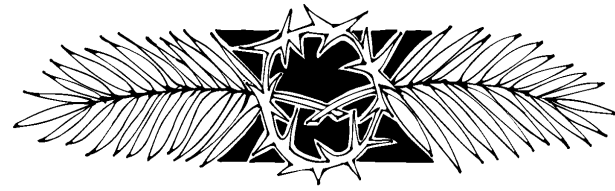


3rd Sunday in Lent

Called to lead . . . Called to serve

Lord, whose love in humble service
Bore the weight of human need,
Who upon the cross forsaken
Worked your mercy's perfect deed;
We, your servants bring the worship
Not of voice alone, but heart;
Consecrating to your purpose
Ev'ry gift which you impart. LBW #423



Third Sunday In Lent

*The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve
and to give his life as a ransom for many. Matthew 20:28*

Leading and serving – they sound mutually exclusive, but this is exactly what we are called to do as followers of Christ! And where do we find a blueprint for this counter-cultural kind of life? Of course, the first place to look is at the life of Jesus, who spoke the words above, recorded in Matthew's Gospel. But some very practical advice can be found in Luther's explanations of the Ten Commandments! We tend to think of the Commandments as "do not" statements, but Luther took them a step further, seeing in each not only a "do not," but also a "should do." Luther puts into very practical, everyday language what Paul meant when he wrote, "*Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.*" (Romans 13:10)

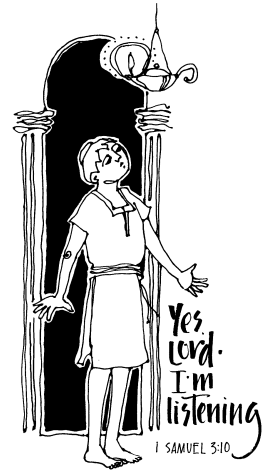
Prayer: Eternal Lord, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your Word and obey it, so that we become instruments of your redeeming love; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(Prayer of the Day for the Third Sunday in Lent – LBW #28)

Monday

Lord, speak to us, that we may speak
In living echoes of your tone;
As you have sought, so may we seek
Your straying children, lost and lone.
LBW #403

*I am the Lord your God;
you shall have no other Gods before me.
Exodus 20: 1, 3*



First things first, the wise man said. And that's how the commandments begin. It's as if God is saying, "Let's get one thing straight right from the get-go! And that one thing is: I AM God, and I AM *your* God!" Martin Luther put it this way: *We are to fear, love and trust God above all things.* (in this use, "fear" does not mean "to be afraid of" it means to have a healthy respect for; to stand in awe of, - which may indeed cause us to tremble!) When we put God first, the first priority is to listen for God's voice guiding and directing us. To listen, we have to learn to be silent for a while. "Be still, and know that I am God," says the Psalmist (Psalm 46:11). Come into God's presence in prayer, with love and trust, and listen to what God has to say to you, his beloved child. Open God's Word and read and meditate on what you read and listen for the message God has for you.

Prayer: Almighty God, you gave your Son both as a sacrifice for sin and a model of the godly life. Enable us to receive him always with thanksgiving, and to conform our lives to his; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Post Communion Prayer – LBW #243)

Tuesday

Holy God, we praise your Name,
Lord of all, we bow before you.
All on earth your scepter claim,
All in heav'n above adore you.
Infinite your vast domain,
Everlasting is your reign.
LBW #535

*I am the Lord your God:
You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.
Exodus 20:1, 7*

Use of language is one of the hallmarks of a leader; even more so of a servant-leader! We all know people who can't seem to get a phrase out of their mouth without adding one or more curses to it. This seems to have infected the language as a whole. People, who do not even consider themselves believers, let alone Christians, think nothing of using God's name or Jesus' name as expletives peppered through their conversation. But Martin Luther says that more is expected of us! Not only should we *"fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, practice magic, lie or deceive using God's name."* We should also fear and love God enough not to use his name casually or without intent or meaning. And, above all, we should *"use that very name in every time of need to call on, pray to, praise and give thanks to God."* God is always present, and all the more when God's Name is spoken. How do you suppose people would react if, when they said with disgust, "Oh, for God's sake!" a voice responded, "You called?"

Prayer: Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, three
we name you,
While in essence only One, Undivided
God, we claim you,



And, adoring, bend the knee while we own the mystery.
LBW #535

Wednesday

O day of rest and gladness,
O day of joy and light,
O balm for pain and sadness,
Most beautiful most bright:
On you, the high and lowly,
Through ages joined in tune,
Sing "Holy, holy, holy,"
To the great God triune.
LBW #251

*I am the Lord your God:
Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Exodus 20:1, 8*

The Sabbath was a remarkable concept! This one day of the week was set aside for rest – for people and animals, Israelites and Gentiles, slaves and free people! It was a day to become part of the Creator's purpose for creation. But people just couldn't leave well enough alone. They had to try to improve on it, and what was intended to be gift and gladness soon became a bother and a burden. Modern psychology has finally caught up with God. It is now commonly accepted that people need a break from their daily work and routine every so often. Once a week is a good interval! It should be considered a joy and privilege to be able to spend time praising God and learning about God's will for us; to pray for those in need, and to receive the prayers and support of our sisters and brothers in faith. But too often we make even this into a burden, a chore, a task! Martin Luther writes, *"We should fear and love God so that we do not despise God's Word or preaching, but instead keep that Word holy and gladly hear and learn it."* Even in quarantine it is good, no, necessary to set time aside as holy; time for prayer and praise.

Prayer: Today his people meet,

Today his Word is shown,
Lord Jesus, teach us how to use
This day we call your own. LBW #246

Thursday

Like a mother you enfold me,
Hold my life within your own,
Feed me with your very body,
Form me of your flesh and bone.
Like a father you protect me,
Teach me the discerning eye,
Hoist me up upon your shoulder,
Let me see the world from high. WOV #683

*I am the Lord your God:
Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the
land that the Lord your God is giving you. Exodus 20:1, 12*

We don't always like it. We especially don't like it when we are teens, but society needs authority. Martin Luther saw parents in a very special light – particularly when he himself became a father. He saw what home life could be: a reflection of community in Christ, where all are cherished and encouraged to learn and grow; where authority is exercised not out of desire for greater power, but out of greater love. In our sin and frailty we do not always live up to this ideal, "*Because of sin, our age-old rebellion, the gladness of marriage can be overcast, and the gift of the family can become a burden. But because God, who established marriage continues still to bless it with his abundant and ever-present support, we can be sustained in our weariness and have our joy restored.*" (LBW Order for Marriage). Luther says, "*We are to fear and love God so that we neither despise nor anger our parents or those in authority; but instead honor, serve, obey, love and respect them.*" This is the only commandment with a promise. Maybe the promise is there because this commandment can be so difficult to keep!

Prayer: O happy home where thou art loved the dearest,
Thou loving friend and Savior of our race,
And where among the guests there never cometh



One who can hold such high and honored

Friday

Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
Show us how to serve
The neighbors we have from you.
Neighbors are wealthy and poor,
Varied in color and race,
Neighbors are nearby and far away.
WOV #765



*I am the Lord your God:
You shall not murder.
You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Exodus 20:1, 13-16*

These are the “well, duh!” of the commandments! The things you would think no one would have to be told, right? Think again! Read the newspaper or watch the evening news. People are constantly murdering each other, having extra-marital affairs, stealing and lying! Luther's meaning for “You shall not murder” picks up the real sense of all of these four commandments: *We are to fear and love God so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs.* Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God, but the second was “like it” - to love one's neighbor. Who is my neighbor? Check out the story of “The Good Samaritan” again – Luke 10:25-37 – “neighbor” is anyone who needs your help!

Prayer: Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
Show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.
These are the ones we will serve,
These are the ones we will love,
All these are neighbors to us and you.
WOV #765

Saturday

In gratitude and humble trust
 We bring our best today
 To serve your cause and share your love
 With all along life's way.
 O God, who gave yourself to us
 In Jesus Christ your Son,
 Teach us to give ourselves each day
 Until life's work is done.

LBW #404

*I am the Lord your God:
 You shall not covet . . . anything that belongs to your neighbor.
 Exodus 20:1, 17b*

Jesus told his followers that they were not to be concerned about the “stuff” of life – possessions, wealth, food and clothing. He even put relationships with other people in second place to the relationship with God. But respecting the other person also demands respect for the relationships and possessions that person values, and so we have these final commandments. Luther says that not only should we not attempt to gain that which belongs to another by trickery, but that we should instead “*be of help and service to them in keeping what is theirs.*” Even though this may not be the way the world operates – and we have seen that in the way people grab and hoard supplies that need to be shared - this is the way for us who call ourselves Christian!

Prayer: Though cold suspicion meet our warmth,
 We love at your command;
 And though always not understood,
 We pray to understand.
 Enable us to stifle greed for thanks or gain, dear Lord,
 And live that sacrificial life which is its own reward.

...but that you be united in the



same mind and the same purpose

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10