

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash.
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“The Ten Commandments” series

Exodus 20:8-11

Worship the Lord!

1. Do it out of love
2. Reap the benefits in joy

Hymns: 234 – 255 – Closing: 238

All Scripture quotations from the NIV.

Exodus 20:8-11 –

“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 manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 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.”

Terence was not a regular churchgoer. He had been to church occasionally in his life, but did not belong to a church or attend anywhere. He knew, however, that his neighbor did. He saw him leave many a Sunday morning when he would get his paper, all dressed up and ready for worship. He really didn't understand why, so one day he decided to ask. His neighbor was out trimming the hedge one Saturday afternoon, and Terence came up to chat. After some small talk, Terence decided to be brave. He asked, “By the way, I can't help but notice that you go to church on Sunday mornings. I was curious why you do this.” The neighbor looked at him with wide eyes. Terence could tell he was surprised. And Terence could tell by the silence and the puzzled look on his face that his neighbor didn't really have a good answer to his question.

Why should a person go to church? How would you answer that question? As we continue our sermon series on the Ten Commandments, the 3rd Commandment gives us answers to this question today. **We are encouraged to: “Worship the Lord regularly!”**

1. **Do this out of love.**
2. **Reap the benefits in joy**

1 – The 3rd Commandment states, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” There was no doubt in the Old Testament how often you were to worship. If you were an Israelite living then, you knew this was a non-negotiable command of God. The Sabbath was celebrated on Saturdays. “Sabbath” is a Hebrew word, SBTH, that means “to rest” or “to stop.”

Why did God command this? God told them, “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 manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 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.” God told his people that they must abstain from work on the Sabbath and also worship him, for he had rested himself on the seventh day of creation. It's interesting that despite all that has happened in world history, we still continue to follow God's pattern for the week.

There were other reasons God commanded that they commemorate this special day of the week in the OT. Deuteronomy 5 tells us, “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.” The Sabbath was also in memory of the great deliverance, or rest, that God had brought them from Egypt!

In addition, Exodus 23 tells us, “Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed.” This had a practical reason too, for everyone needed a day off to rest! Do you know anyone who says, “I don't take vacations. I don't take days off.” If so, they are not following the pattern God designed man to have, where rest and rejuvenation is necessary for our health.

How mandatory was the OT Sabbath Day? Exodus 31 says, “Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death.” Capital punishment was the penalty for

Sabbath breakers. There was no other option except to observe it!

The Sabbath picture went far beyond a day of the week. In fact, every seventh year was also a Sabbath Year when the Israelites were not to plant crops, but let the land rest. And every 50th year, or seven Sabbath years, they were to have a Year of Jubilee when there would be no crops, all property would return to the families who might have sold it, and all slaves were released. The Sabbath was more than just the one day a week!

Why would God command this so strictly in the OT?

1. This foreshadowed the rest and freedom that the Messiah would one day bring. This was symbolic of the one who would say, *“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest... rest for your souls.”* The book of Hebrews also speaks of this complete “rest” that the Christ would bring: *“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his... Make every effort to enter that rest.”* What “rest” they could look forward to because of Jesus. He would bear the guilt of their sins as he died on the cross. He would give rest to guilty consciences because of the forgiveness he would completely win.
2. Also, this was intended to keep Israel godly and worshipping until that Messiah would come! God programmed a way that they were to keep spiritually growing.

This was more a blessing than a command. And the main reason for their worship was to be love for the Messiah and the salvation God had planned.

Did God's OT people observe this Sabbath faithfully? Unfortunately, we read in the book of Jeremiah, chapter 17, *“The LORD said to me: ‘Go and stand at the gate of the people, through which the kings of Judah go in and out... Say to them, ‘Hear the word of the LORD...: Be careful not to carry a load on the Sabbath day or bring it through the gates of Jerusalem... Keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your forefathers. Yet they did not listen or pay attention... Then... your city will be inhabited forever... But if you do not obey me... then I will kindle an unquenchable fire in the gates of Jerusalem that will consume her fortresses.’”* Unfortunately, there were those who broke the Sabbath day. And we have no real

accounts of the Sabbath years or Years of Jubilee being observed in the OT either!

Why don't we worship on Saturday every week? As we hear in the NT book of Colossians, Jesus fulfilled the picture, and did away with the Ceremonial Law of the OT: *“Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival... or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”* We are not bound by specific Sabbath laws, because Jesus completely fulfilled the picture of them in his life.

So why do we still worship? God still does command worship in many New Testament verses. Hebrews 10 tells us, *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.”* To neglect worship or to skip church indiscriminately is a sin.

Yet is the threat of the law our only motivation? As with OT believers, it is also love that motivates us!

- Just like Psalm 26 says, *“I love the house where you live O LORD, the place where your glory dwells.”*
- Psalm 122 says, *“I rejoiced with those who said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the LORD.’”*
- Psalm 84 says, *“Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere.”*

It's natural for us to love God's house, because here we meet and worship the Lord who has saved us and given us true rest and freedom! Here we see the cross as the focal point of our sanctuary. Here the Lord's Supper is celebrated. Here the tree will be decorated during Advent and Christmas, reminding us of our ever-living Savior.

Because of this freedom to worship when we please, the early Church even picked a different day, Sunday, to be the big worship day of the week. This is the day that Christ sealed our true rest and freedom by rising from the dead on Easter!

Today, what if a person is not in the house of God regularly to worship him? And what is “regularly?” Is 50% regularly? It's debatable, of course, but let's just say 50-75% of the time, for argument's sake. Are there legitimate reasons for not being in church at least that frequently? I ask my Catechism class every year to list reasons on the board why a person would miss church on a given Sunday. They usually have reasons like:

- My car broke down on the way.

- My alarm didn't go off.
- The weather kept me off the roads.
- I was sick.

I can't remember any other valid reasons for missing worship at God's house. Some have said that they work every Sunday morning, yet we do conduct worship services on Monday evenings. Another area church has Thursday evening worship.

Some may be out of town. But don't forget that we have 30 churches in the state of Washington. One might be pretty close! Or that you can plan your own Sabbath worship with your family if you are too far to drive to God's house.

Whatever might have kept a person away from God's house on a given Sunday, hopefully they're thinking, "___ (fill in whatever kept you away) kept me from doing what I really wanted to do today." If they don't feel that way, something has come between them and their Lord. As one of my pastor friends once said, "It's not the love of Jesus that keeps people away from church."

After all, imagine a husband saying this to his wife: "Honey, I love you with all my heart. You're my reason for living and you are truly important to me, in fact the most important part of me, but I only want to talk to you on the phone about every 2 months and see you 4-5 times a year." What wife would love to hear those words? Is this man really sincere about his love for her? **May we regularly come to God's house in love for him who saved us from our sins!**

2 – Besides the fact that love is our motivation for worshiping, we also can recognize the benefits that we will gain from coming, for we will reap benefits from being near God's Word! What benefits are these? I sat down and thought of answers to the question Terence raised at the beginning of this sermon: What reasons would we have for being in God's house? If you look on the back of your bulletin cover today, I've listed some reasons:

1. God deserves our praise for creating us, and also for preserving us for another week. The Lord not only has made you, he also got you through this last week! What a good reason to come to his house and praise him!
2. God deserves our praise for saving us. Here is an even greater reason for our praise! He has sent his only Son to be

our Savior, paying for your sins with his life! This is the best reason to praise him in his house!

3. God commands us to worship. This, as we said, is not our main motivation for worshiping, but it still is a command of God that's in effect.
4. We long to confess our sins and hear God's words of forgiveness. Is there a sin on your conscience troubling you? Or have you not sinned this past week? We as humans need to hear the forgiveness God has for his believers.
5. We need spiritual strength for another week in the world. Martin Luther had a good thought about the strength we need in his Large Catechism:

**"Be sure to get this: Even if you knew the Word of God through and through and had mastered everything, yet all your days are spent in the devil's territory, and he rests neither day nor night from stealthily trying to sneak up and kindle in your heart unfaith and evil thoughts against all the commandments. Therefore you must at all times have the Word of God in your heart, on your lips, and in your ears. But where the heart remains unmoved and the Word does not resound, there the devil breaks in and does his damage before one realizes it."
(Third Commandment, F. Samuel Janzow translation, CPH)**

You will be returning to the world of sin for another week. You will be polluted by talk shows, half hour sitcoms, commercials, and perhaps even your job atmosphere. We need strength for the next week!

6. We love to sing to our God. Or, if you feel inadequate and don't sing (which you shouldn't!), at least hear others sing praise and lift your spirits.
7. We love to pray to our God as a church. You may say, "Pastor, these last two things we can do in our own homes, but many times we fail to.
8. Jesus commands us to take the Lord's Supper often. This, of course, is

- something you probably would not do at your home. This is important in the life of the Christian to receive his forgiveness in the Lord's Supper!
9. We can learn from God's Word in the readings. This would be the response to the person who says, "I worship God out in nature. The golf course is where I see God and have church." We can see God out there and know he is powerful and wise, but we don't learn of how he's saved us or how he empowers us to live for him.
 10. We can learn from an organized sermon from a trained minister, which applies to our lives today. If you think that the Bible is too hard of a book for you to dig into, why would you miss the chance to hear it explained to you from someone who is applying it to your life?
 11. We are strengthened when we worship with other Christians. It is encouraging for you to hear the family ahead of you pray the Lord's Prayer with you, and to hear the family behind you sing that favorite hymn of yours. A wise man once compared Christians to coals from a fire. If they stay together, the fire stays burning nicely. If one is taken out of that fire and placed by itself, it will soon go out.
 12. We are encouraged by sharing friendship with other Christians. Not only do we worship together, but hopefully you will find good, supportive friends here at church. If you think nobody relates to you to be your friend, remember that we have about 540 members here at Holy Trinity!
 13. God commands us to bring offerings for his work. God commands Christians to give of his blessings from him so his work may be done. You can mail it if you really prefer to, but why not be in the habit of bringing your gifts regularly to his house?
 14. God commands us to know the truth so we can be his witnesses. What a great aid the songs we sing, the lessons we read, and the sermons we hear can be, to equip us to be God's witnesses. The person not here regularly may not be as well equipped as the one who comes often!
 15. God commands us to be able to recognize false teachings. A false school of thought today says that all Christian churches are basically the same. Or at least Reformed churches. Or Protestant churches. How false! What better way to know true vs. false teachings than being rooted in God's Word regularly?
- Terence's friend shouldn't have been so tongue tied after all! In fact, he should have been wondering where to start!
- What benefits did we experience here at Holy Trinity in the past year of worship? If you were here for every service this past year, you heard:
- An Advent / Christmas series on the names of Christ = "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God..."
 - An organ concert service by a skilled pastor of our synod!
 - Pastor Seiltz reminded us of "God's New Year's Resolutions"
 - A Lenten series on "Women of the Lenten Story"
 - A Lenten rotation of area WELS pastors for our midweek Wednesday services
 - A service of tenebrae (darkness) on Good Friday!
 - Two services of praise to our risen Savior on Easter!
 - Three joyful facts about Christ's ascension
 - A summer sermon series on OT heroes of faith
 - A sermon a few weeks ago by Pastor Voss on being bold in prayer
- If you missed some of these, how about making a pledge to be at the entire next year of services and see how your faith will grow in God's Word? And if you were in God's house all this past year, make a pledge to continue to grow in his Word!
- As we close our look at the 3rd Commandment today, I must admit that it was strange preparing this message this week. The reason is that I knew I'd be delivering it to people that were here in God's house for the Sabbath this week. This

should be preached to the people who weren't here today!"

Yet it's good for us to be reminded of these things. It also means there is work for all of us to do. There are people you may know who have strayed from our flock. Our bulletin today reports that about 47% of our members were here for worship last weekend. Some may have been out of town at other churches, but I'd imagine not all were! If you know of a friend who has strayed from God's house, take these thoughts to them. Copies of the sermon will soon be on our website if these are helpful to you.

May all of us here today learn from the 3rd Commandment:

- 1. May the love of Jesus motivate us to be in God's house**
- 2. May we joyfully reap the benefits of being near God's Word**

May God bless us as we gather together!

Amen.