



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, October 4, 2020

Lord Have Mercy upon Us, and Write These Laws Upon Our Hearts

by Garland F. Pierce

Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

20:1 Then God spoke all these words:

20:2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery;

20:3 you shall have no other gods before me.

20:4 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.

20:7 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.

20:8 Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy.

20:9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

20:12 Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

20:13 You shall not murder.

20:14 You shall not commit adultery.

20:15 You shall not steal.

20:16 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

20:17 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.

20:18 When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance,

20:19 and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die."

20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin."

The first Sunday of October in many churches is designated World Communion Sunday.

...congregations across the world partake of Communion. Someone has described the sacred table on this day as 25,000 miles long. In our fragmented world, in which groups often relate with suspicion and violence and even try to destroy one another, the churches of the world coming together to break the loaf and drink the cup is a sign of God's intention for all peoples to live together in love, peace, and justice.

--Joseph R. Jeter, Jr., *World Communion Sunday, Preaching God's Transforming Justice, A Lectionary Commentary, Year A*

Many AMEs are familiar with the words and sounds of *The Decalogue* in the traditional order of service. For some, it is an unnecessary nuisance, prolonging the service. For others, it feels like an uncomfortable reminder of an ancient list of do's and don'ts. God's intentions seem to have been to gift the chosen children of Israel with a framework for their covenant relationship with God and their ongoing relationship with each other as community. The law was for their good. The law offered some degree of protection. The first five offered guidance regarding their relationship to God. The final five offered the same regarding their relationship with their brothers and sisters.

In the USA and in other places as of late, even some in the highest levels of government seem to view laws of the land as nuisances, things to be ignored, or things that do not apply to them. Wearing masks seems to infringe on their personal rights. Staying in and avoiding gatherings seem to crush their freedom. Maintaining social distance seems to be inconvenient and stifling. Paying taxes seems to be something that the poor and folks who are not as smart as them do. The rationalizing goes like this, "The wondering in the wilderness of pandemic has gone on too long; it is time to do what is best for me, regardless of its effects on my neighbors and community."

The Decalogue puts things in perspective: God is the creator and is worthy to be praised. We are the creatures called to obey, to worship, to work and rest, and to live not solely for ourselves, but for God and the community. How we live and what we do matter. How we live and what we do reflect on our relationship with God. How we live and what we do affect others in the community. Communion reminds us of this and that God loves us so much that God sent Jesus to establish a new covenant of grace. God invites us into

relationship and gives us the framework. Lord, have mercy upon us; and, write these laws upon our hearts.

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Can you remember when you really paid attention to the Decalogue? What stood out for you? How does it help your understanding of who God is and what God desires of us?

PRAY:

We worship you, O God, as Creator and Liberator
You led the captives out of Egypt,
delivering them from the oppression of slavery.
You gave laws which enabled people to relate to you,
to one another,
and to the whole creation.
You implored people to worship only you,
knowing that whatever was put in your place
would all too easily become the object of idolatry,
and the priority of people's hearts.
You showered us with blessings
by revealing in Jesus just how precious we are to you,
and through him
you delivered us into a new and living relationship with you
and with one another—
with a new commandment—
a commandment of love.
May we reveal the depth of our love
as we praise and adore you, O God,
in Jesus name and in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

From: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/09/opening-prayer-exodus-201-20.html>

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, think about the commandment(s) that present(s) the most challenge(s) for you, pray for discernment as to how you can start to address the issues and challenges involved. For those US citizens, here are some practical actions to take: Participate in the current democratic processes (voter registration and voting and encouraging and helping others to do so—See: <http://www.amev-alert.org>.) For everyone, practice social distancing as much as possible, wash your hands often, and wear face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amehealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Revisit the Psalm 23 Challenge first issued as part of the March 22, 2020 set of resources.

Hymns of the Decalogue:

From All That Dwell Below the Skies
AMEC Hymnal, #69

1. From all that dwell be-low the skies;
Let the Cre-a-tor's praise arise;
Let the Re-deem-er's name be sung,
Through ev-ery land by ev-ery tongue.
4. E-ter-nal are Thy mer-cies, Lord;
E-ter-nal truth at-tends Thy word:
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore,
Till suns shall rise and set no more. A-men.

My Soul, Be on Your Guard
AMEC Hymnal, xvi

My soul, be on your guard; Ten thou-sand foes a-rise;
And hosts of sin are press-ing hard To draw thee from the skies.

Lord, Have Mercy upon Us
AMEC Hymnal, xvii

Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.
Lord, have mercy upon us, and write these laws upon our hearts.

Nearer, my God, to Tee
AMEC Hymnal, xvii

Near-er, my God, to Thee, Near-er to Thee!
E'-en though it be a cross
That rais-eth me;
Still all my song shall be, Near-er, my God, to Thee;
Near-er my God, to Thee, Near-er to Thee!

Gloria Patri
AMEC Hymnal, xvii

Glo-ry be to the Fa-ther, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the be-gin-ning, is now, and ev-er shall be,
World with-out end. A-men, A-men.

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.