

THE 10 FREEDOMS

Exodus 20:1-17

Have 10 commandments will travel. Judge Roy Moore, once the Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, was removed from office in 2003 after he lost his stubborn fight to keep a carved granite monument to the 10-commandments in his courthouse. He personally commissioned the making of the monument and had it installed in the dead of night in 2001. Judge Moore, a failed candidate for Governor of Alabama but a prized speaker for those in the religious right, now takes the behemoth with him wherever he goes on speaking tours. He's been lugging the 5,280 pound monument with him on a flat bed truck. That's over 500 lbs per commandment! Whenever he brings the monument back to Alabama a 57 foot I-beam crane that spans the ceiling of the Clark Memorials warehouse drops down to retrieve the rock from its chariot, and even this one – a five tone crane! – buckles visibly under the weight.

That's how we tend to think of the 10 commandments as weighty rules carved in stone. They are heavy burdens to be followed.

But that is not how the scriptures present them. The 10 commandments are not set in heavy stone but rather in airy freedom. *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."* The 10 Commandments are presented to us as a freedom song! The God who sets his people free proclaims the fruit of what that freedom entails. Instead of heavy rules for behavior perhaps our perspective on the *Decalogue* would change if we thought of them as the *10 Freedoms*.

(1) Ours is a God of liberation. The first great freedom affirms that we are free not to need other gods. We are freed from all kinds of slavery by a God who loves us. We are free to love the God who sets us free and not sell ourselves back into bondage for a pittance of false promises and illusory pleasures.

(2) We are free to let go of the gods of our own fashioning. We no longer need to worship technology, nor celebrities, nor sports stars, nor politicians, nor the newest *American Idol*, nor our own schemes and plans. We can let them all go for we have a God who is the real deal, not something we fashion ourselves and elevate to the status of worship.

(3) We are free to speak God's name with reverence and awe, with love and respect. Our God has made himself known – revealed himself to us. In Jesus God has come among us as one of us – flesh of our flesh and bone of our bones. We are free to call on him to speak to him and be with him as a living Person. What an amazing gift to call on the name of the Lord our God.

(4) We are free and encouraged to rest. We don't have to work 24-7! God gives us a day of rest and relaxation. God himself set the pattern sanctifying a day of rest. What a gift in our frantic world and hectic lives to have the freedom and encouragement to rest! I know one parish where members took a parish-wide Lenten vow to each take a 24-hour

Sabbath each week. Each person is encouraged to choose his or own day of Sabbath and to truly rest on that day.

(5) We are free to love and honor our parents who gave us life and shaped who we are. We are free to be a son or daughter who honors our parents. It is a privilege to grow up and come to know them as fellow-adults. It is a privilege to care for them when they need it as they cared for us when we were tiny.

(6) We are freed from any obligation for revenge. We don't have to act in anger or hate. We are free to turn the other cheek when someone strikes us. We don't have to let resentment and hurt and anger build up inside us. We can let it go. As we have been loved, so we are able to love. As God has loved us so we can love others.

(7) We are free to love our spouse, our partner. We are encouraged to invest ourselves in each other, to grow together, to love and be loved, to share a mutuality of trust. We are free to love and to cherish for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health till death parts us.

(8) We are free to be trustworthy and to build a community of trust. We are free to live with integrity so that we can look anyone – a police officers, our boss, an IRS auditor, or a music copywrite holder – in the eye and know that we have not taken anything that did not belong to us.

(9) We are free to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. We don't need to cover our tracks, to hide behind a web of deceit, to tell lie after lie. We are free to be real and genuine.

(10) We have freedom from *want*... freedom from wanting so many things, freedom from wishing we had more money, more fancy toys and gadgets, freedom from needing to have *more*. Advertising doesn't have to have power over us.

Our Lord who set us free from the bondage of sin and death invites us to claim the freedom of obedience. For the 10 Commandments can be 10 great freedoms into fuller, deeper, richer life if we practice them.

Thankfully also we have a God who frees us from all the ways we have fallen short of those 10 great freedoms, who forgives us and dusts us off when we fall and encourages us to live more passionately, more truly, more fully, more deeply.

But commandments written in stone can sometimes be hard to follow. And they can be weighty. God promised through his prophets that one day he would write his Law of freedom not in stone but in our hearts. Jesus brings us that New Covenant. He didn't do away with the Old Covenant but fulfilled it and transformed it. He replaces the Temple as proclaimed in today's Gospel. With the resurrection it is rebuilt in 3 days. Jesus is now the place of worship, the life of holiness. The temple that is destroyed is the temple of Jesus' own Body broken and bruised and nailed to a cross for us. His blood washes us

clean from our sins and wrongs. In his brokenness and suffering he identifies with us in all our hurts and sorrow. His resurrection promises us new life. The gift of his Holy Spirit poured out upon us helps us to live in a new way.

The Law in that New Covenant is summarized quite simply and profoundly. *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all our strength and with all your mind. The second commandment is like it, love your neighbor as yourself.* That is the profound Law to be written on our hearts. For if we love God with everything we are and everything we have and if we love our neighbor as ourselves we will be fulfilling all the Law.

In the Old Covenant and now even more in the New Covenant we have a God who has set us free. His Law, whether the 10-Commandments, other Biblical rules and ethical principles, or Jesus' profound a simple summary of the Law, remains in him an invitation to freedom.

God's Law is far more than a 5280 lb behemoth set in stone, but rather an invitation to a life of obedience, faith and freedom. With God's Law written on our hearts and the 10-Commandments (or 10-Freedoms) as our guide we are free indeed. **Amen.**