall plaque right in front of me. It's titled Our Family Rules. Perhaps you've seen a variation of this too. Here are some of the rules in her house:

- Say please and thank you.
- Share.
- Keep your promises.
- Try new things.
- Encourage each other.
- Read – learn – explore
- Make good choices.
- Be courageous.

That's how things go in her family.

Today's first reading is one that we may overlook because we already know about the Ten Commandments. We think of them as the rules that God gave to God's people – God's expectations for how they and we are to live. We can probably recite several of them, if not all. They are part of Luther's Small and Large Catechisms. But other than that, we probably don't think about them very much. Because, after all, I don't kill and I don't steal and I worship God.

But when we consider them in the context in which they were given, some new understandings may emerge. We read in Chapter 19 of Exodus, that shortly after God's people were delivered from Egypt, they came to the wilderness of Sinai where Mt. Sinai is located. They camped in front of the mountain and Moses went up the mountain and talked with God – rather, listened to what God was saying to him and then took those words back to the people. In verses 4-6, God said to Moses, *"Tell them, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you up on eagles' wings and brought you to me. Now then, if you will obey me faithfully and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all the peoples.' "* Their identity was founded in relationship created by God's redeeming action. This is covenant, a covenant into which we are drawn because of God's steadfast love.

Three days later, Moses returned to the mountain that was engulfed in cloud. God spoke the words in today's first reading beginning again with the statement of what God had done for God's people: *I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

Then followed words, the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. The esteemed Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggeman, urges that we think about these not as a series of rules but rather as a proclamation in God's own mouth of who God is and how God shall be practiced in the community of liberated slaves – today in a community of faith. Not rules, but gift for the relationships that we have with God and with one another as we live in the family of God. Kind of like the family rules in my friend's home.

It is often understood that these Ten can be divided into two parts – the first part dealing with our relationship with God and the second part dealing with our relationships with one another. So, our text for consideration today is verses 8-11 of Exodus 20:

*Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.*

This verse is a hinge verse between the two parts, the two Tablets as they are often called. And it actually connects the two. It is the longest commandment of the Ten, suggesting its importance. What does Sabbath look like. As we often think about it, Sabbath – for many, but not all, of us “Sunday” is considered to be the Sabbath day, the day when we don’t go into our place of employment and it usually ends up being the day on which we do all the work that we don’t otherwise get done during the week.

At the heart of the giving of the Law, are God’s words that reminded the people of where they had been – they had been in Egypt, they were brick-makers, forced participants in the Pharaoh’s plan to build more and more buildings in which to store that which he coveted, that which he thought he needed, that of which there would never be enough. Try harder. Do better. Make more. Wash. Rinse. Repeat. And Repeat. And repeat. Work harder. Go gather your own straw. Get busy. Produce. Answer those emails. Check off the to-do list. Get to it! Sound familiar?

This is in striking contrast to the God who created all that is, all that is good. How many days of creation? Yes, seven. I want you to note that one of those days was a day of rest – the God who created the cosmos included a day of rest in the grand task that was accomplished. There were not six days and then a day off – there were 7 days for this work of creation and one of them was a day of rest. Do you see the difference?

Now, what does a day of rest look like? Indeed, what does “rest” look like. Would we even know it if it came and sat in our laps? My friends, I offer these words this morning that are currently very important to me. I believe that many, many of us, even in this time of pandemic, are wrapped up in the trappings of Pharaoh – look how many bricks I made, look how many bricks the boss is expecting me to make, look at my labor, look at how busy I am, look at how many awards my kids received, look at how far I have to travel for their games, look at how many emails I have, look at how busy I am. Or we have retired from these kinds of expectations, but their memory continues to lurk in the back of our minds. Can you see that in this we become people of the “doing” – human doings, as it were. Instead, God’s words spoken to Moses and then to us, draw us into a time of rest, restfulness, times of simply “being.”

So, because we’re in church on Sunday even if on-line, we can see how it is that this Sabbath Teaching helps shape and inform our relationship with God, the first part of the decalogue. How then does it come to play in our relationships with other people? Those in our families – might life unplugged bring us closer together? Might time of unscheduled open space for more fun and conversation?

What of those who work to serve us Sunday brunch – might I decide to go home for a meal so that I am not complicit in the system that makes them work.

Or those of us who go home to work in the kitchen to prepare a Sunday dinner. I wonder if we could prepare a meal ahead of time so that we could sit in the rocker and enjoy without having to prepare. Those who work at Publix so that we can get our deli sandwich fixings for lunch for the week ahead. I

wonder if I couldn't plan my meal preparation and grocery shopping differently. I remember being at a kibbutz in Israel on the Sabbath day that they observed. The communal meal was different than other days because there was no cooking, no use of appliances. People ate sandwiches or salads, simple fare.

May I be mindful of those who work so that I can enjoy what I like. Alas.

During this season of Lent, I encourage you, as am I, to think about when and where and how you create your Sabbath, your rest and how you help others live into theirs as well. This requires some intentionality. As you look at how you spend the rest of the day, perhaps there is one thing that you could omit or ratchet down or reschedule. So that you could have some real rest. And draw closer in relationship with those you love, with God's people. Perhaps there is one thing that you could add into your Sabbath day – perhaps reading, walking, strolling, napping, letting the dog (or cat) climb on to your lap.

The life of the slaves in Egypt was one of production, production for the sake of the ruler. Our life in Christ is so very different – his yoke is easy and his burden is light. Hear these words from The Message Bible, Jesus' words in Matthew 11: "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

This my dear ones, my fellow treasured ones of God, this is Sabbath. Set in what God has done for us and how we live together. May your Lent have a regular time of Sabbath because we are treasured ones of God claimed in the waters of our baptisms, marked with the cross of Christ forever in those covenantal waters. Named "Beloved."

Thanks be to God.