

WELCOME 6th August 2023 – 10th Sunday after Pentecost '23 A

Exodus 19:1-9, 16-20 & 20:1-21 & 31:18

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! I'm almost back...still a bit to go before I'm at full strength, but keep praying & we'll get there! In the meantime...

Growing Praise inserts & Bible Study Qs are still there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that ^{w/} someone else. **Zoom** Bible Study Catch-ups will be on hold for another week or so. But they will be back.

As we move into this week...

T&C's may apply. That little disclaimer...the fine print that sets out the conditions under which someone agrees to provide goods or services. They detail the contract obligations, set the rules & define the conditions under which an agreement is/not fulfilled.

Many see the 10 Commandments that way - a list of terms & conditions for being a Christian. "This is what it takes." Still others, see them as an outdated set of rules or obligations that no longer apply in 21st century living. Separated from the relationship of grace, it's easy to see the Commandments like that.

But emerging from the saving work of God, **I am** the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery & the intimate mutual relationship God desires with his people, the Commandments are a gift of love that reveal our identity as his people, protect the freedom we have been given, guide our relationship with God & those around us, create community, & enable us to flourish in a life of blessing.

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings & brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me & keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. You will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.'

It's an unshakeable & unchangeable promise...a promise set in stone...& in us as living stones. And know this...

God's mutual covenant of grace will transform every heart, every relationship, every home & every community in which it is lived.

We'll experience that grace & provision today...

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Father you call us as your own & release us into this world for your purposes. Let every thought word & deed be held firm in your grace. Make our worship today & our lives in all things a reflection of your mission to this world & the path ahead for this band of disciples one that invites others into your life & love. Amid challenges & changes equip us by your Spirit for whatever tasks you have set for us. Infuse your wisdom into our hearts so that we discern your will & way in all things for your glory & the widened embrace of your kingdom in this city...through Jesus we pray...
Amen.*

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Someone says to you, "The commandments are the essence of Christianity. They're all you need." You respond....?
2. Someone says to you, "The commandments are irrelevant." You respond....?

10 PENTECOST '23 A – A JOURNEY OF PROMISE: THE PROMISE SET IN STONE

Since I've been out of touch for a bit... & we're in the home stretch in our experience in Exodus... I want to go back & grab a few pieces of the Exodus journey to help us see the big picture of the narrative so these last weeks tie together all the incredible grace we're experiencing. Remember, the book of Exodus is built around 2 two crucial events. **1st** – the Exodus itself... the deliverance of God's people from slavery into the freedom of life in relationship w/ God. The saving work of God's mighty hand & outstretched arm to draw his people from death in bondage to life w/ Him. Everything we've seen to now has focused there: the Exodus itself. But of equal importance **2nd** is the Sinai Covenant... the manner in which God's redeemed rescued people are to live into this new freedom. How they are to daily live into this relationship w/ the God they only know as Saviour ... Redeemer... Rescuer... the God who is keeping a promise made to their ancient ancestors Abraham, Isaac & Jacob.

For most of us we think, "Oh yeah... the 10 Commandments," but that's just the start the opening chapter of the covenant. The covenant as a whole is deeply detailed in scope. It covers the entirety of their lives... family relationships... worship... business dealings... judicial matters... on & on & on 100s of stipulations regulations commands & ordinances. The Covenant is the nitty gritty of how their newfound freedom is to be lived in every aspect of their daily lives... responsive & related to their God. The real but unspoken question that underpins both the Exodus itself & the Sinai Covenant is one that also confronts each of **us**... Is God enough?

IS GOD ENOUGH... to grant freedom where I'm trapped – to heal my brokenness – to breathe life into the places in me that have long felt dead – to create hope in my despair – reveal purpose & meaning in my daily drudgery/grind – reason to live when you're waiting to die – provide – protect – guide & lead out of confusion – drive me out of my inertia or reclaim me from me rebellion & get me moving again into the life he promises & intends... security refuge safety future... **IS GOD ENOUGH**... for all that/more

Now the Israelites regularly said "No." They grumbled, complained, objected, rebelled... kept looking back to Egypt w/ a bizarre fondness. They rewrote the story of their slavery unto death w/ bright colours & read it through rose-tinted glasses. When life got tough they attributed malicious murderous intent to God. In the midst of their rescue they accused God of leading them to their deaths. The sinner in them & the sinner in us will always find an excuse to say "No. I need something more than what God offers, gives, promises." :||

So... 2 wks ago we walked out of worship w/ this affirmation of faith from King David: **"The** Lord is my Shepherd. I have everything I need." In other words... God is enough.

So as we get into the 2nd part of the Exodus Journey... the Sinai Covenant, I want us to dig here for a **minute**... What in your life would cause you to doubt that? What in your circumstances (or someone you know) would cause you to question God was everything you need, enough, to satisfy your "want"? Israelites said No... The sinner in them & the sinner in us will always find an excuse to say "No. I need something more..." What could that be? Talk to your neighbour...

See here's what breaks my heart... all of that reveals that the sinner in the Israelites & the sinner in me/us lives w/ a twisted view of God... If God would just give me ___ then I would ___. If we just did right then God would ___. Like a business deal... one hand washes the other... scratch my back... For far too many years/far too many people the Sinai Covenant (most clearly the 10Cs) are a simple checklist of dos & don'ts... God's naughty/nice list for humankind. We do & then God should... But look at God & how he establishes his work in us... **You** have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings & brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me & keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. You will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.'

You see it... Grace always comes **first**... Grace always establishes a **relationship** not a transaction not a business deal not a checklist tick box... a relationship. *You know how I carried you on eagles' wings & brought you to myself.* The desire from the Father's heart is always intimate fellowship w/ those he crafted in his own image for his blessing to pour out on the earth. His image, presence & purpose lived in us.

Grace always comes first... Grace always establishes a relationship... *Once you were dead because of your disobedience & sin... But God is so rich in mercy, & he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sin, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)* – **Eph 2:1, 4-5**

But the promise, the gift of grace, calls us in as partners & participants... grace invites us to become intimate mutual companions w/ the Father in the promise: **Now** if you will obey me & keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. You will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' Not quid pro quo... Not I have now you **must**... Obedience reveals grace received & lives into God's destiny. The Commandments are a gift of love that reveal our identity as his people, protect the freedom we have been given, guide our relationship w/ God & those around us, create community, & enable us to flourish in a life of blessing. They answer the **question**, "Is God enough?" w/ a resounding **"Yes!"**

If God's **not** enough I will be forever turning against God & those around me for whatever it is I think I lack – want – desire or deserve. The Commandments reveal to us **&** in some way protect the very things God loves... His Name, worship, family,

authority, neighbours, unique relationship to us as Saviour...When the world can't see it...when the world doesn't hear it from us...when the world can't tell the difference b/t God's people & anyone else...the covenant relationship of grace is cheapened... Bonhoeffer's words, "cheap grace" is grace that just says, Ah...go on... she'll be right. You don't need to take God *that* seriously. Once in a while is fine. You're free...free means do as you please. Nonsense! The NT is filled w/ warnings... Yeah you're free but don't use your freedom as an excuse to sin – do whatever strikes your fancy - hurt your neighbour help them – bring disrepute on the name of Christ...When the world can't see it...when the world doesn't hear it from us...when the world can't tell the difference b/t God's people & anyone else...the covenant relationship of grace is cheapened...Obedience reveals grace received & lives into God's destiny.

For far too many years/far too many people the Commandments have been seen as a list of terms & conditions for a transaction/business deal. "This is what it takes." Still others, see them as an outdated set of rules or obligations that no longer apply in 21st century living. But emerging from the saving work of **God**, *I am the Lord your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery & the intimate mutual relationship God desires w/ his people, the Commandments are a gift of love that reveal our identity as his people, protect the freedom we have been given, guide our relationship w/ God & those around us, create community, & enable us to flourish in a life of blessing. **You** have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings & brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me & keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. You will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.'*

It's an unshakeable & unchangeable promise...a promise set in stone...& in us as living stones. *"And you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light."* – **1 Pet 2: 5 & 9**

God's mutual covenant of grace will transform every heart, every relationship & every home & every community in which it is lived.

TAKE IT HOME – *As you leave today...be specific as you share with your neighbour – don't just say "everywhere"*

In what setting will you live the covenant of grace into which you have been called?

Let's pray with that in mind...

"Lord, do whatever you need to do *IN* us, so you can do whatever you want to do *THROUGH* us so that all whom we know in this city & beyond might be called into the embrace of your love, the fullness of your power & & the joy of your purpose...through Jesus Christ...Amen.