

The 10 Commandments

Many emphasise the 10 Commandments over the Beatitudes.

But what are they all about? Really? We know they are a set of rules. But is there something more? Look at the opening commandments

I am the LORD your God...
you shall have no other gods before me.
You shall not make for yourself an idol....
You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God....
Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.

All those commandments have to do with honouring God—loving God. Not forgetting to make the sacred a critical part of life; honouring those around us. Or rather, honouring God through the way we live with others.

A man asked Jesus:

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

Jesus took the Ten Commandments and reduced them down to two. We can please God if we do two things. Love God! Love our neighbour! It's that simple!

But what does it mean to love God? If we loved God, what would that look like? What would we do? The Ten Commandments offer us one picture of what that might look like.

- If we truly love God, will put no other gods before him. We won't let money be more important than God—or sex—or hobbies—or entertainment—or food, drink, drugs—or friends—or even family. We will not let anything be more important than God.
- If we truly love God, we will not make any idols. We won't worship idols made of word or stone, our own preferences...
- If we truly love God, we will not use his name disrespectfully. In our culture, that has come to mean not using God for swearing.
- If we truly love God, we will rest from our labours on his day—not easy to do in a world that demands that we work days, nights and weekends.

Love God! Love your neighbour! What does it mean to love our neighbour? What would our lives look like if we loved our neighbour? The last commandments tell us that:

If we truly love God, we will honour our father and mother. God calls us to honour our Heavenly Father, but he also calls us to honour our earthly fathers and mothers. This means caring for them; respecting them.

If we love our neighbour, we will not murder him or her.

If we love our neighbour, we will not cause hurt in their relationship.

If we love our neighbour, we will not steal from them.

If we love our neighbour, we will not tell lies about him or her.

What I believe, is that the commandments of Moses, and even more so the two commandments of Jesus are meant to give us a glimpse of the kingdom.

In the 10 commandments we see *what the kingdom will look like*. It will be a place where people are connected to God, and reflect that connection in the way they live. Same thing for the two commandments of Jesus.

We get an enriched picture of kingdom living in another powerful set of statements. What we call the Beatitudes – Mt.5.3-12. In the Beatitudes it is less a matter of what we should DO as how we should BE.

Blessed are the humble
Blessed are the compassionate,
Blessed are the meek,
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for
justice,

Blessed are the merciful,
Blessed are the pure of heart,
Blessed are the peacemakers,
Blessed are they who suffer persecution for
justice sake,

Many are so focused on the law and the ten commandments, they neglect the 8 beatitudes. Why do we fight to have the ten commandments posted on walls; but never fight for the eight beatitudes to be posted on the wall?

I think that at the highest level, not only the beatitudes, but also Jesus' 2 commandments and the 10 commandments are relational. As I look at these powerful teachings I see a progression. I see a movement from a rigid approach of the 10 commandments, to the broader and softer two commandments of Jesus with their focus on love, and ultimately to the Beatitudes.

There is a shift, a development; from a concrete set of rules to a powerful principle of love of God and love of others, to the same laws being fleshed out, in a new way, in a New Testament way, in the Beatitudes. The 10 commandments the kind of rules we set for children.

With the Beatitudes we start living out as our faith matures and deepens. We can follow the 10 commandments at a shallow, legalistic level. You can't be the person of the beatitudes in a shallow way.

I would like to close with one last story. A businessman, notorious for being ruthless, once commented to Mark Twain,

Before I die, I mean to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I will climb Mount Sinai and read the Ten Commandments aloud at the top. Mark Twain thought for a moment and responded, I have a better idea! You could stay home, and work at living them!

We have the laws; an early glimpse of what kingdom living is like. We have Jesus summary of the law, his more compassionate, and in many ways more powerful simplification... where the focus is not right and wrong, but love. And we have the Beatitudes, the ultimate expression of kingdom living

Let us not quote laws, not give lip service, even, to love. Let us simply do the best we can, in the power of God's Spirit. To live the Kingdom, in our life with God, and our life with others,

Pope Francis said in the '*light of Christ*' the Decalogue [10 Commandments] *should not be treated as a series of rules*. It is a guide to authentic human life which brings 'love, joy and peace' in obedience to God's will.

The Covenant comes first, with the call of Abraham. The Torah, the Law, in fact, was not included in the promise made to Abraham. Having said this, one should not think, however, that S Paul was opposed to the Mosaic Law.

He observed it. Several times in his Letters, he defends its divine origin and says that it possesses a well-defined role in the history of salvation. *The Law, however, does not give life*; it does not offer the fulfilment of the promise, because it is not capable of being able to fulfil it. Law cannot save, it simply convinces us we need saving!

The Law is a journey, *a journey that leads toward an encounter*. Paul uses a word, the law is the teacher, leading us beyond itself, towards faith in Christ, that is, *the teacher that leads you by the hand toward the encounter* (cf. Gal 3:24). Those who seek life need to look to the promise - and to its fulfilment in Christ. To everyone he gave the ability to own God as Abba – Jn.1.