**The Monthly Newsletter of Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Lindy, Nebraska**

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**The Rod and Staff**



**January 2018**

**“I am the Lord, Your God.” The Ten Commandments: Introduction**

Throughout last year, in honor of the five hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation in 1517, I provided a series of articles about the work of church Reformation carried out by Martin Luther and his colleagues. Knowing about our history as Lutherans is important. However, we know that we should not remain “stuck in the past.” After all, Martin Luther’s concern was that Christian people know about God, not about his own life.

For that reason, Martin Luther took a tour of the churches in his area in 1528. He wanted to see firsthand how life in the churches was being conducted. What he discovered shocked him. Later he wrote, “What misery I beheld.” To his dismay, he learned that most church members and even the pastors themselves knew little to nothing about the Christian faith. For many years, people had been accustomed to practicing their faith through mere ritual observance. Luther felt strongly that people should know about basic matters of the faith so that they can actively participate with understanding. To that end, in 1529 he wrote his *Small Catechism* and *Large Catechism*. Both of these books are still used in Lutheran congregations today.

When Martin Luther set out to explain the Christian faith in his *Small* *Catechism*, the first thing he did was list and explain what we know as the Ten Commandments. Throughout this year of 2018, I will devote these newsletter articles to discussing each of these Commandments. The Ten Commandments are important, but it is important to understand them in the right way.

The Ten Commandments are found in two places in the Old Testament. The first is Exodus 20, where God gives Moses the Ten Commandments after God led the people out of slavery in Egypt and into freedom. The Ten Commandments are repeated in Deuteronomy chapter 5.

One surprising thing is that even though everyone agrees that there are ten of these commandments, Jews and Christians themselves disagree about how exactly to number the commandments. The Bible itself provides no system of numbering, and so different groups have interpreted differently what comprises separate commandments.

For example, Lutherans and Roman Catholics number the Ten Commandments in the following way:

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

3. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

4. Honor your father and your mother.

5. You shall not kill.

6. You shall not commit adultery.

7. You shall not steal.

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.

10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, his workers, or his livestock, or anything that is your neighbor’s.

Most other Protestant churches, influenced by the Reformed perspective, number the Ten Commandments differently because they interpret the explanation of the first commandment as a separate commandment, dealing with the issue of worshipping “graven images” rather than God Himself:

1. I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.

2. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

5. Honor your father and your mother.

6. You shall not kill.

7. You shall not commit adultery.

8. You shall not steal.

9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

10. You shall not covet.

Interestingly, many Jewish people number the Ten Commandments even differently than the two systems above. In the Hebrew language, the word that is translated as “commandment” (*davarim*) can mean “words” more generally. So, they sometimes refer to the Ten Commandments as the “Ten Words” that God speaks to His people. This is because Jews believe that the first “Word” that God speaks is not really a commandment at all, but simply a declaration:

1. **I am the Lord your God**, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

2. You shall have no other gods beside me.

3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

5. Honor your father and your mother.

6. You shall not kill.

7. You shall not commit adultery.

8. You shall not steal.

9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

10. You shall not covet.

I have come to believe that thinking of the Ten Commandments as the Ten Words is helpful for us as Lutherans. Martin Luther was clear that we do not earn our salvation by obeying the Ten Commandments. In fact, we cannot, as we do not possess the ability to live up to God’s righteous standards. If we did, we would have no need for Jesus Christ to be our savior. Instead, just as God declared to the Israelite people that he had saved from Egypt that he was their God before listing his expectations of them, we believe that God has first saved us through Jesus Christ and then gives us guidance for how to conduct ourselves.

The word “commandment” sometimes conjures negative images in our minds. Human beings do not always like rules. But we believe that the Ten Commandments are actually a precious gift from God. True, we do not earn our salvation by obeying them. But without guidance from God as we live our lives, chaos rules in our world. When these Ten Commandments are broken, there are often devastating consequences. When Martin Luther explained these commandments, he not only focused on what Christians should not do, but he explained what Christians should do in response to their faith in the God who graciously declared to us: “I am the Lord your God.”

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Special Announcements**

* The annual meeting for Good Shepherd will be on Sunday January 21 after worship.
* The installation of church council members will be a part of worship on January 21.
* In preparation for the annual meeting, please submit any reports for the annual report to Connie McDonald by at least January 14.
* Confirmation class will resume on January 10.
* As always, when in need of offering envelopes, let Connie know.

**Commemoration of the Saints**

Lutherans do not venerate (pray to) special people called “saints.” Our Lutheran confessional documents speak against that practice. However, those same documents that prohibit the veneration of saints encourage Christian people to look to the lives of significant Christians of the past as a source of encouragement for our lives in the present.



This month, we look at the life of **Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe**, a Lutheran pastor from the small Bavarian (southeastern Germany) town of Neuendettelsau. The life of Wilhelm Loehe is commemorated on January 2, the day of his death.

Loehe never left the small town of Neuendettelsau. Nevertheless, he exerted tremendous influence on Lutheran life around the world, especially in North America. He focused strongly on the worship life of the congregation, believing that as the congregation was rooted in the promise of God through Jesus Christ given in the Lord’s Supper, mission and service in the world would follow. Loehe sent missionaries to many parts of the world, such as Australia, New Guinea, Brazil, Ukraine, and North America. The “Loehe men” in North America were involved in founding German-based Lutheran synods such as the Iowa Synod and the Missouri Synod. Loehe’s work continues to be influential, especially through his eloquent prayers that draw us into communication with God. Even from a small, out-of-the-way location, great things happened for the glory of God.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**Worship Schedule**

**January 7:** The Baptism of our Lord with Holy Communion at altar rail (White)

**January 14:** Second Sunday after Epiphany (Green)

**January 21:** Third Sunday after Epiphany with Holy Communion continuous line (Green)

**January 28:** Fourth Sunday after Epiphany (Green)

**Featured Hymn for January 2018**

***We Are Baptized in Christ Jesus***

*Lutheran Hymnal for Church and Home, 74*

1. We are baptized in Christ Jesus. We are baptized in his death; that as Christ was raised victorious, we might live a brand new life. And if we have been united in a dreadful death like his, we will all be reunited, for he lives.
2. In the water and the witness, in the breaking of the bread, in the waiting arms of Jesus, who is risen from the dead, God has made a new beginning from the ashes of our past; in the losing and the winning we hold fast.
3. Glory be to God the Father, Glory be to Christ the Son, Glory to the Holy Spirit, ever three and ever one; as it was in the beginning, glory now resounds again in a song that has no ending. Amen.

* John C. Ylvisaker, 1937-2016

*Note: Ylvisaker, the father of the contemporary worship movement among Lutherans, uses the imagery of Romans 6 to describe the meaning of baptism for the Christian.*

**Monthly Watchword for January 2018**

“The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.”

* Deuteronomy 5:14 ESV

**Ushers for January:**

* Head Ushers:
  + Unknown (to be announced)
* Ushers:
  + Loren and Jane Yule
  + Ralph and Theresa Jessen
  + Jim and Marilyn Sage
  + Mike Sage

**For Further Information on LCMC and the NALC:** You can download and read the newsletters of both organizations at the following addresses:

* **http://www.lcmc.net/newsletters**
* **http://thenalc.org/newsletter/**

**Website:** The web address is as follows:

* **www.gselclindy.weebly.com**

**From Martin Luther’s Small Catechism:**

**The Ten Commandments: The Seventh Commandment**

*You shall not steal.*

*What does this mean?*

*We should fear and love God so that we do not rob our neighbors of their money or property, nor take from them by unfair dealing or fraud, but help them to improve and protect their property and means of making a living.*

**A Later Christmas Message**

Note: the following message was written for the youth to share with the congregation on December 31, when Pr. Tom was away. However, worship was cancelled that morning because of the extreme cold. Therefore, the brief meditation that was to be shared that morning is provided below:

Dear congregation, in our part of the world, when most people think of “Christmas,” they think of the time between Thanksgiving Day toward the end of November all the way to December 25. Radio stations will play Christmas music during this time, but even Christian radio stations will stop playing Christmas music on the evening of December 25 and go back to their usual routine. The time between Thanksgiving Day and December 25 is a time of intense marketing by retailers, with many stores making a large percentage of their profit for the year in the weeks before Christmas Day. So it’s no wonder that many people think of Christmas as over and done with after dinner on December 25.

In many of our homes, Christmas trees and Christmas lights are already being taken down. And so it surprises people to learn that the twelve days of Christmas that we sing about as children actually *start* on December 25 and go to January 5. Those twelve days of Christmas do *not* lead up to December 25. We are in the middle of the season of Christmas now, and today is the seventh day of Christmas. According to the old secular children’s song from England, the seventh day of Christmas is when “my true love gave to me seven swans a swimming.” But as we gather on the seventh day of Christmas, we hear not about a gift of seven swans a swimming. Instead, we hear a story about wise men, Magi, from the East. And these wise men, led by a star, travel from afar to visit the child named Jesus, and they bring him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And old tradition says that these wise men were three in number, and that’s understandable based on the number of the gifts that they bring. But it never actually says how many of these wise men there were. There could have been hundreds of them for all we know. But as we think about journey of these wise men, it’s a reminder to us that the message of Christmas is not something we should just forget about after dinner on December 25.

In the nativity scenes that we see in front of churches and houses this time of year, we see these wise men together with shepherds on the night that Jesus was born. But if we read the story from the Gospel of Matthew carefully, we see that these wise men would not have come to visit Jesus on the night that he was born. In fact, these wise men probably didn’t find Jesus until he was at least a year old. In Matthew chapter two verse ten, the Greek word that is translated as “child” does not mean a newborn infant. It means a child of toddler age. So these wise men were occupied for a long time with finding Jesus. It wasn’t as though they just dropped by that one night and went on their way. Their search for Jesus became their life, for they knew that the child that had been born was special.

When we hear the story of these wise men, we sometimes focus on the gifts that they bring to the child Jesus. But the main point of the story is not that these wise men bring gifts. The main point is that Jesus himself is the gift, the greatest gift that God can give, to the world. And when those wise men realized this, it changed their lives forever. The story of Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ, is something we take with us through the whole year, not just in the weeks leading up to December 25 and not even just in the actual twelve days of Christmas. Through the gift of Jesus Christ, God begins a new relationship with us and the world, and God calls us to live in that relationship, always receiving Jesus Christ and the forgiveness and redemption he provides. As Jesus Christ was born and lived among us, it is as if a rose was planted among the weeds and sin of the world, and we are called to adore and trust in that rose that God planted among us. Hans Brorson, the Danish Lutheran hymn writer, wrote the following Christmas hymn, which we can imagine those wise men singing so long ago upon finding the child Jesus:

1. I've found now the fairest of roses. In briars and thorns it reposes. My Jesus, a branch newly showing. A rose among sinners is growing.
2. O sinners in brambles and briars, Corrupted by your stubborn errors, Why are you so proud in your spirit, And trust in your own feeble merit?
3. O come seek the places most lowly, And weep before Jesus the Holy. Receive all the gifts that he offers, This Rose planted here among briars.

* Pr. T. E. Jacobson

**January 2018**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3  Pr. Tom in Lindy | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30 with Holy Communion (altar rail)  The Baptism of our Lord  White | 8 | 9 | 10  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:00  Church council, 7:00 PM | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30  Green | 15 | 16 | 17  Pr. Tom in Lindy  WOW/WNALC meeting, 10:00  Confirmation class, 5:00 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30 with Holy Communion (continuous line)  Green  Annual meeting | 22 | 23 | 24  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class, 5:00 PM | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28  Sunday School, 9:30  Worship, 10:30  Green | 29 | 30 | 31  Pr. Tom in Lindy  Confirmation class,  5:00 PM | | | |
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Good Shepherd Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Lindy

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