

Sermon for A Year with the Catechism The First Commandment

Date: September 12, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Psalm 115

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 8:1-6

Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:1-2, 8-11

Sermon Text: Exodus 20:3-6

Sermon Title: The First Commandment

Introit: Psalm 62:1-2, 11-12; Antiphon 62:8

Hymns:

LSB 940 – Holy God, We Praise Thy Name

LSB 581 – These are the Holy Ten Commands
(v. 1-2, 11-12)

LSB 953 – We All Believe in One True God

Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151



Songs:

Holy is the Lord

Good Good Father - Chris Tomlin

Father I Adore You

How Great Is Our God - Chris Tomlin

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



Text: Exodus 20:3-6

You shall have no other gods before me. 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. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

NOTE: Copyright information.

Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

© 2021 Pastor James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Open, please, your Bibles to Exodus 20, and your Catechism to page 58. While you get there I want to walk you through a thought process that will be important to understand as we move forward. There is a key point I want you to understand concerning why I want you to bring your Bibles. (I've used this example before, so some of you have heard it, but it bears being repeated so we're all on the same page. (While you look for the pages in your Bible and Catechism.)

There is a very real, and specific, reason why I want you to start bringing your Bibles and Catechisms to church, and it is far from simply putting on a show. It is far from, "Hey look I brought me Bible. See what kind of Christian I am!" It is far from that. I want you to bring them for one very simple and specific reason.



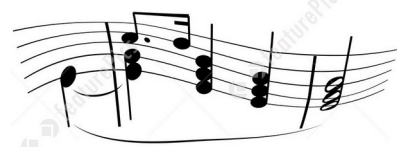
I say it is simple, but that's the problem. It is so simple we forget it is the answer. To help everyone understand I want you to think about drawing the sound of a bird singing. I suppose, depending on your artistic skills many folks would draw something that looks like this. The problem with that is I said draw the sound of the bird singing.

So perhaps we could change the picture. Maybe we could add something like this. Now we've got something that represents the sound, but I said draw the sound of a bird singing.



So you might think, "Oh pastor now I get it." You might come up with this. The problem with that picture is still the same problem. I said draw the sound of a bird singing. I said, "Draw the sound." In this picture we still have the bird. I did not say draw the bird, I said draw the sound of the bird.

I want you to draw the sound so that I can look at it on the page, walk through the forest and when I hear a bird singing I will know it is the bird you thought of as you drew its sound on the page. So let's get rid of the bird. That would leave us with this.



That is the reason I want you to bring your Bibles! I know what your thinking. Pastor has lost it. What does that have to do with reading a Bible, or opening a Catechism? The answer is: Everything!

The assignment I gave you was to draw the sound of a bird singing. We've got that one figured out. Now draw the sound of the voice of God. You've got your Bibles open (or if not look at the screens up front). What do you see there? You see

a collection of letters from our English alphabet. Aren't those letters simply symbols of sounds? Drawings for sound?

Because of those pictures of sounds I could ask someone to tell me a secret on this side of the room. I could write (or draw) those words (or sounds) and bring it to someone on this side, and they could know the secret because I drew the sound of the voice on the page. The second person could hear with their eyes.

In your Catechism (on page 58) you will find the First Commandment, along with the explanation that follows. It is there in the box as you might have memorized it. There is the voice of Dr. Martin Luther as he teaches us about God's Holy Word. (Imagine his thick German accent...)

“You shall have no other gods.”

What does this mean?

“We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”

That sound was drawn on a page 500 years ago, and it still resounds today for our eyes to hear.

When God gave these Commandments to us, through Moses, this is how He started. This is Moses drawing the voice of God. In Exodus 20:1-2 he drew:

God spoke all these words, saying, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.¹”

The voice of God.

The full text, found in Exodus 20:2-6, is:

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. 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. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.²”

1 Exodus 20:1-2

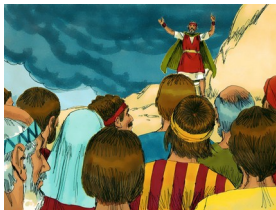
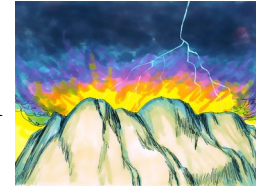
2 Exodus 20:2-6

Those words were drawn, in stone, by God Himself. Exodus 31:18 records:

God gave to Moses... the two tablets of the testimony,
tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.³

Now there is more happening than just God's voice, as those words are being spoken and recorded, (by the very hand of God.) I want you to picture what is happening when God gives these words to the people of Israel. To picture that you have to page back a little to Exodus 19:16. Imagine being there:

¹⁶ On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast, so that all the people in the camp trembled.



¹⁷ Then Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they took their stand at the foot of the mountain.

¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.



¹⁹ And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him in thunder.

Imagine what it would have been like to actually be there that day. To feel the earth shake and hear the thunder clap. After coming away from such an encounter with God you cannot help but realize that He is the Creator, and you are merely the created. At such times you have this compelling feeling that you should be bowing, kneeling down, or laying prostrate on the ground in reverence for His might, His authority and His power, as you pay homage to Him as Lord and God. We are to acknowledge His existence and His Lordship, obey His decrees, and direct our hearts and minds towards Him, and Him alone.

That is the 'what' of this Commandment. That is 'what' it says. The real question is 'why?' Why does God give this Commandment to us? He give it because God knows (He knows because He made us and designed us) that wherever we focus our thoughts that will affect our attention. He knows that everything, in all of creation, is fleeting. It cannot last because nothing in this

3 Exodus 31:18

creation will last. Everything is temporary. Everything will disappear and disappoint. God knows that any other god to which you bow will not come through for you when you need it.

That is exactly what God's Word teaches us in Psalm 115. There we hear God speak of beautiful idols made of gold and silver. Beautiful as they may be that is all that they are, artwork made by an artist.

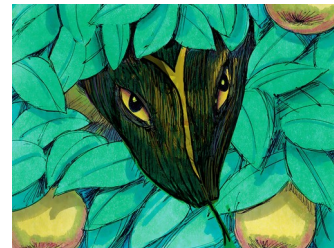
That is why Psalm 115 says:

They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.
They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
and they do not make a sound in their throat.⁴



Psalm 115 is just a poetic way of saying, those who worship such things are foolish. It is a waste of your life, your time, and your worship, because that block of wood, no matter how decoratively carved and adorned, is still just a block of dead wood.

These are not the only things people worship. Sometimes people worship other, and just as foolish, things. Some people worship power or authority. Some worship dirt and gossip on people. Some worship money. Some worship status and title. These are the things they long for most, crave most, desire most. All of them give a sense of superiority over others. All of them dismiss the One True Living God and replace Him with other things. All of them, be they idols of wood and stone, or superiority and status are still the sin of Eden. What were Satan's words? "You will be like God."⁵



Carved idols are submissive to the one who carves them or cares for them. Cravings and desires for authority and title make others submissive to the one who holds those views. They are all about replacing God with something that makes you god.

Look again to page 58 in your Catechism.

4 Psalm 115:5-7

5 Genesis 3:5

“You shall have no other gods.”

What does this mean?

“We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.”

Worship should be directed at the God of the Bible, the only True Triune God, the only True and Living God, who is the Creator of all things. Worship should be directed at the God of the Bible because He comes through for you. The one true God promises to act for those who worship Him and He does, in many and various ways. He promises to watch over His worshipers, and He does. He promises to listen the prayers of His worshipers, and He does. He alone has the power to touch a life and make a change. God acts in the lives of His people. Ultimately, when we need Him most, at our death, He defeats even that enemy, and carries us safely home.

I am amazed at the transforming power of God. We are, at times, ambushed by the greatness, the wonder, the wisdom of God when He stoops down to walk with us, His children. At times like that we feel His presence, and we realize that God is dynamic, authoritative, powerful. He is dangerous. We also realize that He is personal, compassionate, loving and frighteningly very real. Look at the “Central Thought” in your Catechism. What does it say:

All people everywhere are constantly looking for happiness, identity, security and meaning in life.

...

As Christians, we look to the one true God for all that we need. This is the God who created and sustains us, who redeemed us by giving Himself to be crucified for us in the God-man, Jesus, and who sanctifies us (*holifies us or makes us holy*) through the power of His Holy Spirit.

There is no other God.

We see that most clearly in the life of Jesus. In Jesus we see God who has come near to us, walked with us, cried and laughed with us. He suffered the trials of life just like we do. He even died the death we were supposed to die. Why? Because His love for His children is greater the pain He had to endure to save us. As He breaks out of the grave, He sets us free from the grave.

Don't waste your worship on other gods, be they things, idols, money, status or spirits. Because if you do, the day will come they will disappoint you. Who can you trust? Where can we anchor our hopes? “From where does our help come?”⁶”

The First Commandment teaches us to, “fear, love, and trust in God above all things” because, “Our help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.⁷” He will come through for you, forever. Worshiping God is never a waste. Worshiping God is always a blessing, because God comes to us through His Word forever.

In Jesus name.

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**



7 Psalm 121:2