

"Your Cheatin' Heart"  
August 11, 2019  
St. Paul's UCC Church  
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**Deuteronomy 5 (selected verses)**

Moses convened all Israel, and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day. Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. Neither shall you commit adultery. Neither shall you steal. Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor. Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife. Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

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Welcome to the seventh week of our summer series on the Ten Commandments! For ten weeks, we will focus on each one of the Ten Commandments – Ten Gifts, Ten Promises. I will preach on these commandments; but not only that, I will interpret the commandments musically as well! The Music of the Ten Commandments.

But first, a little review. I was off last week, so let's review those Ten Commandments again. And, of course, my favorite way to do that is by way of song! So here is the song I wrote for our first Sunday on the Ten Commandments. This introduces all of them and puts them in context. (I would love it if the children could come forward and help me sing this one...)

Exodus and Deuteronomy both contain the Ten Commandments,  
Ten words written out of love.

Martin Luther said one time that to know the Ten Commandments  
Is to know the entire Word from God above.

So, children, let's hear them now

And see what they reveal,

These words from God whose love is now made real.

*The Ten Commandments, from God to you and me.*

*The Ten Commandments, from God to set us free.*

*Years, they pass and Jesus our Lord says sometime later,*

*It's all about this love for God and neighbor.*

First thing's first: our God is first, there's nothing or no one before God.  
The second one says, no idols that are grave.  
Third, don't take God's name in vain,  
And fourth, remember the Sabbath;  
A day of rest, our dignity will save.  
Five, honor Mom and Dad; and six, no more killing,  
My heart is hurting when you are not willing.

But wait, there's more! There's also number seven: no adultery.  
This protects relationships so well.  
Eight, you shall not steal; and nine, you shall not bear false witness.  
That means that no lie is yours to tell.  
Ten says don't be jealous, don't think others have it all.  
When we covet others' stuff, we just feel small.

Today, we are looking at the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery."

Remember that we are now in the second "table" (or section) of commandments, which is all about care for the neighbor. We cannot have a right relationship with the divine if we don't have one with our neighbor. In other words, it's not just our relationship with God that matters; but our relationship with one another, with our neighbor, matters too. It matters a lot. God cares a lot about how we treat each other.

And how does God want us to treat each other? God wants us to treat each other with respect, with love, with grace. God wants us to have boundaries around our behavior towards one another, because God wants us to be free.

Yes, God wants us to be free. God wants us to have good boundaries because God wants us to be free. Seems kind of like a paradox, doesn't it? Try this example. Taking our commandment from last week, "You shall not murder/kill," if you feel like your life is unsafe or if someone is treating you in a way where your safety is threatened, you feel terribly "unfree," right? Feeling at ease and safe from physical harm is enormously freeing. The boundary of not killing each other, and not having to worry about our safety, makes us free.

Now, let's look at our commandment for this week, "You shall not commit adultery." It's amazing what happens when there is trust in a marriage. So much freedom, so much room, so much grace! But if there's a threat to that, if you're not sure that your spouse is being faithful to you, once again – like with feeling physically unsafe – this is terribly un-freeing. You feel bound, small, afraid when trust is broken. You feel unfree and small and un-generous if you don't know that you can rely on the person with whom you have made this commitment of fidelity.

One of the best examples of this feeling is embodied in the great country singer Hank Williams. I love this song because he not only sings about this small feeling, this "un-free" feeling of being bound – not just for himself, but for the one who cheated on him, too. Breaking trust not only affects the ones we break the trust with; it affects *us* – the so-called "cheaters" – too.

Your Cheatin' Heart (Hank Williams)

Your cheatin' heart will make you weep  
You'll cry & cry, and try to sleep  
But sleep won't come the whole night through  
Your cheatin' heart will tell on you.

*When tears come down like pourin' rain  
You'll toss around and call my name  
You'll walk the floor the way I do  
Your cheatin' heart will tell on you.*

Your cheatin' heart will pine some day  
And crave the love you threw away  
The time will come when you'll be blue  
Your cheatin' heart will tell on you.

Church, this is one of the great paradoxes of our faith: *Freedom requires laws, or rules, or boundaries, in order to work.* Expectations of faithfulness within a marriage or partnership are boundaries in which we can be free *and* where our partner (neighbor!) can be free. The law, or the commandment “you shall not commit adultery” is the boundary around our commitment to faithfulness. And that boundary makes us free.

*I am bound to be free, I am bound to be free  
I commit myself to you, and I am bound, I choose to be bound  
Our love is bound to be free*

Here are the boundaries and here are the walls  
Here are the fences that we make  
But not for suppression, no. They are not that tall.  
It's only that whole lives are here at stake:  
And what I really want our love to be free.

And when I say, “I love you,” my words do not suffice  
And drawing lines is how we will begin  
I want for you to trust me – and that's more than being nice  
I commit to choosing you, just you!, again:  
Come, Holy Spirit, come make our love free.

I know, I know, it's not the most romantic notion – binding ourselves in love in order to free ourselves. It's not exactly the stuff that Hollywood movies are made of. But there's something deeply *grown-up* in binding ourselves to one another in this way. Making commitments to one another – and keeping them – not only leads us to love one another more deeply, it also leads us to love ourselves more deeply... all of which, in my book, leads to an even greater love of God.

Loving God, neighbor and self... sound familiar? Not a bad set of grown-up “rules” to live by!

Thanks be to God!