

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Words of the Holy Law God gave to Moses on Sinai that you heard read this day/night are referred to as the “Second Table” of the Law. The First Table, the First Three of the Ten Divine Commands, treat of your relationship with God. “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me”, “Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain”, and “Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy” are commands that require saving faith in God, and demonstrate what is in your heart toward God.

Of course, taking the Name of the Lord your God in vain is quite simply to have other gods, as is neglecting the keeping of the Sabbath. Breaking the First Table means that the One True God has been supplanted in your heart by something or someone else. That idolatry, and it is idolatry, can be coarse or refined. It is coarse when you worship false gods – allah, budda, the god of the Jews, the god of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the god of the Mormons, or any other of the many false gods the world holds up.

It is refined idolatry when it is nuanced, when while confessing to believe in the One True God you in fact fill your heart with other things – the trappings of this world, lust, jealousy, anger, despair. When these overcome you and your first desire is indulge in them, that too is idolatry. Something else has taken the place of God in your heart. Most frequently it is yourself.

The Second Table, the Words you heard read this day/night, treat of your relationship with neighbor. But they are built upon the First Table. To have a right relationship with neighbor, you must first have a right relationship with God. That a right relationship with God isn’t necessary is one of the many lies of our age – that a society that holds many gods, or a society that rejects the One True God, can truly flourish.

Of course it can’t, for without the fear and love of the True God there can be no true order, no true peace, no trustworthy government, no true prosperity, no honor among men. Such is our nation, indeed our world today. The pain and suffering and lawlessness and cheating and hatred and deception and deceit you witness bears testimony to the godlessness of our nation.

“Thou shalt not murder”. “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” “Thou shalt not steal.” “Thou shalt not bear false witness.” “Thou shalt not covet.” All these are sins against neighbor. And our Lord teaches the deeper meaning of these Words – to be angry, to hate, is to murder in your heart. To look upon another in lust is to commit adultery in your heart. So too desire the things of others, to plot to get them, is stealing even if you aren’t successful. And every breaking of the Second Table is simply a breaking of the First.

For God is the source of all life. He is the Life-Giver. To murder, to take life, is to reject and oppose Who God Is and what He commands. God is faithful, faithful to His Holy Bride, the Church. To commit adultery is to reject Who God Is and what He commands. God freely gives.

To steal is to reject Who God Is and what He commands. God is Truth. His Word is Truth. To bear false witness is to reject Who God Is and what He commands. And so it is with each Commandment. Rightly understood, the Commandments are an expression of the ontology of God, of His Divine Attributes.

“Thou shalt not”, God says. And He says it clearly. And He repeats it. But that hasn’t kept you from sinning, from doing the very things of which He commands “Thou shalt not.” And those sins you have committed against neighbor are sins against God. So the smoke and thunder, the lightnings and trembling and fire of Sinai stand against you. But it is not the fire and smoke of Sinai that is the eternal sentence of every sinner. It is the fire and smoke that is never quelled, the unquenchable fire. So repent, lest you find yourself on the Lord’s left on Judgment Day.

Our Lord Jesus Christ kept the Commandments. He kept them perfectly, rightly, completely. He never sinned. He brought honor and glory to the Father. But in the taking on of your sins, in laying upon Himself the sins of the world, in wrapping righteousness in transgression, He stood before God and man as the greatest of sinners, the worst law-breaker, the most vile offender of all time. And for that, for doing the very thing for which the Father sent Him, He who kept the Law was crushed by the curse of the Law.

He suffered the unmitigated wrath of God the Father for the violation of the First Table. He was separated from God the Father, forsaken. That is the consequence of breaking the First Table – separation from God. And that horrible hell Christ suffered for you. His cries of “Eli, Eli...” went unanswered in the darkness.

And, bearing your sins, He suffered the consequences of breaking the Second Table – of dishonoring His Father, of murder, of adultery, of theft, of false witness, of coveting. So He was forsaken by God, and hated by the very people He came to save. Their anger found voice in insult and false accusation, by striking His head, and by the ruby furrows of the scourge. Their hatred, their enmity, was steeled by cruelty, and found its point in the thorns, in the steel spikes and in the Roman spear. And their rejection of Him was sealed with that large, heavy stone.

He broke no Law. He bore your sins, your breaking of God’s “Thou shalt not”s. And because He bore them for you, His promise to Moses is a promise for you: “In every place where I record My Name, I will come to you and I will bless you.” You, you upon whom His Name is scribed, to you He comes and you He blesses. He does it in love. For against love there is no Law.

The Law stands for time and eternity, because God is eternal. But it’s curse, it’s sting, is removed for you who are washed in the Blood of Christ. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law, but now death is swallowed up in victory, Christ’s victory, the victory He makes yours through faith in Him.

The God that gave the Law on Sinai took on Flesh, and died to free you from the Law. You no longer need to stand afar off, for you are reconciled to God. He bids you draw nigh un Him. On the altar of earth called Golgotha, He gave His life that you might live. He gave His life, that what goes into your mouth sanctifies you – His Body and Blood. Believing, eating, drinking, He fills your heart with the very One that makes you holy – He fills your heart with Christ, who fulfilled the Law for you.

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