

P. 321 {p. 300} What is the 3rd Commandment?
What does this mean?

That's what we learn in the example of the two men in the parable this morning.

“The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side.” We dare not conclude that this poor man went to heaven when he died simply because he was poor in terms of not having earthly wealth and riches. Rather, the Scriptures teach us, *Without faith it is impossible to please [God] (He 11:6)*, and *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16)*. So in the context of Scripture, if his soul went to heaven when he died, we know he was a Christian; he had faith in Jesus.

On the other side of the coin is the rich man. He had vast material wealth. He lived only for the pleasure of the moment. He was self-centered and selfish. He ignored His neighbor. *“The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades,”* Jesus teaches us. It is easy for us to conclude that the rich man was condemned to hell because he was rich. If we concluded that, we would be wrong. His problem was that he did not hear and believe God’s Word.

Notice the words of Jesus, *“They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them...If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.”* Again, “Moses and the Prophets” was the Jewish way of referring to the Old Testament. The rich man did not listen to God calling him to repentance and faith through the Word. The rich man remained dead in sin, with no love for God and neighbor in him, because he failed to listen to "Moses and the prophets," that is, the Word of God.

I. Now, before you put on your Pharisee gown and point the accusing finger at this rich man in the parable, I invite you to look at your heart, your life in the mirror of God’s Law, and know what you see? You see that you do not always listen to and believe God’s Word. And, there is a rather simple reason for that, God’s Word condemns you and your sin, and you don’t like that very much.

The Bible says, “Love your neighbor,” sure ya do, right? Especially when your neighbor gets that promotion to supervisor at work, and now you have to do what they tell you to do every day at work. Or, how about when your neighbor’s kid gets to start on the team and your kid sits on the bench, then you love your neighbor, and your neighbor the coach, right? Or, how about the 4th Commandment? That Commandment teaches us to honor

those in authority over us, but what about when you are driving down the highway? Then, honoring those in authority over you doesn't exactly include obeying the posted speed limit, does it? What about when you gossip about your neighbor's adultery? Is the 6th Commandment more important than the 8th? Or, instead of being content, you hoard and hoard and hoard more earthly stuff for yourself, because after all, God may not keep His promise to open His hand and satisfy your every need, right? Honestly, it's a lot easier to trust in the lottery ticket than the empty tomb of Easter morning, isn't it? *Love keeps no record of wrongs*, the Bible says (1 Cor 13:5). And again, it says, *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Eph 4:32)*. But, we don't treat our neighbor as Christ treats us, do we? We keep a solid record of wrongs, we hate, we refuse to be reconciled, we are not patient with our neighbor.

Yes, yes, you believe John 3:16. But, what about all of Scripture, especially those parts that show your sin? We do well to remember the words of James, *For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it (2:10)*. And the Law says, *the wages of sin is death (Ro 6:23)*.

II. Because you ignored, doubted, and didn't listen to "Moses and the Prophets," God spoke to us by His Son. Jesus, the very Word of God, became flesh and dwelt among us, to make God known to us. Chiefly, He made God and His love known to us by taking on all of our sin upon His flesh. He took on all of our sin, including those times we ignored, doubted, and didn't listen to God's Word and carried them to Calvary's cross. There, He endured all the wrath and anger of God against our sin, even our sin against the 3rd Commandment, shedding His blood all over that cross.

Because He did that, we are forgiven, all of our sin.

And “someone” did rise from the dead, Jesus rose on Easter morning, to bring life and immortality to light. We hear and learn His words because that is how He makes that life and immortality your very own. He distributes the forgiveness, life, and salvation He won on the cross to us through the Word.

III. *Fight the good fight of the faith*, Paul writes in our Epistle. Dear Saint of God, you can fight the good fight of faith -- striving to overcome sin and keeping 10 Commandments in your thoughts, words, and deeds -- because God is working in you through His Word – the spoken Word and the Visible Word of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

So, that we may know what a holy life is; what righteousness, godliness are; how we are to love God and our neighbor; God has given us the 10 Commandments. We are not saved by our good works, our keeping of the 10 Commandments, nor do we earn brownie points with God by keeping the 10 Commandments. Rather, the 10 Commandments guide us in living the Christian life.

You know my car illustration, right? If you want to go some place in your car; your car needs an engine, a transmission, gas in the tank and air in the tires. But, there is that one seemingly small part of your car you dare not overlook -- **the headlights**. Just as headlights guide, direct, your car, so the 10 Commandments guide us, direct us, in living a God-pleasing life.

Rather than trusting in lady luck, we call upon God in every trouble, pray, praise, and give God thanks. We hold preaching and the Word of God sacred and gladly hear and learn it, so that God can do His work in us. We respect all in authority over us, for these are the “masks” of God, as Luther calls those in authority over us, because there are God’s servants

for a polite and orderly society; something our nation could use a little more of these days. We respect the gift of life; we do not kill unborn children, the aged or infirm because they are an inconvenience. We honor marriage as the life-long union of one man and one woman, even with the jokes we tell. We thank God that He has given us the ability and opportunity to work for our daily bread, because by our work in our daily vocations, we glorify God. The words from our lips encourage and build up our neighbor. And, we know that satisfaction, peace and contentment do not come from how many toys or money we have, but come only from a heart filled with faith in Jesus.

We hold God's Word sacred and gladly hear and learn it so that you can fight the good fight of the faith until that time He sends His angels to carry your eternal soul to Abraham's bosom.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.