

The Third Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Deuteronomy 11:18-21,26-28 (NIV)

¹⁸Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ¹⁹Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ²⁰Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, ²¹so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth. ²²If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him— ²³then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. ²⁴Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. ²⁵No man will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go. ²⁶See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— ²⁷the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; ²⁸the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.

Theme: God's Word Is the Solid Foundation

Many Jewish homes have something called *Mezuzoth*, which is the text of Deuteronomy 11:13-21 and Deuteronomy 6, placed in a box on the right side of the doorframes of their homes. The men also wear *phylacteries* which are little black boxes on leather bands that contain these scriptures on their foreheads and their arms. They take these verses literally which told Israel to bind God's word as a sign on their arms and forehead and to have His word written on their doorposts. As we wear crosses or have the fish symbol, these are strong reminders of their faith and the importance of God's Word in their lives.

As Christians we might not have God's Word strapped to our bodies or nailed to the outside of our homes, but as Moses writes, it should be in our hearts and souls. It is what we talk about, especially with our children because that word of God is the solid foundation for our lives.

I. Both the law and the Gospel are part of that foundation.

We want to take God's Law to heart. Psalm 119 speaks of how good and wise God's commandments are. For instance, it says, "*Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.*" (Ps 119:36,37) God gave His people good and righteous laws. By following them, they would be a just society, and they would give glory to the God who had blessed them so much.

The 10 Commandments are still relevant to our society today. God wants us to give Him the glory and honor due His name. He calls us to be good and just to each other. When we live according to those commandments, society flourishes. Where they are mocked and broken at will, things deteriorate. Think about it.

- Do we treat our parents and elders with contempt and disrespect or do we give them honor?

- How much do we value human life? We look at the high murder rates and the fight for the right to abort our children and it appears that human life is often not worth very much.
- What about marriage? In California the marriage licenses will no longer say “bride” and “groom” but “partner 1” and “partner 2” to pave the way of same sex marriage. Cohabitation has become the norm. Our youth are being taught to be careful rather than to wait until marriage for relations. Many of the ills in our society today can be traced to our complete lack of respect for marriage.
- The Lord tells us not to steal. Yet, too often we feel that if it is not locked, it’s ours for the taking. Do we sometimes look for ways to take advantage of others or to do as little as possible at work? Respect for other people’s possessions and a strong work ethic are two things that God commands.
- How important is the truth in our society today? Have we sometimes become so good at lying that it doesn’t even bother us?
- What about contentment? Are we satisfied with what we have or do we look at what someone else has, and we want it?

The 10 Commandments are a part of the foundation of our lives, our family, and our society. When they are mocked and broken freely, the foundation begins to crumble. There were many examples of that in Israel. The prophets often decried how the people defrauded one another. There are examples of adultery, murder, and lies that destroyed lives. The same can be said of today. It is tempting to think that life is more fun if we do away with the commandments. We can get further ahead in life by neglecting them. We sometimes try to free ourselves from them. But those commandments still hold wisdom for us today. They hold our lives, our families, and our society together. We can see a lot of examples of how lives have been destroyed when they are broken. It is just like breaking the foundation that a house is sitting on.

The Gospel is the most important part of that foundation. It tells us how God has helped us in the past and how He promises to help and save us now. In Exodus 20 God began the 10 Commandments with these words, *“I am the Lord Your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”* Those are wonderful words. God was powerful enough to save a nation of slaves from the strongest nation of the time. He promised to be their God. However, just a short time later while Moses was on Mount Sinai to receive the Lord’s commands, Aaron built the golden calf and proclaimed, *“These are your gods, O Israel who brought you up out of Egypt.”* (Ex 32:4) Israel had a lot of trouble with the law, but they even had more trouble with the Gospel. They would quickly forget what the Lord had done for them. God instituted the festivals to remind them. He told them to set up monuments to remember His great works, but the people kept forgetting Him. They followed the Baals that the Canaanites worshiped. They even began to worship gods in which the faith demanded that they sacrifice their children. Again and again God had to bring trouble on them so they would turn from the false gods to Him as their Savior.

The Gospel is the most important part of our faith yet today. We can look back and see the fulfillment of everything that Israel hoped for. The Savior was sent into the world to save us. He gave His life on the cross as the payment for our sins and rose as our Savior. The good news of Jesus Christ has gone out, not just to the Jews, but to people of every nation. God has called us. We were baptized into His name. He has helped us through one trial after the next. He has blessed us in ways that we could have never imagined. He never forgets us, but do we ever forget Him? Do we ever

build our lives on anything beside His promises? Do we look to our own strength or the false hopes of our day? They will disappoint us, but Christ never will.

II. What is at stake whether God's Word is in our hearts or not?

It is the blessings or the curses of God. He says in verses 26-27, "*See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God...and the curse if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God...to go after other gods that you have not known.*" It is so important that God's Word is in our hearts and taught to our children because that is the difference between the blessed and the cursed life. When we neglect the 10 Commandments, we get ourselves into a lot of trouble that we make ourselves. When we forget God's love for us in Jesus Christ, our lives are filled with worry, regret, and a search for the wrong joys in life. But when we take God's commandments to heart, we see just how good and wise they are. It doesn't mean that we won't have any problems in life, but we will make less trouble for ourselves and for other people too. When we take the Gospel to heart, we find peace in God's forgiveness when we have strayed. We know that God is our refuge and strength just as He has been throughout our lives. We look forward to the eternal life that He will give to us in heaven. He gives our lives peace and confidence no matter what comes against us. Everything around us might be falling apart, but we stand firm on the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Savior. You might say that the cracks that we have made in the foundation of our lives by breaking God's commands are even filled in through faith in the Gospel of our Lord. The greatest treasure that we can give to our children is to plant that word of God in their hearts too. We want to teach them the 10 Commandments that they learn to know right from wrong, and we especially want them to know their Savior Jesus Christ. We can leave them thousands of dollars in our will, give them everything that their hearts desire, and even leave them a world with less pollution, but none of those things are as important as filling their hearts with God's Word because when they take that word to heart, they will also lead their lives under the blessing of our Lord.

There are many things that we could build our lives and the lives of our children on, but the only one that will not crumble is the solid word of our Lord, both His commands the good news of His love for us in our Savior Jesus Christ. May God's Spirit enable us to take that word to heart and guide us as we teach it to our children, that our lives will be built on the solid foundation that will never give way.

Amen

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