

Second Sunday after Christmas

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Behold, in this way we would have had a godly child properly taught, reared in true blessedness, and kept at home in obedience to his parents and in their service. People would have had blessing and joy by seeing this. However, God's commandment was not permitted to be commended with such care and diligence. It had to be neglected and trampled under foot [Matthew 7:6], so that a child could not take it to heart. Meanwhile, the child would gape like a panting wolf at the things we set up, without once consulting or giving reverence to God.

For God's sake, let us learn this at last: placing all other things out of sight, let our youths look first to this commandment if they wish to serve God with truly good works. Then they may do what is pleasing to their fathers and mothers, or to those to whom they may be subject instead of parents. For every child that knows and does this has, in the first place, this great consolation in his heart. He can joyfully say and boast (in spite of and against all who are occupied with works of their own choice): "Behold, this work is well pleasing to my God in heaven, that I know for certain." Let them all come together with their many great, distressing, and difficult works and make their boast. We will see whether they can show one work that is greater and nobler than obedience to father and mother. For to parents God has appointed and commanded obedience next to His own majesty. For if God's Word and will are in force and being accomplished, nothing shall be valued higher than the will and word of parents, as long as that, too, is subordinated to obedience toward God and is not opposed to the preceding commandments....

THE NINTH & TENTH COMMANDMENTS

The same was done in former times also with respect to wives. They knew such tricks, that if one were pleased with another woman, he personally or through others (as there were many ways and means to be invented) caused her husband to become displeased with her. Or he had her resist her husband and act in such a way that he was obliged to dismiss her and let her go to the other man. That sort of

thing undoubtedly prevailed much under the Law, as we also read in the Gospel about King Herod. He took his brother's wife while he was still living. Yet Herod wanted to be thought of as an honorable, pious man, as St. Mark also testifies about him [Mark 6:17–20]. But such an example, I trust, will not happen among us. For in the New Testament those who are married are forbidden to get divorced [Mark 10:9]. (Except there is the case where one man shrewdly by some trick takes away a rich bride from another man.) But it is not a rare thing with us that one estranges or alienates another's manservant or maidservant or lures them away with flattering words.

In whatever way such things happen, we must know that God does not want you to deprive your neighbor of anything that belongs to him, so that he suffer the loss and you gratify your greed with it. This is true even if you could keep it honorably before the world. For it is a secret and sly trick done "under the hat," as we say, so it may not be noticed. Although you go your way as if you had done no one any wrong, you have still injured your neighbor. If it is not called stealing and cheating, it is still called coveting your neighbor's property, that is, aiming at possession of it, luring it away from him without his consent, and being unwilling to see him enjoy what God has granted him. Even though the judge and everyone must let you keep it, God will not let you keep it. For He sees the deceitful heart and world's malice, which is sure to take an extra long measure wherever you yield to her a finger's breadth. Eventually public wrong and violence follow.

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