

Third Sunday in Lent/Communion  
March 7, 2020

“Choosing the Right”

We are reflecting together during the Sundays of our Lenten journey on the extraordinary good news that the God we seek and serve is one who has already sought us out for the serious binding relationship we mean when we use the word Covenant. Today’s Covenant is one of the most famous - and perhaps most misunderstood covenants of all time: The giving by God of the ten commandments to Moses.

It is easy to be uneasy listening to a list of “thou shalt not’s.” We can even begin to wonder if God is setting us up for failure. If life is going to be all about not making mistakes, we are in trouble. In truth, quite the opposite is true. Instead of leading to failure, these commandments lead to life. This passage is about being brought into the family and given the keys to live in community. And we yearn for community.

If we put the substance of the covenant under a microscope, we will miss the point of having it in the first place. We need to go back to the day in which Moses was minding his own business and herding sheep. And there it was, *the famous burning bush*. God appeared in the burning bush which was not consumed and said, ***“I have heard the cries of my people in the land of Egypt.”*** People say, *“God is nowhere to be found!”* But the glorious good news is that ***we are the ones who are found.*** God heard the cries of his people, sent Moses, liberated slaves who had no power and *then* we arrive at today’s covenant. **The covenant isn’t about catching us doing something wrong.** The covenant is meant to show us life worth living. *Life we can imagine when God finds us.*

This covenant also provides the children of Israel with important information they didn’t need before. Now that they are free, they need to know how to *make choices which promote community* and a good life

for everyone. This is why the covenant starts out with getting straight who God is. When we are confused about God's goodness and primacy, it is easy to imagine **freedom means we get to do whatever we want instead of freedom bringing us responsibility** which is ours to happily discharge in a genuinely free life.

In slavery, personhood is diminished, and the slave becomes a possession. The children of Israel had been slaves and for as long as anyone could remember – their personhood had been diminished.

The covenant we witness in the commandments enriches our lives by teaching us ***people and not things matter most.*** That's why we don't covet - and we don't act as if someone else's spouse belongs to us. In Egypt, the children of Israel were at the bottom of the pyramid, so to speak. Being productive and yearning for riches one would never have were at the heart of existence. ***God's covenant calls us to value people and use things and money.*** *The ways of Pharaoh fail – life enshrined in covenant connects and succeeds.*

Friends, we don't choose what is right to avoid punishment...we choose what is right because in that choosing, we embrace the life in which God has found us. We celebrate our freedom and give our life's energy to connect when we follow the commandments guidance. It is our life-giving opportunity to choose the right, because the one who defines what is right has chosen us first. God help us to find joy in choosing what our life-giving covenant with God tells us is right.