

Oct. 10, 2010 “What about the Law of God?” Exodus 19:3-6; 20:1-21 and Psalm 111

Image: Playing a board game with a toddler

- Have you ever won a game with a toddler?
- You might as well give up understanding the game, b/c somehow the rules keep changing
- Playing a game w/o clear rules is next to impossible
- Rules of game give guidance and expectations are set

What about the rules – the law – that God gives to the Israelites (and to us)?

Last week, the people cried out and God heard them. Between that point and where we find ourselves in Exodus 19 and 20 a lot has taken place:

- Pharaoh doesn't listen
- 10 plagues
- The Passover – community of Israel marks their doorposts w/blood so no destruction falls on them and told to commemorate the day
- The parting of the Red Sea
- Manna and Quail and water from the rock

And then we come to 19:1 – In the 3rd month after the Israelites left Egypt they came to the Desert of Sinai and camped in front of the mountain. And it is there that God reminds them of what he has done for them.

God and Moses converse w/messages brought to the people and messages back to God, until we have the giving of the 10 commandments

If I asked you right now to stand up and recite the 10 comms. On your own, do you think you could do it? Don't panic – I won't really do that, but as familiar as the 10 commandments should be, for most people, if they have studied them, it is when they went through confirmation. (Yet, in this day and age, not everyone has that in their background.) The 10 commandments are an important gift from God to the people.

Let's recite the 10 commandments together. I'll start them and you can join in when you are ready:

Commandment 1: You shall have no other gods before me.

Commandment 2: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Commandment 3: Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

(These three are about our relationship with God; the next 7 are about our relationships with one another.)

Commandment 4: Honor your father and your mother

(As wonderful as it is that this is about young children honoring their parents by respecting and obeying – as well as other adults – it is also about adult children caring for their elderly parents.)

Commandment 5: You shall not kill.

Commandment 6: You shall not commit adultery.

Commandment 7: You shall not steal.

Commandment 8: You shall not bear false witness (lie).

Commandment 9: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Commandment 10: You shall not covet your neighbor's possessions.

Why did we take the time to recite the 10 commandments together? Because in order to keep them, we must first know them! From what I hear, you seem to know your commandments.

10 commandments bring about a function of the law, like the rules in a game have a function

- Bring order instead of chaos
- Bring us rules for living

Not only about limits b/c 10 commandments given to the Israelites after God liberated them and led them into the wilderness! So, it wasn't about what they did that saved them, but about what God did for them.

Amazingly commandments, the law of God is also about freedom

- Freedom to help us to be who God called us to be
- Freedom to live in some sort of order instead of chaos
- Freedom to know that these are the signs of the covenant and that those whose lives are directed by these commandments belong to God

Prof. Craig Koester states that "the law is given within the context of relationships."

It is when the law is taken out of that context that we have problems, especially when the law is used as a club or a weapon. Many times this happens when we lose sight of 1st commandment and worship ourselves (our egos) as a god instead of the God who created us.

Commandments / Law of God are gifts of God's redemption for His chosen people.

Even Jesus, in the writings of the New Testament, sums up the commandments in that of relationships: "Love God. Love others."

Commandments / Law of God not the same as having rules for a game

**It's about the life we live in the midst of God's story, as God's covenant people
And our being a part of this story continues. . .**

Helpful Resources:

Narrative Lectionary Podcast and Discussion

The Lectionary Commentary on The Old Testament

www.sermonsfromseattle.com – sermon on The Ten Commandments