

The Story: New Commands and a New Covenant

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Date: 06 October 2019

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, Braymar Baptist. For anyone who doesn't know me, my name is Kent Dixon, and it's my privilege to be the lead pastor here. So just a quick announcement from me.

I will be away next Sunday, so Noel Sayers, the lovely and talented Noel Sayers, will be continuing our series and the story with the sermon, Wandering. Do you remember being a young child and your parents gave you rules to follow? Do you remember that? Do you remember how compliant you were following those rules without question, always obeying the rules and responding to what was asked of you? If you answered yes to this, I'm impressed. You must have had a very different childhood than I did. But actually, as I reflected on this, I've always been a people pleaser, as long as I can remember, really. And I've always been a diplomat and come from a family of diplomats, people who seek to maintain harmony in relationships, sometimes even at the expense of our own interests or feelings. Largely, we live in a world of rules, don't we? Take driving, for example. Emily is about to take her driving training for her license.

Every day, we either get into a vehicle or ride in one as a passenger. And whether we're driving to school, to work, to church, the store, or anywhere else, we follow countless rules without even noticing.

As drivers, we respond almost instinctively to what has come to be known as the rules of the road. We drive on the correct side of the road most of the time. We slow down or stop when we see certain signs or signals, generally. We go the correct direction on a one-way street. We merge when signals tell us to merge. And even on a relatively short trip, a driver may make literally, think about this, if you're drivers, you may literally make a hundred decisions based on the signs along the way.

The actions or the rules those signs represent, and then our inherent knowledge of those rules. And following these simple instructions is not about complicating the journey or spoiling the experiences along the way, as we enjoy all that the open road has to offer. And in the case of driving, these rules are quite simply about keeping us alive and ideally out of danger.

[2 : 51] These rules protect us, they direct us, and they keep us and others on the road safe. Without these rules to guide us and protect us, even the simplest of journeys could be chaotic, stressful, and even life-threatening. And even though most drivers obey the rules for the most part, you should hear me in the car on the way to church on weekday mornings, you can also likely point out times every single day that you're driving, and you see other drivers who either aren't familiar with the rules or obey them loosely.

Maybe sometimes that's you. I come from a long line of people with heavy feet. Yeah, true confessions. It's true, isn't it, dear?

That's why there are handprints in the dash on the passenger side, with Michelle's fingers. But I'm sure that you've seen firsthand how that seems to cause frustration when other people don't obey those rules. And at the worst of times, there's actual danger that you might experience, as other drivers don't pay attention.

You may have heard this story. A little five-year-old girl was having a trouble-filled day, arguing back and forth with her mother. Finally, her mother, exasperated, said, Jenny, I want you to sit in the corner right now, and don't you get up until I say that you can.

Little Jenny went over to the corner, sat for a few minutes, thought about it, and she yelled at her mother, Mom, I'm sitting on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside.

[4 : 46] Is that okay? Every one of us has an I'm standing up on the inside attitude, don't we?

I think that to some extent, every one of us wants to stand up, to buck authority and resist the rules. And I believe that's why we have trouble with the Ten Commandments, or at least the idea of them.

The Ten Commandments can cause us to view God sometimes as a judge and a cosmic killjoy. So as we continue our sermon series on the story, our sermon this morning is titled New Commands and a New Covenant.

And through that, I hope that we'll begin to see the Ten Commandments in an entirely new way. Listen to what the Bible says in Exodus 19, verse 1.

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, on the very day, they came to the desert of Sinai. Last week, you may remember that we saw how God freed his people from the oppression of the Egyptians, and with Moses to lead them, they crossed the Red Sea and entered a new land.

[6 : 06] God had promised to deliver his people, and through his mighty power, he brought this new nation out of Egyptian slavery and into freedom.

Now remember, God's ultimate plan is to be with us. God wants us to be his people, and he wants to be with his people.

In Exodus 20, verses 1 to 7, you may know this story or you may not. God gave to Moses the Ten Commandments, guidelines for how we are to treat both God and each other.

Simply put, the Ten Commandments are God's rules of the road for living in healthy relationship with both him and others.

And the most perfect model of relationship that we have as Christians is the relationship among the Trinity. Harmony. Mutual respect.

[7 : 14] Clearly defined roles that complement one another. A community of love. And I believe that at times we have glimpses of that perfect community and relationship within the church.

But sadly, we also see selfishness. Pride. Gossip. Grumpiness and resistance.

Self-interest. How often do we stop and recognize how me-focused we've become in the Western church? Think about that.

I don't like this song, this speaker, this whatever. I'm sure you can insert your own word there.

Something that has actually been a selfish or prideful thing that you have allowed to come between you and a healthy relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ or between you and God.

Something that you have simply allowed to get in the way. My friends, we need to get over ourselves. Because ultimately the church, God's people, God's plan, it is not about you.

[8 : 40] It's not about me. Yes, it includes you. But it's not about you. Not solely. We are Christians because of what God has done for us through Christ.

We are sinners, folks. And we have absolutely no hope without the saving work of Jesus Christ and God's great love for us.

And I challenge all of us this morning that when you find yourselves getting grumpy about something not being the way you would like, the way we've always done it, the way I'd really rather it be done, maybe it's time for us to focus back on God and what He wants.

We're not here to be entertained. We're here to fall on our knees in awe and love for the God who saved us.

And the one who loves us so deeply, folks, that He gave everything. Church is a privilege.

[9 : 55] It's not a right. It's an honor. It shouldn't be a chore. And it's not about you.

We're not here because we're entitled to anything, but because we're invited into relationship and community with God and with one another.

So instead of seeking for church to entertain us, I believe it's time for us to be reminded that it's about worshiping and serving God. and serving and loving others.

That's it. So with the Trinity as a perfect community of love, as our model and example, the Ten Commandments were given to us to help shape humanity into a loving community as well.

As I mentioned earlier, the Ten Commandments are nicely broken up for us into those that guide how we relate to God, commandments one to four, and those that guide how we are to treat other people, commandments five to ten.

[11 : 09] Nicely broken up. God likes to do that. It's interesting to note that the phrase, the Lord your God, is repeated five times throughout the section of Scripture that relates the Ten Commandments.

It couldn't be more clear that God is reminding the people, not just of that time, but of this day as well, that the authority behind these commandments belongs to Him.

There's a reason they're not called the Ten Suggestions, the Ten Opinions, the Ten, gosh, it'd be nice if you folks would.

commentators suggest that these are directives spoken by the Almighty God.

Do you get that? Directives from God. So the first commandment, let's read this together. You shall have no other gods before me.

[12:15] Now commentators suggest that the words before me can also be read as in opposition to me. Have you ever thought that the suggestion, even the suggestion, that there could be another God is both unbiblical for us as Christians, but also illogical?

Why? Why is that illogical? Because simply to declare God exists means to assert that He is infinite, eternal, sovereign over all things.

There is room for only one such being on the throne of the universe. Just one. Now the second commandment, let's read this together.

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

We've talked about this before, that an idol doesn't have to be a golden statue that sits in your house that you make offerings to. I think we get stuck on that word.

[13:28] An idol is simply anything that takes the place of or priority over God in your life. Anything to which we devote our energy or time or for which we make sacrifices because we love it and somehow serve it.

Think of things in your life that may have become idols for you. And I encourage you to confess that to God and allow him to rule over those things.

Some of them may not be wrong. Netflix is not inherently evil. Spending 12 hours streaming a show episode after episode may be a better way to spend your time.

Consumerism can become an idol. A job title can become an idol. Your salary can become an idol. Your family can become an idol. Worth thinking about.

The third commandment, let's read this together. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

[14:45] There's actually two meanings at work here. This commandment speaks not just about using the name of God in a vulgar or profane way, but also to swear an oath by God's name.

You hear people say, oh, for God's sake. Not great. And then there's the entire other list of various profanities that use the name of the Lord.

I've said to friends many times, you can use every other gross word in the vocabulary, but the ones that really bother me are those ones. If God's name is the name above all names, and Jesus himself teaches us to pray by beginning that the Lord's name is one to be hallowed, or as the term is defined, made holy or sacred, sanctified, sanctified, or consecrated, venerated.

We are granted access to God not only through his son, but through our relationship with him. A relationship based on God knowing us and us knowing God.

Use his name well. The fourth commandment, let's read this together, excuse me. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

[16:19] Recognizing the Sabbath was an important part of the Jewish tradition, but it also served as a statement to other people who saw the Sabbath as just another day.

Sabbath also means rest, which God modeled for us through creation. Not only there, but he gave it to us as a gift to create balance in our lives.

Proper rest, godly rest, is not laziness. I'm saying that to myself as much as anyone. It's a gift of refreshment and replenishment that God has given to us.

He doesn't expect you to work 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In fact, he's against it. I have the worst time shutting down. Michelle often she'll just say to me, take a break, take the day off, but I can't stop my wheels from turning.

I can't stop, I feel like I must clean the yard. I must, I should be doing something. And you've heard me say this over and over before, don't should all over yourself.

[17:36] Because that's not words from God. When you say I should do this, I shouldn't have done that, is that God? Probably not. We need to literally give ourselves a break.

And then beginning with the fifth commandment, we begin to see how God calls us to treat other people. In the fifth commandment, let's read this together.

Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land your Lord is giving you. As we can see through the Old Testament, the Jews were taught to respect age and to care for their senior citizens.

That was normal. That was healthy. So how dramatically different from our society, where we seem to value youth, we seem to value new and fresh.

But we forget that with age comes knowledge and experience and wisdom. So not only are we, this really struck me this week as I was studying this, not only are we to honor in this passage our own fathers and mothers in the sense of a literal recognition of our parents.

[19 : 00] That's how I've always read it. Maybe you have as well. But think about it this way in addition. We're also to honor the fathers and mothers of generations past.

Read that into it as well because that is intended to be there. Not just our own fathers and mothers, but the ones who have come before. We're to honor our history and what we've learned through previous generations.

The sixth commandment, let's read this together. You shall not murder. That's pretty clear, isn't it? That's a fairly clear and obvious directive, right?

We're not to kill someone else. That makes sense. For one, it's against the law. But more than that, we're to fundamentally respect and value all human life.

And even before that, we're to be aware of the desires and feelings that may lead to the desire to take another life.

[20 : 10] Pride, jealousy, anger, oh, I'm so angry I could kill that guy. Resentment, selfish emotions that can lead to selfish actions with devastating consequences.

The seventh commandment, let's read this one together. You shall not commit adultery. The family is the basic unit of God's people.

And so faithfulness to the marriage contract is the foundation of family. It's the essential aspect of that core, core piece.

adultery breaks the marriage contract. It breaks trust. It damages relationship. And while God will forgive the sin of adultery, that initial act, as is the case with so many human things that we do, so many things that we don't think through, there are repercussions like dropping a stone in a pond. individuals and families are casualties of adultery. And they will usually still suffer the broken relationships and hurt that comes from that.

[21 : 33] And I've talked to you before about how someone's action, we may forgive them and move on, but that initial action changes you. And so that's what we're talking about when it comes to adultery.

And so I'm not putting a guilt trip on anyone who's had those circumstances happen in their life, not at all, because God's grace will cover that. But it's important to honor that commitment, that relationship.

The eighth commandment, reading this together, you shall not steal. Again, pretty clear, and it seems straightforward, that if something doesn't belong to you, regardless of what that something is, don't take it.

In a very fundamental way, respecting someone else's property not only shows respect for that person, but if you thought of this, it also speaks to your personal integrity at the same time.

And remember, stealing in secret doesn't mean God doesn't know. Worth thinking about. The ninth commandment, you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

[22 : 57] So, false testimony certainly suggests giving an accurate account of something in a legal sense, right? There's very legal language there. But more than that, it simply speaks to the importance of not lying.

And again, this speaks to our character and integrity. If you say one thing and do something else, what does it say about your character? If you judge someone else for their behavior in a certain way, and then do the same thing yourself, what does that say about your character?

character? This one, we all know, let's say it together. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

For this, for me, it speaks to the I want tendency that we see in society in general, and possibly even in our lives, our own lives.

Do you ever think to yourself, boy, if I just had, if I just had a new car, oh, I'd be set. That's mine. I say that one. If I just had a little more money, if I just a hair, just like 50 grand more a year, if I had a bigger house, you know, 1,500 square feet, but 30 500, that is ideal.

[24 : 31] A more important sounding title, coordinator versus executive director. Oh, boy. You know what that is, though, don't you?

It's human ambition in isolation from God. It's our striving in ourselves. It's our short-sighted, often selfish way of looking at this world.

It's our way of chasing after the next thing. Oh, if I had that. Or a little bit more, just a slight, just a half a slice more.

Our sense that just a little more, just a little something would be enough. But we recognize that that will ultimately never satisfy us, because we always push the margin again.

And what we're doing there is trying to meet a need, meet a gap, meet an ache in our hearts that only God can fill. Keep trying, it won't work.

[25 : 40] I know that myself. If you remember way back when I was called to candidate, I say way back, it's only been seven months, but it feels like way back.

doesn't it? In a bad way? Not in a bad way, I hope. But I preached a sermon a few weeks before Christmas and I talked about this very issue, the fact that we have an inherent yearning.

We have that in us and it's a longing to be satisfied. But it's not wrong. It's not sinful, it's not prideful. God made us this way. God made us to long for something more. To feel a sense of something missing in this world and in this life.

My friends, that is because we're made to find wholeness and complete peace only in a relationship with God. We try and stuff other stuff in there and it doesn't work because it's not meant to.

[26 : 48] Only when we stop striving, stop wanting, stop straining, is God able to speak the truth to us and meet us where we are.

And through the Ten Commandments, we get a clear picture of what it means to live in healthy relationships. Not just with God, but with others as well.

As commentator Warren Wiersbe says, the Ten Commandments end with an emphasis on being a good neighbor. For the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself.

If we love our neighbors, guess what? We won't covet what they have. We won't steal from them. We won't lie about them.

or do any of the other things that God prohibits in his word. If we put God and others first, that other stuff won't be as appealing.

[27 : 55] God gave these commandments to Moses so that we would know how to live in harmony with both God and one another. And they're as relevant for us today as they were when God originally gave them.

God gives these new commands and this new covenant to the people through Moses. This Mosaic covenant has its known.

And it shows God at work again to bring us back to him. But while Moses is with God receiving the Ten Commandments, what are the Israelites doing?

They get impatient. they get bored. They get self-interested again. And they pressure Aaron into helping him meet their needs, their temporary needs, by helping them build a calf to worship rather than God.

And then Moses intercedes on behalf of the people and God agrees to not wipe them out. but he sends them into the land he has promised them and he does not go with them.

[29 : 16] You read in Exodus, God says, you stiff-necked people. He blesses them but he will not go with them. And in Exodus we read in great detail about God's instructions for building a tabernacle.

Pages and pages and pages. very specific instructions. Ephods and gold and carving and the Ark of the Covenant. Read it, it's fascinating.

It's heavy, architectural, but it's fascinating. These were instructions for building a place where God would live and meet with his people.

And after all that had happened, after the stubbornness and rebellion of the people, God still wanted to be with them. That was still his plan.

As we continue on in Scripture into the book of Leviticus, you can read that on your own, we read a great deal about God's requirements for offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings and other kinds.

[30 : 28] But why was that necessary? God requires that sin be atoned for, paid, covered, by the shedding of blood, by sacrifice.

And as I've mentioned in previous weeks, our sin nature is the main thing that keeps us separated from God. And each one of us has that.

We have that standing up on the inside nature. And so our sin must be dealt with, must be covered, must be atoned for somehow.

For the Jewish people of that day, the sacrificing of animals became the central focus of the priestly sacrificial system. So that sin, that rebellion of the people, would be constantly atoned for, constantly covered.

The new nation needed their sins to be covered so that God could dwell with them. The rebellion of the golden calf, the intercession of Moses, and the gracious forgiveness of God made it possible for God to dwell with his people again.

[32 : 00] And of course, we know where this story ultimately winds up. Jesus himself comes as our great high priest, and his blood, once and for all, atones for, covers.

With the blood of Jesus, with his sacrifice, you are restored in relationship with God. I mentioned the tabernacle, the movable tent that the Hebrews built where God would come down and live with them.

My friends, through Jesus, we are now the place where God dwells. We are that new tabernacle. The church is not a building. The church is us, God's people. And we are the place where God resides.

This morning, we've taken a closer look at the Ten Commandments, the rules that God gave his people, gave us, to help us as we relate both to him and to others.

[33 : 29] And I encourage you to seek to follow these rules in your actions, in your words, in your relationships.

And while you seek to follow them, consider how you're following them as well. God's God's love. Because we may obey the rules when we think someone else is watching.

Whether out of a desire to be seen as a good person, or perhaps out of a desire for recognition. In Matthew 6, verse 1, Jesus is very clear about how we are to behave, particularly in relation to our behavior.

behavior. But let's read this together. Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

And Jesus continues in verse 5 when he gives us the correct perspective on prayer. And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others.

[34 : 49] This morning through communion, the Lord's Supper, we celebrate what it means to be the people of God in community with one another under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

And it's through communion that we both reflect individually and as a community on the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. And as I've said before, as we celebrate communion together this morning, we approach this table, not as a Bramard Baptist Church table, but as the Lord's table to which he calls us to freely come.

My friends, you are welcome at this table by God's grace, whether you've kept the Ten Commandments this week or not.

It's not a condition. Let's take a moment of quiet reflection before we come to the table together. Bo best noon here.

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