

Sunday 10th September 2023 (all stage worship)

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.

God is ever present, around us and within us, we worship together in God.

Story The very hungry caterpillar by Eric Carle

[Listen here](#)

Thought

Caterpillars transform into butterflies, from land bound into free flying creatures, but before they do that they have to feed themselves ready for the transformation. Caterpillars know to do this instinctively but humans also need to transform from people who follow the ways of the world into people who live consciously in God and we need to feed ourselves as well and we do this by learning more about ourselves and about God.

Baptism is the point at which we, or our parents, acknowledge that God has a part in our lives and we dedicate ourselves to discovering more about this through our life within the church and through our daily living. It is the start of our transformation from earthbound to a free flying version of ourselves.

Readings Exodus 20:1-17
 Romans 13:8-10

Reflection 1

I wonder if you can recite the names of the seven dwarves? It is a bit like the party game Kim's Game where you have twenty seconds to memorise the items on a tray before it is covered and you have to remember what was there.

There are many things for which we create lists and trying to remember everything on the list when it is not in front of you can be difficult. Maybe you have forgotten your shopping list and tried to work from memory, there is nearly always something forgotten.

Today's reading from Exodus contains a list which has been translated throughout the centuries as the ten commandments. However when we know something about the background to this passage we see it differently.

The Israelites had been captive slaves in Egypt for many generations, most of them had been born slaves, as had their parents and slaves never have to make a choice – they are told what to do. When they followed Moses into the desert they were free but there was no one to tell them what to do and no one to teach them how to make choices, let alone right choices. There was no community and utter chaos with fights and jealousy everywhere.

Just as we grow up and learn how to make choices, so, the Israelites had to learn how to make choices. The ten words were to create a safe environment where they were free but responsible for caring for one another.

Reflection 2

What do you feel like when someone says you cannot do something? Very often being told you cannot do something creates the temptation to do what we shouldn't.

For a long time the ten commandments have been seen as a list of 'don't dos' but when we know something about why they were given we can see them differently and they make more sense. However, there is another way of looking at them, we can use the ten words as a measure of our journey towards being the best person we can be, our journey towards the fullness of our humanity and our oneness in God.

We can all be tempted to do things we know we should not do, and we know we should not do the things listed in the Ten Rules for living together. Instead of taking them as one big list we could see them as stages towards becoming like Jesus, changes in the way we behave.

God says, You will recognise your progress towards me by these signs, these indications, these changes in YOU.

1. You will remember that you are free and why you are free.
2. You will stop trying to imagine me and instead just accept me. You will love me with everything you are and have. No longer will you worship success, money, power or symbols of these; you will have outgrown them.
3. You will not use my name when things go wrong nor will you call upon me for frivolous things; you will understand the power of words and thoughts and use them wisely.
4. You will remember to keep a day for me and you shall call it holy and eventually when you remember you will see every day as special and every moment as holy.
5. You will honour your parents, respect and love them, and you will honour all people.
6. You will know you have found me when you realise that you will not kill. You will not choose to end any life without the most sacred reason. Your new reverence for life will cause you to honour all life forms including plants, trees and animals.
7. You will not do anything to harm another's friendship or relationship. You will not be jealous of other's friendships.
8. You will not take a thing that is not your own, nor cheat, nor manipulate, nor harm, when you have found me.
9. You will not say anything that you do not believe to be true.
10. You will not envy or desire anything that others have.

You will know you have found the path to God when you see these signs in yourself, when you recognise the journey of transformation. These are freedoms not restrictions, promises not commandments.

Looking at the ten words in this way makes them positive instead of negative.

We can sum them up as Ten words for freedom, ten words to help build a better world just like the Israelites had to learn to build a better world.

Paul in his letter to the Romans said,

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbour as yourself."

¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

This was an interpretation of Jesus teaching about love, when we follow the way of Jesus we should constantly check that we are loving people and that our words and actions are not hurting others and we have a code to help us – the ten words of freedom.