

Exodus 20:1-21

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- [0 : 00] God's Word before us this morning. How do we as believers respond to ten words, ten commandments as they're known?
- Last week we found the newly formed nation of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai. Now, awestruck by the presence of God on the mountain.
- But as we read a little bit further as we have in today's text, we find that what actually happened on last week was but a prelude, an introduction to the meeting on the mountain.
- Today we return to the mountain where we get to hear two sets of voices. In verses 1 through 17, we hear the voice of God from the mountain.
- In verses 18 through 21, we hear the voices of the people of God who have gathered at the foot of the mountain.
- [1 : 22] Two sets of voices, if you will. On the one hand, God speaking. On the other hand, His people responding to what God has said.
- Did you notice that our text today begins with the voice of God in verse 1? And God spoke all these words saying, huh?
- God is speaking. Here we hear His, we don't hear the trumpet sound today, but the people in that day heard the trumpet sounding, majestic, authoritative voice of God, and it became discernible to them.
- There were words, and there were words that they understood. And that's the introduction, verse 1. And it's enough to get us into the narrative for today.
- What they had seen up to this point was enough to generate an emotional kind of response. They were fearful. But responding to God requires more than an emotional response.
- [2 : 44] I mean, as we gather, I mean, sometimes we really can get emotional upon hearing God's word or being in the service. It can be a very, very emotional experience.
- But hearing God's word demands more from us than our feelings, huh? What the Lord wanted to communicate demanded that He communicate with the people using words that would provide them guidance, give them direction, so that they could fulfill their calling in the world.
- And what was that calling? Look again. We see it in Exodus chapter 19, verses 5 and 6 from last week's text.
- Now, therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine.
- And here it is. And you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that used to speak to the people of Israel.
- [3 : 59] That was their call. God had a role for them in their world in the days of old.
- So the Lord speaks. He speaks to the people who was rescued from Egyptian bondage. And what He says answers a question. And the question is one that is right for the people of God of any generation.

Here's the question. How should those who are rescued by God and commissioned by God, how should they live in the world?

God's words answered that question for them. How should those who are rescued by God and they have been commissioned by God, chapter 19, verses 5 and 6, how then should they live in the world?

If you belong to Jesus on this morning, you have been rescued by God and you have been commissioned by God as far as what you are to do in this world.

[5 : 10] And we need to ask ourselves, how then should we live? How should you and I live in a city where three-year-olds like Devon Quinn hospitalized just a few blocks away at Comer Children's Hospital, how can we live in a world where children like that are not safe?

How should we live? Huh? How should we live when a country, once again, where we're shocked by the deaths of those who pay the ultimate price for, without sufficient cost, even this week?

Huh? How should the people of God live in a nation that mourns the loss of lives of innocent citizens and the loss of the lives of officers charged with upholding the law?

Huh? How should we live? You ever ask yourself that? Do these things come to mind to us as God's people as far as what might be our posture in this kind of world?

How do we live in a world where life is cheap for some and devalued by those who are bent on taking the lives of others, terrorists, if you will, even if it costs their own life?

[6 : 38] How should we live? I believe the answer from the text is this. Those who are rescued by God should live under the words of God.

Those who are rescued by God should live under the words of God. We say, Pastor Jay, what do you mean?

The text will help us to see what I mean, huh? The words that make up what we know as the Ten Commandments were the foundation stones, the core principles, if you will, for how God's people were to live in the world in that day.

Keywords. Now, we're going to talk about other in the chapters that are following, there are going to be things that flow out from these foundation stones, various stipulations, guidelines for the people.

But here's the foundation here for the people of God of that era. I believe Ted Koppel got it right a few years ago.

[7 : 51] Broadcast journal. Some of you may not know him. He no longer occupies that role. But he picked up on the valuable core truths that we find here. Huh? It's a 1987 commencement address at Duke University.

That's what he says. The sheer brilliance of the Ten Commandments is that they codify a handful of words, acceptable human behavior, not just for then or now, but for all time.

Language evolves. Power shifts from nation to nation. Messages are transmitted with the speed of light. Man erases one frontier after another.

And yet we and our behavior and the commandments which govern that behavior remain the same. The tension between those commandments and our, listen to this, baser instincts provide the grist for journalism's daily meal.

What a huge gaping void there will be in our informational flow and in our entertainment without routine violation of the sixth commandment. Thou shall not murder.

[9 : 02] They've always been imperfect role models, false gods of material success, and shallow fame, but now their influence is magnified by television and iPhones and phone cameras and all of that.

I caution you as one who performs on the daily flickering altar to set your sights beyond what you see. There's true majesty in the concept of an unseen power which can neither be measured nor weighed.

There's harmony and inner peace to be found in following a moral compass that points in the same direction regardless of the fashion or trend.

How should we live? First of all, we should live as people characterized by devotion to God. See that in the text?

Look at the introduction where God introduces himself. We see his identity in verse 2. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

[10 : 16] God was the deliverer, the liberator, if you will, the one who had rescued them out of Egyptian bondage and slavery.

Huh? He had holy plans and purposes for them and in the world and their lives were to reflect a radical, a radical devotion to him.

And we see that in the verses that follow it. Huh? The first two commands, the Lord mandates a commitment that is consistent with his nature and the person, his person and what he had done for them.

Look at the text. You shall have no other gods before me. You should not make for yourself a carved image or a likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water underneath the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or serve them for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

[11 : 26] No gods, beside God or in preference to him. Here God demands from his people, Old Testament people of old, Christians today, ultimate allegiance.

And as the one who has liberated us, freed us, he can command that, he can demand that. Exclusive devotion to God.

What that requires of you, me, is that we adopt a thou and thou only first in my heart kind of mentality.

No rival deities. No rival thrones, if you will. A God first mentality.

Is that how you think? Is that how you roll on today? Verse 4 forbids the making of anything that would take the place of God.

[12 : 30] One writer notes that the second commandment is about limiting God. Anything that you and I create as God, it limits God who has no limitations.

Anything that we set up, any altar that we bow down to, other than that of the living God, how it limits him. But he's not in that vein at all.

How big is God? How big and wide his vast domain to try to tell these lips can only start. He's big enough to feel the mighty universe that he's small enough to live within our hearts.

Nothing should have the allegiance or the devotion that rightly belongs to God. So how do you stand?

Where's your allegiance? Where's your devotion? Who's occupying the God space or the space that rightly belongs to God in your life?

[13 : 42] Are there other things or other people that tread on territory that should be reserved for God and God alone?

Verse 5 speaks about the implications of idolatry for those who ignore this mandate. And verse 6 notes the far-reaching blessings to those who honor God.

Did you notice that? Speaks about visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children of the third and fourth generation of those who hate me? But then there's something else.

There's an alternative to that. It's showing steadfast love. The great Old Testament word *chesed*. Covenant love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandment.

Huh? Exclusive devotion to God also involves the proper use of his name. Verse 7. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

[14 : 42] For the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. It's basically talking about the misuse of the abuse of God's name. Where his name is not being properly invoked.

Certain things that are inconsistent with his character and what he actually stands for that cannot be rightfully done in his name. There's certain things that God would not another way of putting it is to put his signature too.

And you can't do certain things and expect his approval to it. Again, that's a violation of the use of his name. Sort of like forging God's signature to something that he does not approve.

Misappropriation or misrepresentation of his name even by those who are called by his name. This is what it means to live like a Christian.

If you're going to name the name a Christian, represent that name well. Exclusive devotion to God also involves recognition or entry into divinely established patterns.

[15 : 56] You see that in verses 8 and following? Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy? six days you shall labor and do all your work but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the larger God only you shall not do any work you or your son your daughter again basically he's talking about entering into a pattern that has been established by God mimicking God's rhythms!

God established by an all wise God who cares for his creation. Exclusive! devotion to God.

Isn't this something that Jesus stressed in his teaching? Turn over with me to Matthew chapter 22 in verses 34 to 40.

Jesus in his teaching again he elevates what we see in principle here and sums up the teaching of the Ten Commandments but also we find him in the Sermon on the Mount giving fuller sense to the spirit of the Ten Commandments so it's not simply an act it's what's underneath the act and what goes on in one's heart 22 34 to 40 but when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees they gathered together and one of them a lawyer asked him a question to test him teacher what is the great commandment of the law he said to him you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your mind this is the first again it's a summary of the first tablet or the first four commandments this is the great and first commandment and the second is like it you!

love your neighbor as yourself on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets again foundational kinds of things first commandment a great commandment summarizes the four commands they require devotion to God no leftovers our world needs Chicago needs people who are captured by undivided exclusive devotion for God so the question this morning have you been rescued by God through Christ does that show in your devotion does that show in your commitments and your witness in the world as eight God's agents in the world does your devotion to God display itself as you posture yourself in this world people how do we live in this world as people characterized by exclusive devotion to

[18 : 58] God as represented by the first four commands that we see in verses three through eleven but not only are we to be known by our devotion to God we are also to be characterized by as people by our respectful dealings with people in this world devotion to God or another way of saying it is reverence for God but also in our respect or our respectful dealings with people did you notice in verse four just as we are to be people characterized by devotion to God we are also to be characterized by respectful dealings with people and this is wonderfully appropriate that this begins where does all of this begin it begins in the home honor your father and mother that your days may be long in the land that the

Lord your God is giving you in the home parents is God's agents teachers leaders nurturers that's where it begins honoring them and children never forget that your parents are on assignment for God in this world as it concerns you your nurture your growth they love you and they care for you never want you to go wrong and you never go wrong when you honor them I tell you it's it's wonderful to get a little bit of mileage on you in life and I mean you don't have to be in your 60s to get mileage but I am matter of fact and if you want to say I got something to add that I'm closer to 70 than 60 all right but the point is this so true that you live and learn and

I mean even as those of you who have parents that are adults but anyway you slice it to know that parents are God's gifts and God's agents in the world and to love them and to honor them and to respect them I never will forget an act that my wife showed to my mother as far as what it meant to honor a parent my mother had a knee replacement that would not get well and it was such an ugly detestable kind of wound but I went to the kitchen and there was my wife washing my mother's wounded leg again this was not her mother this was my mother again that that's what it means to honor a parent there are there are sometimes it could be a little difficult entering into adult parents worlds you don't raise your hand don't don't say ouch whatever but but seriously but honor goes all the way from

Brooklyn and Gwendolyn up here on the front row to older people like me if you got your parents honor them love them care for honor and respecting people begins in the home to have it happening in that domain loving and caring and I mean sometimes you honor and respect in some homes it's just a one way street you honor me and that's it and everybody honors me but it's a multi lane highway it should be respect but again this is where it's nurtured in the home this is where it begins don't try to export respect if you're not exercising it within the place that you call your home honoring it means various things in various stages of life but can also stress on this morning that respectful dealings with people extend to all people all lives matter all lives matter you don't have to put any color before that or after it all lives matter unfortunately there has developed in the world a certain kind of pecking order and mentality that is persistent in our world and in our country yet you and I must share

God's perspective on these matters all life is sacred from conception and beyond regardless of one's color or their abilities or their disabilities all lives matter so to say Pastor Jay where are you going with that we're living under God's word and in principle the major principle living under God's word involves exclusive devotion to him but also demands exercising respect to all people regardless of gender and dare say even regardless of sexual orientation respect is in order for all lives life friends is sacred and if there's any place that that needs to be recognized it's among those who have been rescued by

[25 : 53] God those who have been received the grace of God it needs to be housed among us it needs to be nurtured among us it needs to be recognized from us as those who are God's agent in the world we've got to uphold recognize we've got to uphold the standard as far as people will characterize by respect in our dealings with all people but did you notice that respect for people also includes life is to be respected not dishonored by taking life I was shocked a little bit as I looked at the Hebrew on this and I was trying to see what was it that was getting the emphasis in the text and as in languages sometimes the first word or the last word gives you the first word in the verses is the Hebrew word low and that's not the not gets the emphasis where you see in the text thou shall not not as up front that gets the emphasis as we see in verses 13 and even prior to that again that's where basically say know this among you is

God's people none of this and none of that and I thought maybe the and I was trying not to emphasize the not but the text does emphasize it basically this is not to be a part of your dealings with one another no murder don't dishonor another by taking life and not only that the respect for relationships the sanctity of the marital bond in verse 14 you shall no adultery no sexual impropriety outside of the biblical boundaries one man for one woman for one lifetime those are the biblical boundaries I didn't set them sexual relational conduct is in view no sexual misconduct it's what's here among those who have been rescued out of the world and he wants them to live under live under the word living under god's word no disrespect for property should not steal no disrespect as far as respect for the reputation of others by not witnessing falsely as it relates to them true telling is to prevail no false witnessing so did you notice the movement from the external to the internal in verse 17 you shall not covet!

Again that's that strong internal desires your neighbor's house wife or whatever he possesses it doesn't belong to you living under how are we to live in this world we're to live under god's word that calls for exclusive devotion to god first four commandments and respectful dealings with others beginning in the home last six commandments these were things that were prescriptive for god's people as far as what they were to do they should live as redeemed people but then as you move from god's word speaking prescriptively we move into the people's response descriptively as far as looking at how they respond you see that in verses 18 and following when all the people saw the thunder and flashes of lightning the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking the people were afraid and trembled and stood afar off this is their response it's describing that force and

Moses said you speak to us this is the people's response we'll listen but don't let god speak to us lest we die look how Moses he lives the people but then he responds to them said don't fear for god has come to you to test you as a matter of fact there's a great commentary on this um deuteronomy chapter four turn over there and again it helps to explain what we see that's going on here this is an after the fact deuteronomy chapter four verse ten it's an after the fact kind of deal he's Moses is on his final leg it's about to god is about to retire him and so he speaks to them on the other side of close to 40 years of the wilderness and here he is uh deuteronomy four verse ten how on that day you stood before the lord your god at horeb same as sinai the lord said to me gather the people to me that i may let them hear my words so that they may learn to fear me all the days of that they live on the earth or learn to reverence god and that they may teach their children so and you came near and stood at there they are at the foot of the mountain while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven wrapped in dark cloud and gloom then the lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire you heard the sound of words but saw no form there was no voice and he declared to you his!

covenant which he commanded! you to form that is the ten commandments there it is and he wrote them on two tablets of stone and the lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules that you might do them in the land that you're going over to possess again a reiterating of what we see in Exodus again why it was and how it was that God was speaking in and to speak!

[32 : 51] Lord I love the song that we sometimes sing speak oh Lord as we come to you to receive the food of your holy word take your truth planted deep in us shape and fashion us in your likeness that the light of Christ may be seen today in our acts of love and our deeds of faith oh speak oh Lord and fulfill in us all your purposes for your glory how shall we live in this world under God's words Moses words are instructive for us the bottom line is that when God speaks his people must listen so that we can function in this world as we should how should we be as rescued people live from a New Testament perspective we should live under God's word crow