“Law of Love and Liberty: God’s Narrow Way”

Exodus 20:1-15; Luke 19:1-10

(notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 9/6/20)

 The 10 Commandments function both as a window to help us see the nature of God, and as a mirror, to help us learn something about ourselves as our consciences go to work. (Q1) What is God like? “You shall have no other gods before Me.” GOD IS INCOMPARABLE. “You shall not commit adultery.” GOD IS PURE. “You shall not steal.” GOD IS JUST. When we steal, it is not just a sin against another person; it is a sin against God. (Q2)

 As we look into the mirror of this 8th commandment, we must admit that we are by nature idolaters. We are all impure at heart. The seeds of discontent and the spirit of entitlement are within all of us. This leads to theft. This theft may take the form of taking stuff, or it may be that we rob others of their reputation with gossip. We may view money and things as entitlements. If so, we rob God of the gratitude due only to Him. Is any of this hitting home? (Q3)

 Let’s take a look at the 8th commandment from the standpoint of “the letter of the law.” To steal is to secretly, deceptively take what is not yours to take. Adam and Eve stole the fruit from God’s special tree. In our sin nature, we are just like our first parents. Stealing is the fruit of discontent; it is to doubt or disregard God’s provision.

 Now let’s look at the 8th commandment from the standpoint of “the spirit of the law.” Personal property rights are given by God. These rights are an essential part of humanness. During this pandemic we’ve seen the hoarder and the price gouger. Both have a “better me than them” attitude. Other examples of theft include predatory lending, not supporting your elderly parents and putting the burden on taxpayers, and those who take advantage of the elderly financially. Theft is a violation of human dignity. This is true all around the world. Remember this: all things belong to God; people are merely stewards of what belongs to Him. (Q4)

 Now let’s look at an example of theft found in the Luke 19:1-10. Here is a sinner who meets his judge in the person of Jesus Christ. The story of Zacchaeus is a tale of “greed meets grace.” This publican (tax collector) was hated by his fellow Jews as a parasite and a traitor. But somehow, he was drawn to Jesus. (Q5) Zacchaeus was desperate for grace. Are you that desperate for grace? Jesus is pleased to enter into the lives of all those who are desperate for Him. Notice that Jesus said He was going to Zacchaeus’ home. He didn’t ask! There was no time for Zacchaeus to rush home and get his house in order. No time to hide the evidence! There is a crucial element here: **GRACE DOES NOT DEMAND THAT SINNERS CLEAN UP THEIR LIVES BEFORE RECEIVING CHRIST!** Got that??? Is today the day you come down from merely looking at Jesus, to instead repent, and surrender your selfishness to the One whose salvation is full of grace? Zacchaeus isn’t worried about the crowd. He knows that it is just between Jesus and him. Someone summed up the encounter this way: “Jesus is more full of grace than you are full of sin.”

 How do we know Zacchaeus was saved? How can you be sure of your salvation? Look again at Luke 19:8-10. **SALVATION AND SURRENDER ALWAYS TRAVEL TOGETHER.** Jesus always cleans up the life He has entered. To put it another way, justification always results in sanctification. He who saves also makes us holy. Zacchaeus is a man who is changing into a brighter reflection of God’s holiness. Grace can break the chains of sinful living. Sin’s power has at last met its Match! (Q6)

 God, who is infinite in mercy, is also infinite in wrath. Fortunately, Jesus bore God’s wrath for Zacchaeus’ sin and for yours. When Jesus entered Zacchaeus’ life, He changed it. **GREED LOSES ITS GRIP ON THOSE SAVED BY GRACE! Amen!**

**QUESTIONS:**

1. A window and a mirror: What have the 10 Commandments taught you about the nature of God? What have the 10 Commandments taught you about yourself?
2. How can this be?
3. Look at the first 7 commandments. How can breaking each of them be regarded as theft?
4. If you are like me, you say you are a steward of God’s stuff, but then you hold it very tightly. How can we hold His stuff loosely?
5. Why was Zacchaeus drawn to Jesus?
6. Notice the verb tense Pastor Steve used: “is changing.” Why did he do that?

 “Wonderful Grace of Jesus” (Lillenas)

1. Wonderful grace of Jesus,
Greater than all my sin;
How shall my tongue describe it,
Where shall its praise begin?
Taking away my burden,
Setting my spirit free;
For the wonderful grace of Jesus reaches me.
	* Refrain:
	Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,
	Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;
	Higher than the mountain, sparkling like a fountain,
	All-sufficient grace for even me!
	Broader than the scope of my transgressions,
	Greater far than all my sin and shame;
	Oh, magnify the precious Name of Jesus,
	Praise His Name!