

3-18-18

Exodus 20: 12-10

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Last Sunday Calvin talked about the first three commandments and how in essence God has sent a relationship status request to us, and it's up to us to accept it or reject it. Commandments 4-10, which we are going to take a look at today are about our communal relationships with other people.

When my daughter Emma was in kindergarten, I remember one day I gave her a hug and she looked at me and said, "Four hugs a day that's the minimum. Four hugs a day there is no maximum." It turned out she said that because her kindergarten teacher had helped the kids learn a song that goes, "Four hugs a day that's the minimum. Four hugs a day there is no maximum."

I was thinking about that song and how there are a lot of days in my life when I am satisfied with just the minimum not only when it comes to hugs, but especially when it comes to commandments 4-10 which are really about loving my neighbor. Sometimes I flick through them in my mind and I think, "I've honored my parents today. I haven't killed anyone. I haven't cheated on my husband. I haven't stolen anything or lied today. I haven't been looking at other people's houses, or possessions or relationships and thinking, if only I had that I

would be happy.” Somedays I think that I have done the minimum to keep the 10 commandments and that is ok. Just getting by is ok.

But then along comes Jesus encouraging us to go for the maximum instead of the minimum. Part of the reason that I like Luther’s Small Catechism is that I think in his explanation of the commandments he also pushes us to the maximum. For example when he explains the fifth commandment, “You shall not kill.” Luther writes, “We are to fear and love God so that we do not hurt our neighbor in any way, but help him in all his physical needs.” So it turns out that just not killing my neighbor isn’t enough. I actually have to help him with all his physical needs.

This past week, my family flew out to San Diego to visit my in-laws. On the way back I was held up at security for my bag to be searched. Just as they were searching it my four year said to me, “I need to go potty.” So my oldest daughter took her to the nearest bathroom and the line was a long snake out the door which made my four year old start to cry. My oldest daughter said that everyone was so nice that they just let them cut to the front of the line. Doing the maximum means we might have to help other people with their physical needs.

Or the sixth commandment, “You shall not commit adultery.” Luther writes, “We are to fear and love God so that in matters of sex our words and conduct are pure and honorable and husband and wife love and respect each other.” Or as Jesus said in Matthew 5, “You have heard it said, “You shall not commit adultery, but I tell you anyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Wow! Talk about taking it to the maximum.

Or the seventh commandment, “You shall not steal.” Luther writes, “We are to fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor’s money or property, or get them in any dishonest way, but help her to improve and protect her property and means of making a living.” Sometimes I hear complaints about how other people’s property is looking, but rarely do I hear someone offer to help with the maintenance.

Or the eight commandment, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” Luther writes, “We are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander, or lie about our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him and explain his actions in the kindest way.” This is seriously one of the toughest commandments to live to the maximum. We are to explain our neighbors actions in the kindest of ways.

OR the ninth and tenth commandments, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house or spouse or his workers, or any of his possessions.” Luther writes, “We are to fear and love God so that we do not desire to get our neighbors possessions by scheming, but always help her to keep what is hers.

Does anybody here watch HGTV? For me personally any episode of house hunters usually leads to a round of covetous desire with thoughts like, “If I just had a bigger kitchen....bigger entryway...if I just had granite counter tops and stainless steel appliances then I would be really happy...”

Maybe you have other things that you covet, “If I just had that person for my spouse...or if I just had that kind of car then everything would be great...”

Actively helping people to keep their possessions or keep their relationships is really countercultural and time consuming. How have we supported or encouraged people in their relationships? How have we helped people keep their possessions? Boy, doing the maximum is a lot of work.

Last I want to talk about the fourth commandment, “Honor you father and your mother.” Luther writes, “We are to fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and others in authority, but respect, obey, love and serve them.”

I was fortunate to grow up in a very loving home where everything my parents did for me and my brothers came from a loving heart. They made us go to school, brush our teeth everyday, go to church every Sunday, say prayers every night. My parents strongly encouraged us to eat fruits and vegetables every day and to be kind to others. I may not have always agreed with all of those things, but my parents did them out of love for me.

I realize that not all people have had the same experience with parents or adults in your lives. I am sorry if a trusted adult physically abused you or unfairly withheld love and affection from you. I don't think that was God's intent and I am sorry for your sorrow and pain.

Luther thought that parents and all adults in positions of authority were to use their power to serve other people. If they used their power for their own gain rather than to serve others then they did not have to be obeyed because they were using their power in a wrong way.

Luther took this from the example of Jesus. Jesus was given all authority in heaven and earth and he used his power to serve people, to heal them, to feed them, to give them living spiritual water. His sacrificial service even lead him to die on a cross for the sins of everyone.

We often talk about the commandments serving as curb, a guide and a mirror. They serve as a curb by keeping evil actions contained. They serve as a guide for believers who desire to live lives that please God. As a mirror the ten commandments show us our sins and our need for a Savior.

I think this is what Luther was trying to do when he wrote his explanations for the 10 commandments. We are never going to be able to keep all of them perfectly, and that is why we need Jesus to save us.

Because our salvation and Jesus forgiveness doesn't depend upon us keeping the 10 commandments perfectly the question then becomes, "Do we want to do the minimum in our relationship with God and other people or the maximum?" Some days doing the minimum might be all we can handle and other days we might stretch ourselves to do the maximum.

Psychotherapist Virginia Satir wrote, "We need 4 hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth."

I firmly believe that the God of all creation who sent his Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins has also sent the Holy Spirit to help us do more than just survive, or more than just maintain our relationships with God and other people. The Holy Spirit is coaxing us to grow in our relationships with God and others. This

week look over the 10 commandments and choose just one that you will try to live to the maximum for the week because Jesus wants you to have life and have it abundantly.