

“All I Need”
September 1, 2019
St. Paul’s UCC Church
Rev. Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy

Exodus 20:1-17

Then God spoke all these words: 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; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. 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. 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.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Whew, we did it! Welcome to the *last* Sunday on our Ten Commandment series, “The Music of the Ten Commandments,” where I have attempted to preach *and* interpret musically the Ten Commandments of Holy Scripture. I don’t know about you, but this has been a very meaningful and deepening several weeks. I hope and pray that the music of the Ten Commandments will continue to sing in us, beyond the summer, into the weeks, months and years ahead.

I’d like to start today by sharing the song I sang our very first Sunday, the song that captures all of the Ten Commandments in one fell swoop. This will remind us of the bigger picture, and where we’ve been this summer. Please, sing along!

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 final one, number ten of the Ten Commandments, "You shall not covet." You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor. You shall not be jealous of your neighbor, wish you had the life they have.

Here is what is behind this commandment: if I'm coveting someone else, then I must think that I am lacking in some way, right? If I'm looking over at Neighbor Joe or Jane, and thinking I want what they have, then on some level, I believe I'm incomplete. That I'm lacking, that I'm not whole or good. When I covet someone else, I think that life, or happiness, is really somewhere else, and not right in front of me.

Remember how much God wants us to be free? That is the theme of all the commandments, really – how much God yearns for us to be free, and no longer in bondage. And coveting – or desiring what someone else has – becomes its own kind of bondage. If I'm thinking, "If I only had such-and-such, or if I were like so-and-so, *then* I would be happy," then this desire is claiming me. It's limiting me. If I think that real life is somewhere else, then I'm not free. I'm still in bondage.

By the way, that's what our whole advertising industry is about, what consumerism is all about. Those ads on TV or on the internet, they tell us: "You're not enough. You need these shoes, this car, this whatever-it-is to be whole." But these ads do nothing less than reinforce that we need something else – either another product, or maybe even another totally different life – in order to be fully human, or fully good.

And, once again, when we are comparing ourselves to someone else, we are not free.

I wrote a song about this whole comparison thing so many of us do when we looked at the second commandment about idolatry, and it's just as relevant as it was several weeks ago:

She is better, she is brighter, she can do it all.
She's the expert, she's the good one, standing there so tall.

And me, I lose my way. And me, I can't compare. And me, I'm failing every day.

He is loved, and he is fun and he is full of light.
He always smiles, he's so at ease, he's never had to fight.

And me, I'm not okay. And me, I just fall short. And me, I'm failing every day.

O God, hear my prayer as I compare. As I cry out, it isn't fair. And do you care?

All I want to do, O God, is run away for good.
My spirit's draining out of me, my hope runs out like blood.

So hear my prayer, O God. And help to pull me up.
Anoint my head and fill my cup.

I want to hear your words again that you created me.
I want to hear that I am loved, I long to be set free.

So hear my prayer, O God. Revive me once again. And turn my enemy to friend.

*O God, hear my prayer as I compare.
And take away all this despair. And meet me there.*

Of course, God cares. And this last commandment, "you shall not covet," frees us to completely reject whatever gets in the way of telling us that we are whole and enough and good *just as we are*. This commandment reminds us to let go of what we think we desire, and replace it with the desire for the one true God, the God who made and who loves us, the God who frees us from comparing ourselves to others, who frees us from telling ourselves that we are not enough just as we are.

In the love of God, we have everything we need. Everything. We don't need anything else. We have enough. We are enough. That is what my final song is about:

Everything, every, every, every, everything.

*I have all that I need, all that I need
You meet me here, and give me all I need.*

You lay me down. Beside the quiet waters, lay me down.
You fill me up. Oil on my head and in my cup.
You still my breath. Though wars will rage around me, still my breath.
Restore my soul. I'm tired and I'm sad; restore my soul.

Thanks be to God!