

5<sup>th</sup> October 2014

## Trinity 17

Proper 22 **Green**



### Collect

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

**Exodus 20:1-4,7-9,12-20** English Standard Version (ESV)

### The Ten Commandments

20<sup>1</sup> And God spoke all these words, saying,

<sup>2</sup> “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>3</sup> “You shall have no other gods before<sup>[a]</sup> me.

<sup>4</sup> “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

<sup>7</sup> “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

<sup>8</sup> “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work,

<sup>12</sup> “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

<sup>13</sup> “You shall not murder.<sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>14</sup> “You shall not commit adultery.

<sup>15</sup> “You shall not steal.

<sup>16</sup> “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

<sup>17</sup> “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour’s.”

<sup>18</sup> Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, the people were afraid<sup>[c]</sup> and trembled, and they stood far off <sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die.” <sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, “Do not fear, for God has come to test you, that the fear of him may be before you, that you may not sin.”

**Footnotes:** a. or *besides*. b. The Hebrew word also covers causing human death through carelessness or negligence. c. Samaritan, Septuagint, Syriac, Vulgate; Masoretic Text *the people saw*.

**COMMENT:** Of all passages in the Bible, this may be the most familiar. Perhaps more surprising to us now is the scholarly opinion that these Ten Commandments were by no means original to the Israelites. It may also come as a surprise to many that there are variations in the way different religious communities enumerate them. Nor do all Christians follow the same enumeration. Jews, Roman Catholics and Lutherans treat worshipping other gods and making graven images as the first commandment, while Reformed and Orthodox Christians separate them into two. Roman Catholics and Lutherans separate coveting into two prohibitions, as nine and ten: nine - the household; and ten - the remainder of the list. This Decalogue set forth the eternal covenant relationships between God and humanity and between human beings in a relatively small community. Yet the constitutions and laws of many modern nations are based on this ancient code, particularly the last six commandments. The first three demand the worship of God alone, prohibiting image-making and the use of God's name to do harm to others. These not only stress God's exclusive claim over the lives of people, but also demand total commitment, thus preserving people from divided loyalties and protecting the community from misusing God's power. The next two call for the observing of the seventh day as a day of rest and for honouring parents when they may no longer be of significant economic value within the community. These institutions provide protection for some of the basic elements of society, in their emphasis on labour, rest from labour, and human dignity. The following three commandments focus on the life of the individual or the family within the larger community. They insist on the sanctity of human life, marriage and sexuality, and the necessity to maintain a community in which the extension of self one's into property is recognised and respected. Women were then regarded as property too. The last two deal more with social relationships, assuring that truth is the basis of justice and that community life is not corrupted by lust for another's goods or lives. A recent cartoon depicted the giving of the Ten Commandments with a modern public relations twist. A bewildered Moses stands looking up at a cloud through which the hand of God thrusts the tablets of stone toward him. A voice sounds out of the cloud saying, "These are your talking points." That is very much the way it has been throughout history.

## **Matthew 21:33-46** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **The Parable of the Tenants**

21<sup>33</sup> "Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country.<sup>34</sup> When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants<sup>[a]</sup> to the tenants to get his fruit.<sup>35</sup> And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.<sup>36</sup> Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them.<sup>37</sup> Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'<sup>38</sup> But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.'<sup>39</sup> And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.<sup>40</sup> When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"<sup>41</sup> They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons."<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'<sup>[b]</sup>; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our

eyes'? <sup>43</sup>Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. <sup>44</sup>And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>45</sup>When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. <sup>46</sup>And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

**Footnotes:** a. Greek *bondservants*; also verses 35, 36. b. Greek *the head of the corner*. c. Some manuscripts omit verse 44.

**COMMENT:** Jesus tells a devastatingly obvious parable against the religious authorities who so obstinately opposed him. They fully realized what he was saying and made plans to destroy him as the ultimate threat to their authority. The parable and the pointed accusation which followed would resonate with the members of Matthew's own community when Jewish Christians were being driven from the synagogues in the 80s. The quotation about a cornerstone being rejected (verse 42) comes from Psalm 118:22- 23. As used there, it did not refer to the Messiah being rejected. That was a new interpretation imposed on the reference by the early church. Its appearance in three other New Testament books (Mark 12:10-11, Acts 4:11 and 1 Peter 2:7) shows that it was an important part of early Christian preaching as the church struggled to understand why Jesus was crucified.

## Psalm 19 *Caeli enarrant*

℟ **The heavens proclaim the glory of God.**

<sup>1</sup> *For the Choirmaster. A Psalm of David*

<sup>2</sup> The heavens proclaim the glory of God,  
and the firmament shows forth the work of his hands.

<sup>3</sup> Day unto day takes up the story  
and night unto night makes known the message. ℟

<sup>4</sup> No speech, no word, no voice is heard

<sup>5</sup> yet their span extends through all the earth,  
their words to the utmost bounds of the world. ℟

There he has placed a tent for the sun;

<sup>6</sup> it comes forth like a bridegroom coming from his tent,  
rejoices like a champion to run its course. ℟

<sup>7</sup> At the end of the sky is the rising of the sun;  
to the furthest end of the sky is its course.

There is nothing concealed from its burning heat.℟

<sup>8</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect,  
it revives the soul.

The rule of the Lord is to be trusted,  
it gives wisdom to the simple. ℟

<sup>9</sup> The precepts of the Lord are right,  
they gladden the heart.

The command of the Lord is clear,  
it gives light to the eyes.

**℟ The heavens proclaim the glory of God.**

<sup>10</sup> The fear of the Lord is holy,  
abiding for ever.  
The decrees of the Lord are truth  
and all of them just. **℟**

<sup>11</sup> They are more to be desired than gold,  
than the purest of gold  
and sweeter are they than honey,  
than honey from the comb. **℟**

<sup>12</sup> So in them your servant finds instruction;  
great reward is in their keeping.

<sup>13</sup> But who can detect all his errors?  
From hidden faults acquit me. **℟**

<sup>14</sup> From presumption restrain your servant  
and let it not rule me.  
Then shall I be blameless,  
clean from grave sin. **℟**

<sup>15</sup> May the spoken words of my mouth,  
the thoughts of my heart,  
win favour in your sight, O Lord,  
my rescuer, my rock! **℟**

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** The creative power of God in nature and God's sacred covenant with humanity expressed in the Torah became the centrepiece of Israel's religious heritage as set forth in this psalm. The two distinct parts of the psalm cause some to wonder if they were originally two separate compositions. Even if so, the Hebrew sense of the majestic beauty of creation and the divinely ordered Torah make it easy to understand why they were united as one.

### **Post Communion**

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### **The Blessing**

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep *your* hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**