

Ten!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 November 2023

Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0 : 00] Okay, this evening we're going to look at the last commandment from Exodus, the last word.

And I think sometimes when we come to the Bible, one of our greatest challenges is actually taking the Bible seriously, taking God's word when He speaks to us and blunting it, not allowing it to be its own sharp self, not allowing it to pierce into our hearts and our souls.

Now as things go on, we talk about transition. I'm going to slowly morph into Kori as I fade into the background and I'm going to quote Lord of the Rings.

From the film, one of the Lord of the Rings, I think it's the first one when Gandalf has been chased by the big monster Balrog and he says at one point, you shall not pass.

It's a great scene. And I think that sometimes that's what we do with God's word, which is said, you shall not pass.

[1 : 13] You're not going to come into my heart. You're not going to apply to my soul. It's just going to let it flow over and not touch, penetrate, convict or comfort.

But I think it's important we allow it to do that. And tonight is a very private sermon. There's a great temptation when we listen to sermons and that's a great temptation for preachers as well as to say, well, that's a great sermon for someone else.

That was a great sermon for them. Or you're listening to sermons and you say, I could have preached that a lot better than that guy. And well, yeah, that sermon is really going to nail him.

Nail her. It's perfect for them. Or that sermon, it's simply going to stretch my intellect. It wasn't enough. And it certainly won't be tonight.

But tonight, the theme of this sermon is all about your internal desires and mine, your thoughts, the stuff that nobody can see.

[2 : 19] You all look beautiful tonight. You're all dressed fine. You're all looking tremendous. But it's all the stuff that nobody can see is what this sermon is about this evening.

Specifically, specifically, it's about what you think about other people. And that's significant, isn't it, in a corporate gathering, in a church, a church family, because we're always thinking about other people.

And in the workplace, and in the neighborhood, and in the family, we're always thinking about other people. And maybe we're being challenged about the thinking that never reaches the surface directly about other people.

That maybe will sometimes present itself in general unhappiness, or a dull, critical spirit towards others. And foundationally, what it comes from is a lack of contentment with God and a lot that He has given you in your life.

You're discontented with where He's placed you. You're discontented with who you are, and you wish you were someone else. And that is at the very root of this commandment, this tenth word that we have here.

[3 : 33] Remember that they're called words in this section. Only later are they called commands. So in this tenth word, it's clearly the last one, but it's definitely not the least one.

Because this tenth commandment, it almost subsumes them all. It almost embraces and sucks all the other commandments into its own particular message.

Because what we have here is the negative to all the grace and love that the other commands can be summarized as loving God and loving your neighbor.

And it's almost a negative element of that as we see it. And it's the only word, it's the only commandment of the Ten Commandments that explicitly moves from the outward behavior to the internal motive.

All the others can be looked at in terms of, I know that they've got an internal element to them. Love is the foundation for all of them. But they're all externally outworked until we come to this one.

[4 : 43] So right at the heart of the Old Testament, there's this recognition that obedience to the commands is not simply an outward thing, but it's about our internal desires, about what we are thinking, what we are inside, what nobody sees, apart from God.

You shall not covet. Now I'm sure none of you covet your neighbor's donkey. But you'll find that there's many things that will apply to your own heart as they apply to mine.

To covet is to desire or to want something that rightfully belongs to somebody else and that's not intended for you. That's primarily what coveting means.

We see it right at the very beginning, time in the fall, where Eve, Adam and Eve are first parents, they coveted what belonged to God.

It wasn't a shiny apple that they coveted. It was what it stood for. It's what it represented. It was attractive because they could be like God, but they weren't supposed to be like God.

[5 : 52] They were created, they were made in God's image, and they coveted what wasn't intended for them that rightfully belonged to God alone. I think coveting for us exposes two attitudes particularly.

The first is selfishness, I want and I must have. And there's a general application of this command which can be focused on a general materialistic attitude.

Possessing things and needing good circumstances to live in. My situation, my comfort, my well-being. And looking for satisfaction and contentment in possessing things or having relationships that we think we need or that we think more importantly we deserve.

Selfishness, that's a general application of this command. So there's a more specific focus which is on envy, coveting as envy.

So I'm not going to particularly look at the whole element of materialism tonight. A lot of the commentators spend a lot of time on this command speaking about materialism.

[7 : 19] But I think envy is much more significant here because it's focused specifically on our attitude to people, other people.

Three times, it's a short sentence, it's a short command. Three times the neighbor is mentioned.

Don't covet your neighbor's house, your neighbor's wife, or anything that's your neighbor's.

It's very focused, it's not just on general materialism and general coveting of better life, it's particularly focused about our attitude to other people and what they possess and what they have. It's getting at the expense of other people is really what God is getting at here. It's seeing their gifts, their circumstances, their promotion, their exam results, their comfort, their relationships, their marriage, their popularity, their attention, the attention that other people give them, their looks, lusting in some ways.

But it's coveting your neighbor's wife's, it's not primarily about lusting. It's more about having something that you don't have, coveting their youth, their health, anything about them, wishing, longing for that yourself.

[8 : 38] Now it might never go as far as stealing from them or committing adultery or lying in order to get, but inside it's this internal attitude that you're discontented, you're unhappy with God and you're jealous of other people because of what they have and what you don't have.

And it will always isolate you. It will always separate and embitter and bring you to the place of blaming God because it's ultimately loveless.

When Jesus expounds, as He does in the Sermon and the Mount, He expounds further these commands and really the passage we read in Matthew chapter 6 highlights what He's saying about where your heart is there, what treasure will be also.

It's that whole idea of where our hearts are, what we're thinking about, particularly in relation to other people. And it's very solemn because we can hide our hearts from anyone.

You can hide your heart from anyone here this evening. Except from God. And Luther speaks about this command and says, you know, of all the commands, this command convinces us that we're sinners.

[9 : 50] If none of the others do, this one certainly does. And that is for sure. And James speaks about that. And James 4, one of the two, he says, whatever causes fights and quarrels among you, among you in the fellowship, don't they come from your desires that battle within you.

You desire but you do not have. So you kill, you covet but you cannot get what you want. So you quarrel and fight, you do not have because you do not ask God. There's this whole internal focus that is highlighted here.

Now, I'm going to just move on quickly and speak about Jesus. We talk about Jesus being in every part of the Bible. I'm being very blunt about that and going straight to Jesus this evening.

Because I want you to think about Jesus because he obeyed this command. He became the word of this tenth word and he lived it.

Now, all the other ones we can maybe think, okay, but Jesus Christ absolutely fulfilled this internal command and the desires behind it.

[10:58] The only human being who ever lived who never had any wrong desires, wrong thoughts, wrong attitudes towards other people, none of that in Jesus Christ.

His father said, this is my beloved son and who I'm well pleased. Jesus Christ lived life to the full. He worked, he labored, he had enough to eat and drink, he had family, he enjoyed company, he feasted, he celebrated, he wept, he suffered, he encouraged the good desires that are there in others and in life.

But his intentional thoughts, his subconscious thoughts were always focused on a deep love for God and a love for other people.

He was deeply and perfectly content with his father and the relationship with his father, run through crisis. I say, but he was God, right?

That's easy. But he was also human. He was the second Adam and he didn't covet. How did he not covet?

[12:12] How could Jesus learn not to covet? Well, Luke 2.52 tells us that Jesus grew in stature and wisdom in stature and favour with God and men.

And I think it's very important because we think sometimes I think that Jesus, boom, he was God and everything was easy for him because he was God. But maybe he took on a human flesh and we know he learned obedience.

So it was a process in Jesus and from the beginning he understood the outworking of divine love in God and people. So how did he not covet?

He didn't covet because when he was intimate with his father, that's why he didn't covet. How often did Jesus go to a quiet place to pray where he found peace and wholeness and incredible comfort and love in the presence of his father?

That's why he didn't covet because they had this incredible relationship of desire and of contentment with his living God. But secondly, he didn't covet because he understood temptation.

[13:17] You know, the devil offered him bread and people and glory, all these things that he could have without the cross in disobedience.

He could covet these things, Jesus, avoiding the cross, shortcut to contentment. But he understood temptation and he understood the way to respond to temptation and that temptation would have been catastrophic for him.

That going this way, coveting these things would never satisfy the demands of perfect love and that selfishness never does, it's always destructive.

So he had intimacy with his father, he understood temptation and he lived with a future hope that kept him from coveting and wanting what was not right for him to have.

Hebrews 12, 2, let us run with perseverance, the race marked out for us, fixing our house and Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning at shame, sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[14:26] So he lived with this future hope that meant he didn't need to covet what wasn't his and to covet what was destructive. Pleasant for him wasn't discontentment because he knew it was temporary, he had learned obedience.

Not for a moment for Jesus was it painless or easy. He sweated drops of blood, if this cup can be taken from me, yet not my will but yours be done.

Jesus Christ lived with this future hope as he was taking the guilt for all our brutal and selfish and speakably wrong desires on our behalf.

So we see that Jesus obeyed this command perfectly. Therefore we can, through him and in his strength and by his grace, as grace receivers, as Christians, how do we live as grace givers and not be covetous in our lives?

Because coveting is a very destructive and embittering desire in our hearts.

[15 : 47] Well like Jesus, I think we can grow in wisdom. It's tremendously important. The more intimacy we have with God, our Father, our prayer life, where we wrestle with our hearts and don't just bring lists to him of our requests and requirements, but we wrestle with our hearts and we gain a right perspective in our lives and we begin to nail our own thought life and recognize what James speaks about again, James 1, we reach, person is tempted when they're dragged away by their own desire and enticed.

And if their desire is conceived, it gives birth to sin and sin when it's full grown give birth to death. So it's that wrestling with and beginning to understand our hearts and confessing our sins and being thankful like I was saying to the kids earlier on, to know and understand the good desires he gives us and to accept them with thanksgiving because he gives us all good things to enjoy.

And those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant, put their hope in wealth which is so uncertain, but put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

And we recognize that being aware of the disorder of sin and the idolatries of sin, but desiring the good things that he promises to give us. So it's about growing in wisdom and you can only do that as you become intimate with the Father, I can barely do it for myself.

We can't do it in church. It's about an intimate personal growing relationship with the Father, wrestling in your heart, wrestling with your heart and being honest before God about the envy and the covetousness that may be there.

[17 : 49] Growing in wisdom, learning contentment, it's tremendously important I think that we learn contentment. We read that section from Paul's letter to the church in Philippi where he said, I've learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, living in plenty or living in want.

So contentment is the positive, you know, we've looked all the way through the commands that the negative and the positive of these commands, the negatives we shall not cover. The positive is a call to contentment and that's not easy for us in our lives.

There's no magic formula, there's no instant peace. You can't just become content by throwing the odd text out at yourself or other people. There's no simplistic theological answers.

Contentment is hard wrought, usually through suffering and sweating blood. But we learn contentment primarily as we see ourselves as children of God, as we recognize who He is and what He's done for us, the depth of what He's done.

One of the things I mentioned about coveting was a coveting the attention of others. The other people seem to get much more attention than we do and that we seem to be, as Andy was saying, unseen, unnoticed, nobody takes.

[19 : 11] And we covet that attention. We covet being attractive to other people or being noticed by other people or being significant. We can't be more significant than the attention that has been poured out on us by Jesus Christ Himself.

That long before we were even born, Christ Jesus had committed to living the life that we couldn't live and dying on the cross for our sins.

How deep and how focused is that incredible attention on each of us as believers? To consider that and consider His commitment, His promises, the company that He gives to us and recognize even in the dark times, the temporary suffering that there's joy ahead.

It doesn't mean we're, contentment doesn't mean I don't think in any way that we're complacent or lazy and we mustn't be. But whatever we face, whatever darkness, whatever sadness, whatever circumstance that other people don't have, but we seem to have and we covet their peace and we covet their ease or we covet their health or we covet their youth, whatever it is, whatever we face, we take these burdens and battles to Him and we run to Him with Him, not from Him.

That's where we find contentment. That's where we find and recognize that He's sufficient even in the difficult and the bad times that we face. So growing in wisdom, learning, contentment and lastly, choosing a practical kind of outworking of this command is choosing to love others rather than wanting to be others.

[20 : 59] So it's an intentional choice that in our lives that you wrestle with and I wrestle with is that we choose to love others rather than want either to be others or want to have what they have.

And that comes in our thoughts first. Ask what it is that you envy. What gifts in other peoples are you coveting? What circumstances, what wealth, what health, what happiness, what attention?

And pray to be aware of that, aware of that particular focus of your heart. And that will reflect in the way we speak about others I think also in public. This is about the heart, but I think it outworks itself sometimes in the way we speak about others. And so we just learn to be content and to love others rather than wanting to be others. And just as I finish, the last thing I want to say and it's just the opposite of that is we love others who maybe have more than we have or a better life than we have or who are more gifted than we have or more attention.

[22 : 16] I think there's another side to that is that we're to love others also have less than us.

Maybe we're the people that other people are coveting. Maybe we have a lot of gifts or a lot of wealth or good circumstances.

But we're called to love others who have less than us, less attention, less popularity, less wealth, who are in worse circumstances, worse health.

And we can only do that when we recognize who we are before the living God and that every single gift that we've been given has been given from God to us in an undeserved way and that we're called to share what we are and share what we have and never think that our blessings, our life, our privileges are merited because of who we are.

And that humble reality will I think help us to view other people in a better light, those who have less than us, those who have more than us and not to covet a life or a body or a relationship that God hasn't given to us and that wasn't meant for us.

[23 : 36] I hope and pray that there's a challenge in that for all of us as we ask for the living God to shine His light into the darkness sometimes of our hearts.

Father God, we pray that You would help us not to covet, not to covet particularly other people and what they have or what they are or what they enjoy and question why God has made us the way we are and not made us like other people and envy that and ultimately question You and question why You have done this and why You have made us the way we are.

But Lord, as believers You've just lavished Your attention and Your love on us and You've redeemed us and given us unsearchable riches.

Sometimes we don't see them now but we know that in Christ there will be a day when it all becomes clear and when the provision You've made for us, which at the moment is beyond our understanding, beyond our imagination, will be our experience and there will be no place for coveting and no need for coveting and no temptation to covet because we will have everything that You have promised to give us.

So Lord, we pray that You would help us, we confess our wrong attitudes and our heart's desires being in the wrong place so often and we ask for Your forgiveness and thank You that Your forgiveness is guaranteed.

[25 : 15] In Jesus' name, amen.