

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Second, notice how great, good, and holy a work is assigned to children here. Unfortunately, this is utterly neglected and disregarded [Mark 7:10–13]. No one notices that God has commanded it or that it is a holy, divine Word and doctrine. For if it had been regarded as holy, everyone could have concluded that those who live according to these words must be holy people. There would have been no need to invent monasticism or spiritual orders. Every child would have abided by this commandment and could have directed his conscience to God and said, “If I am to do good and holy works, I know of none better than to give all honor and obedience to my parents, because God has Himself commanded it. For what God commands must be much better and far nobler than everything that we may come up with ourselves. Since there is no higher or better teacher to be found than God, there can certainly be no better teaching than what He provides. Now, He teaches fully what we should do if we wish to perform truly good works. By commanding such works, He shows that they please Him. If, then, it is God who commands this and does not know how to appoint anything better, I will never improve upon it.”

CONCLUSION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

So the First Commandment is to shine and give its splendor to all the others. Therefore, you must let this declaration run through all the commandments. It is like a hoop in a wreath, joining the end to the beginning and holding them all together. Let it be continually repeated and not forgotten, as the Second Commandment says, so that we fear God and do not take His name in vain for cursing, lying, deceiving, and other ways of leading men astray, or trickery. But we make proper and good use of His name by calling upon Him in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, derived from love and trust according to the First Commandment. In the same way such fear, love, and trust is to drive and force us not to despise His Word, but gladly to learn it, hear it, value it holy, and honor it.

So this teaching continues through all the following commandments toward our neighbor. Everything is to flow from the First Commandment's power. We honor father and mother, masters, and all in authority, and are subject and obedient to them, not for their own sake, but for God's sake. You are not to regard or fear father or mother, nor should you do or skip anything because you love them. But note what God would have you do, what He will quite surely demand of you. If you skip that, you have an angry Judge. But if you do the work, you have a gracious Father.

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