

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Adult Bible Studies
Week #21

Exodus 20:15

March 5 & 6, 2024

Exodus 20:15

1. The 8th Commandment/Word
2. Background of all 10 Commandments
 - a. The Commandments do not come from “out of nowhere” as it were, but from within the context of a relationship based on God’s love for people and God’s being with the people, especially as embodied in God’s saving the people from slavery
 - b. God reveals here the fundamental aspects of:
 - i. A successful relationship with him
 - ii. Successful relationships with each other
 - c. A main concern of the commandments is the health of the community
 - d. The commandments encompass relationships involving God, Neighbor, and Nature
 - e. The commandments keep order in the world
 - f. Jesus actually elevates the status and demands of the commandments but rather pushes them to their deepest level – see Matthew 5:17-29 – *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets: I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.”*
3. Specific Notes about the 8th Commandment
 - a. Israel understand property to be an extension of a person, therefore theft is a violation of that person
 - b. In ancient Israel:
 - i. Stealing an actual person (kidnapping) was punishable by death
 - ii. Stealing property involved restitution or fines, sometimes greater than the amount stolen
 - c. Theft is considered to be an attack on:
 - i. The dignity of a person
 - ii. The result of that person’s work
 - iii. Work was divinely instituted as part of God’s intention in creation, and theft distorts and diminishes this
 - iv. Theft disrupts the orderly use of the gifts of God that are meant to bless God’s people
 - d. Each individual is responsible for protecting the property of others
 - e. There are considerations about the fact of private versus communal property here: in the biblical record, sometimes property is reserved for the use of the community (see Acts 2:44-45)
 - f. There are also considerations regarding the proper use of wealth for the care of those less fortunate (orphan, widow, foreigner among you)
 - g. Theft can also be the refusal to pay proper (livable?) wages
 - h. God condemns the injury of others in order to gain wealth – Amos 2:6-7 – *“Thus says the Lord: For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and push the afflicted out of the way...”*
 - i. Withholding tithes and offerings is a form of stealing (Malachi 3:8-10) – *“Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me—the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house...”*
 - j. Stealing is sin because it does not “love others”
 - k. Stealing can involve things more than property: things such as a reputation, or credit where credit is due

Questions for Your Life Today

- A. Have you ever been robbed? What feelings did this evoke in you?
- B. Why are we tempted to steal? What does this say about the state of our own souls?
- C. In what ways is stealing ingrained in our social behavior?
- D. How does theft occur in corporate or government settings? Or does it at all?
- E. Is it possible to steal time from someone?

Notes by The Rev. Dr. Jack Baca, Senior Pastor, The Village Church, Rancho Santa Fe, California

Resources:

- a. Interpretation Commentary on Exodus, Terence E. Fretheim, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1991
- b. The Communicator's Commentary Series, Old Testament, Exodus, Maxie D. Dunnam, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1987
- c. The Old Testament Library: Exodus, Brevard S. Childs, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1974