

The Road Map
Sunday, August 15, 2021, 11:15 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena
The Rev. Alfredo Feregrino

In poll commissioned to promote an animated Christian movie the Ten Commandments in 2007, Americans were found to be more familiar with the ingredients (*engridients*) of the McDonald's Big Mac hamburger than some of the Ten Commandments.

In this study conducted by a marketing research firm for the upcoming release of the animated feature film, 80 percent of respondents knew too well that "*two all-beef patties*" were among the ingredients of the Big Mac but only six out of ten could identify "*You shall not kill*" as one of the Ten Commandments.

But there are more: In the Torah, the five first books of the Hebrew Bible/ commonly known as the Old Testament, starting with the book of Genesis, there are a total of 613 commandments, as counted by Jewish scholars (also known as Mitzvahs).

Many of the 613 commandments are obsolete or outdated because some of them refer to practices in the Jerusalem temples, which were destroyed.

Others commandments are no relevant within our current context such as :Women must not wear men's clothing; Not to tattoo the skin; Not to cook meat and milk together; Not to eat creatures that live in water other than fish, (and I love shrimp).

So, In order to understand the gospel passage that we heard today, I need to give you some background.

Because it will be difficult to reflect on this passage in isolation.

This passage concerning oaths and vows is part of series of six statements or declarations (antitheses, as a figure of speech) that compare something that "was said" in the past with Jesus teachings in the present.

Basically, Jesus contrast/ compare the old teachings about righteousness with that specific context with the teachings of his present time.

The topics of these six statements are: Anger, Adultery, Divorce, Oaths (as our today's gospel) , Revenge and Love for our Enemies.

It is important to mention that Jesus used six statements to further explain or inform the Ten Commandments and the law of his time.

Ok. Enough of a background for now...

Actually, in my case, I had to memorize all the Ten Commandments when I attended Sunday school as a child (many years ago) even though I did not know the meaning of many of the words back then. Covet? ...False Witness? Adultery?

As 8 year old child, I had no idea what was all about.

So, let me summarize the commandments to you: If you want to, you can find them in the (BCP pg. 350 /847) which is our red book that you have in front of you in the pews.

The first 3 commandments , speak of our relationship with God, the 4th Honor your parents is a transitional one and the remaining ones have to do with **the self** in relation with others.

The commandments specify where the limits are in healthy relationships, boundaries which, if you cross them, will damage or destroy those **relationships**.

We shall not allow ourselves to abuse the physical life, the sexual life, or the reputation of those around us if we are to remain in true relationship with God, other people, and ourselves.

But I would like to think about these stipulations and commandments not just as a binding agreement, or requirement, but as a road map.

29 years ago, in 1992, (wow) I traveled for the first time by car, on my own from my home in Mexico, all the way to Seattle with my cousin. It took us four days to arrive to Seattle. What I remember most about this trip is that I was so proud of my “navigation skills”. GPS or Navigation apps did not exist back then.

So, I had in my possession a really detailed large scale Road Atlas map. Remember those? I got mine in Costco.

My map was so easy to use. As we were driving along highways and roads, we did not know what to expect, but because we had our map, we knew exactly how to get from town to town, knowing in advance the distance and the time that it would take us to arrive at each destination.

I was surprised to discover how this fact impacted our whole trip, giving us a sense of security and confidence on our journey because this map was so accurate and kept us on the right path.

If we see the commandments as a road map, this metaphor that can help us to pay more attention and see if the routes or ways we are using to navigate our lives, are the best ones to bring us to the right destination.

And the **right destination** is to be in a better relationship with God, with other people, and with ourselves. That’s the destination.

Most of the time when we drive, looking for our destination or just driving for the sake of it, we may not pay attention to the landscape.

But Jesus is telling us that in order to follow the right route (rut), the right direction, we need to pay extra attention.

If we pay extra attention, we might see that in our anger we might have insulted other people, our friends or our neighbors and that we need to travel the extra mile to come together.

Same when we have abused or offended our partners or spouses, family members, members in our communities.

Same when we do not tell the truth, same when we lie, or manipulate the truth.

You know what... dishonesty and manipulation of the truth is at the core of the teaching of gospel that we just heard today.

We know that truth telling is at the core of every major issue in politics, business, medicine, family life, the economy, health care and the judicial system.

Sometimes we do not know what is the truth or what is an “alternative fact” for instance.

This is a very big issue right now.

We have reached the point where we do not trust what we hear anymore.

And what's more, many times we are not honest with ourselves and others because we've lost the sense of what it's like to navigate a straight path for ourselves.

Someone said once that “What is inside a person, defines what is outside.”

But here, the gospel invite us to pay extra attention, the gospel invite us to live with integrity.

Few weeks ago, I preached about integrity... remember?

And I said that:

Integrity is acting, talking and behaving in ways that honor yourself and others.

Integrity is examining things before you do them and doing only those things, you know to be true and right.

Because living with integrity will bring clarity and direction to every part of your life.

But what would happen if the routes, ways or roads that we have taken in our lives have not maintain the path of integrity?

What happen, when we lose that sense of navigation?

This may sound so simple, but we always can correct our ways and take the right route, the right direction by turning around.

This is the good news that the Gospel proclaims. Our loving God wants to be in relationship with us. God wants to be in union and communion with all of us. God wants us to be in union with each other, our loving God wants us to find the right destination.

Interestingly the meaning of the word repentance means to turn around.

Turn away from our offenses, and return to God.

Turn around. There is always a way to go back.

You know...When we pause with the desire to be restored in our relationship with God, ourselves and others—even though we may not know exactly how—we give God the opportunity to meet us.

We give God the opportunity to enter into our lives and help us.

We open ourselves to God's grace.

And you know what.... It is in seeking to be in relationship with God that God always meets us.

We have a loving God who always walks with us and never abandons us, even if abandon God by leaving the path,

And... it is in seeking to be one with God that God always **surpri-ses** us.

Yes, the Commandments are a road map that will allow us to live with integrity.

And just like that Road Atlas I remember from all those years ago, if we stay on the path, the path of truth, the path of love, the path of integrity, we can have a sense of security and confidence that we will eventually arrive at our destination.

A destination with the source of love.

We are so bless that have this map right here in front of us.

I wonder, how will **you** choose to use it?

Jesus is inviting us to live these commandments not out of duty, but from a desire, that stems from our very core of our beings... our love.

No wander, Jesus reduces the 613 biblical commandments down to just two: to love of God and to love your neighbor.

So, I invite you to pay extra attention,

If we see this as a road map, the commandments can be a perfect guide that can direct us to a perfect relationship with God, to other people, and to ourselves. **AMEN**