

## Deuteronomy 5 Part 2

*Readings Deuteronomy 5:12-33 Ephesians 6:1-9 Luke 14:1-6*

Story of corona virus test:

Couple of weeks ago I had a corona virus test. I had a bug that felt quite severe. I'd had contact with a bunch of international students. So I got the test. They give you an option of a swab up the nose or down the throat. The lady said if you have a strong gag reflex, don't go down the throat. I went for the nose. Don't know if I have a strong gag reflex. But it goes right up your nose. Deeper than feels comfortable, that's for sure. They're trying to get a sample of what's in your lungs.

Then it was 48 hours of isolation. I got the bedroom. Ally went and slept elsewhere. So my room became off limits, well kind of. But even though I'm fairly young, not in the high risk range, no underlying health issues. And even though it turns out I just had the rhinovirus – a cold. Despite all that, I still, in the night, by myself thought about, what if I'm dying. Thought about regrets and sins past, and confessing them, and good things too, things I was thankful for.

We have long taken it for granted that we will live to 70 or 80 or 90. 70 feels very young to die these days, doesn't it. And so this virus threat is an enormous jolt. If you're like me, your anxiety levels have risen. Because we want, we expect a long life. For ourselves and our relatives and friends.

We're continuing looking at the 10 commandments this week, the second half of the commandments, those that focus on our relationship with each other. But there was advice in there about how to live a long life. Nothing in there of a medical nature, or social distancing. Did you notice it?

We'll come to it soon. But you might remember Jesus divides the commands of the Bible in two: Love the Lord your God, and love your neighbor. Last week we looked at the command to love the Lord your God, and read the first four commandments, or statements. Today, we've read the last seven. That's partly because it's hard to know where to put the Sabbath. Is the Sabbath a commandment primarily given with respect to loving God, or to loving our neighbor? I'm having a bet both ways, so we've read it both weeks.

Last time, we saw how important it was to see that these commandments are given *after* God's people had established a relationship with God. Today, it's worth remembering what's gone before. It's after we've gotten our relationship with God right, that our relationships with others will work best.

### Fifth

But let's look at the first command with a promise, as Ephesians calls it

Deuteronomy 5:16

"Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

You might have thought this was one of the promises only for the Old Testament people. But the apostle Paul only changes it slightly, and repeats the promise in Ephesians 6: "Honor your father and mother"-- which is the first commandment with a promise-- 3 "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

It's the kind of promise like the ones you get in the book of Proverbs: On average, honouring your father and mother will increase your life expectancy, and help life go well in general.

It's the kind of advice I like more as I get older, as a father. But it doesn't say, honour your father and mother, so their life goes well. It's honour them, so your life goes well. Now might be a good time to see them, if you still have parents. You might not see them in a while. Honoring goes beyond childhood. It includes caring for them in their old age, doing things for them, not speaking ill of them publicly.

And how would that give you a long life? Well, the whole disposition of honouring the one who gave you life is core to the way you're made. Living the moral life we're designed to, in appropriate relationships – it's a guard for mental health, for a sense of purpose and direction, it goes well with honouring God himself. If you can't honour your father and mother who gave you life and you can see, how will you honour the God who gave you life whom you can't see?

As a parent, I tried to teach this by using the language of the text here. If they went too far in their jokes, that's not honouring your father, rather than that's not honouring me. Because I'm not so concerned about the fact that I'm dishonoured. I'm concerned about the fact they won't live a long life and have things go well, if they can't honour their father.

Right now is a big test of how we honour the elderly in our community. We all have a mother and father. Many of them are under direct threat from the virus. Asking if our parents would like a visit, how we can care for them, now's the time. I say to myself as much as anyone.

### **Sixth**

In verse 17, you shall not murder. Jesus takes all these commands, and pushes them to their maximum application. We are not to wish the worst for people, not to hope for their deaths. Leave judgment to God. Hope and pray for the best for others, even our biggest rivals or enemies. We're not to take life.

I've wrestled with this decision to halt public church services. In the end, our decision to close is in part a response to this sixth commandment. We don't want to play a role in the death of others. We certainly don't want to kill. So just one of the ways to do that, is severely limiting our numbers at church. It will be a closed meeting. 10 or less going forward, I think, just those required to make it happen, and to stream it to you out there. We'll look to have one place in this closed meeting each week for a visitor who wants to ask for prayer or ask a question about the Bible. If you want to come to the physical gather, maybe once every 7 weeks or less, best way is to get on our roster, and Bible-read or pray or sing or help with sound and data. We're doing it this way because it's an extension of this command – Do not murder.

### **Seventh**

In verse 18, You shall not commit adultery. Notice it frames our sexual life around marriage. The most serious of sexual sins, are those that attack someone's marriage and therefore their family. Again, Jesus maximises these commands, and applies them to our hearts. They imply we shouldn't be fantasizing over how good nice it might feel to sleep with that woman, that man, to see them undressed, if we're not married to them, yes, but especially if that would involve damaging families. Yes, sex is designed for marriage only. That's for the good of children and families.

### **Eighth**

In verse 19, you shall not steal. We could well be tempted in days ahead. And then to bear false testimony about it. They often go together. It's good for us to look after others, so they don't feel the need to steal. That may become more real for us in days ahead.

### **Ninth**

I was running late for my doctor's appointment. The car tank had been on empty for quite a while. I hadn't thought through the fact that once I came out of the appointment, I'd be in quarantine. I came out wearing a mask. What do I do? Go to the servo on the way home anyway, like I was going to? Take off my mask and pretend. Leave my mask on. What if someone asks me if I'm in quarantine. It was a wrestle, but I ended up going straight home, hoping there would still be enough petrol next time I drove. And there was. But bearing false testimony, even on serious things – it's not far from any of us. In the original setting, it's especially in the court room, in a trial that the command is given. It implies that an upright society requires a functioning, just legal system. With unbiased testimony. The truth and the whole truth, so help me God. Even if that leads to an outcome I don't like.

### **Tenth**

The tenth statement is telling us not to covet. It's the only commandment explicitly talking about our inner life, our desires. And we're not to desire things, that in the having them would damage our neighbor. We're to be content with what we have. That will bring us peace. Riches are deceptive says Jesus. Solomon's hundreds of wives led him into disaster. Money can't protect us. Just look at this coming virus. God will take us if he wants to, when he wants to. So let's be content with what we have.

### **Fourth**

Lastly on the Sabbath: It's a command about resting 1 in 7, to remember God. And having those under our power to do the same. For we need rest. Many of us will be forced to take a long rest soon, I suspect. We'll have more time in which we can remember God. And rest with each other. And we may well reflect at that time – why did I fill my life with so much, that I could never rest. Sometimes on bad weeks, I'll make it a 24 hour day off. Like this week, which was crazy, it was about 1:30 Thursday to 1:30 Friday. And sometimes, just as Jesus illustrates, sometimes an ox or child falls into a well and we pull them out – we save life, even on our Sabbath our day off. But we will suffer if we don't take the rest we are commanded to take.

Having given these 10 commandments, 10 statements, this constitution of the nation, Moses encourages the people to keep it. Again long life is promised for obedience. Verse 33 *Walk in obedience to all that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.*

Yes, things go better for us when we obey God's commands. But this is not a prosperity gospel. It's not saying, have faith, obey, and you'll get rich and avoid the corona virus. It means, on average, you'll have a longer, fuller life if you relate to God and each other as you were made to.

More importantly though, we Christians know Jesus has fulfilled the law on our behalf. The apostle Paul writes this, in Romans 10:4 Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

We've failed to obey this, we don't deserve eternal life or even long life. But because Jesus did it all, his perfection counts as our is we believe in him. That's the Christian message. We can seek to obey this law, because Jesus has already done so on our behalf.

So because of what he's done, let's keep straining to love each other. Even in these dark times.