
Sunday 7 March – Third Sunday of Lent

Readings: Exodus 20:1-17 & John 2: 13-22

Exodus 20:1-17

The Ten Commandments

And God spoke all these words:

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

“Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

“You shall not murder.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.

“You shall not covet your neighbour’s house. You shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.”

John 2:13-22

Jesus Clears the Temple Courts

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Reflection

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

When you think of the Sabbath day what comes to mind? When I was growing up my parents liked us to spend time as a family on Sunday. We went to church, had lunch together, and then often went for a walk or played a game in the afternoon. They were fairly strict about how much TV was watched on Sundays and there was no chance of doing anything like going shopping as the shops were all shut. As I became a teenager I found it a pretty dull day!

As I've got older I've begun to see the benefit of having a day which is different to others - a day of rest, of relaxation, of winding down from the busyness and being refreshed. I recently read John Mark Comer's excellent book, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* which I would highly recommend. Comer is passionate about Sabbath and I've begun trying to have a day regularly in which I set apart as different.

Sabbath will be different for all of us but for me it's a day of retreat from the things that cause my brain to whirr and race. A day to switch off my mobile phone and laptop - no distractions, no mindless scrolling on Twitter, no online shopping. A day to walk, to garden, to read a good book, to eat some great food, to have a long bath, to chat with a friend or with my mum, to pray, to sit and ponder, to just be.

I think that it's interesting that the command to keep the Sabbath comes right in the middle of the Ten Commandments. I wonder if God knew that, by that point, we'd all need some encouragement. All need some time to digest the commands that had been given. All need some time to prepare for those that come next. It's an oasis to help us feel less daunted by the other commandments.

I believe that keeping a Sabbath day will help us to keep God's other commandments. We'll be less tired and burnt out and so less likely to have arguments or be tempted into relationships which could lead us into dangerous places. We'll be spending less time shopping or scrolling the internet and so there will be less temptation to covet things we don't have. We will be spending more time with God and building a relationship that puts him above all else.

A Sabbath is so much more than a day of not being "allowed" to do things. If we can find a true Sabbath pattern then God will open up so many ways to bless us in our rest and equip us for our busyness.

~ Kerry Thomas ~