

Answers to Sermon Notes

The Ten Words: The Eighth Word

Deuteronomy 5:19

8/7/22

1. This morning, we continue our study of the second table of **content** of the Ten Commandments with the 8th commandment: “You shall not **steal**.”
 - a. My **first** experience with this commandment was as a very **young** man.
 - b. But, as I’ve grown older the **full meaning** of the commandment has gotten deeper and deeper.
 - i. And more and more **beautiful**.
2. Hopefully, you have noticed the, “It’s **that**, but it’s **more** than that,” pattern we have been using.
 - a. God’s will regarding this commandment is no **exception**.
3. This is evidenced already in the **summary** teaching that the catechism gives. (HC, Q&A 110-111)
 - a. But, what the catechism **points** us toward it does not take the time to more fully **explain**.
 - b. For, we can make **lists** of dos and don’ts, but the more fundamental question is, “**Why?**”
 - i. If you want to know the **will** of God, ask, “**What?**”
 - ii. If you want to know the **heart** of God, ask, “**Why?**”
 - a. This is where we enter the world of **principles**.
 - b. Knowing why God has commanded certain things also helps us recognize when the evil one is attempting to use his **words** against his **purposes**.
 1. Such was the case when **Jesus** was **tempted** in the wilderness.
 - c. It seems that this is the **most important** question we can be asking of these things today.
 - iii. Why does God command us **not** to **steal**?
 - a. The answer begins by recognizing that the overall **purpose** of this table is to promote **human** flourishing.
 - b. This commandment does that by governing the **sustaining** of human life.
4. The **Sustaining** of Human Life.
 - a. Originally, mankind was sustained by the **abundance** provided in the **garden**. (Gen. 2:5-9, 15-17)
 - i. Though the man was put in the garden to **work** it, it did not work **against** him.
 - ii. This all changed when Adam **fell** into **sin**. (Gen. 3:17-19)
 - iii. From this point on, the sustaining of human life was to be a **struggle**.
 - a. A struggle that would eventually **end** in **death**.
 - iv. While we may not experience the stark reality of this struggle on a **daily basis**, we are not as far from it as we may think.
 - a. **Historically**
 1. Both the **Jamestown** and **Plymouth** colonies.
 - b. **Geographically**
 1. **10%** of the world population (roughly **780** million) suffers from extreme hunger.
 2. **10,000** children die per day from chronic poor nutrition.
 3. **49%** of the **Haitian** population suffers from hunger.
 - c. **Economically**
 1. **Covid** lockdowns and shortages.
 2. Putting an additional **80-100** million into extreme poverty.
 - b. The **fall** and **curse** brought about a new reality, a reality that led to this commandment, a commandment which recognizes four main **principles**.

i. **Scarcity**

- a. Scarcity: **Limited** resources to fulfill **limitless** wants/needs.
- b. The struggle is **real** and a matter of life and **death**.
- c. This is the first principle of **economics**.

ii. **Poverty**

- a. While poverty can be caused by **injustice**, the primary reason is the **curse**.
- b. Thorns and thistles, **natural** disasters, sickness, **foolishness**, etc. all create poverty. (Acts 11:27-30, Pr. 24:30-34)
- c. So, God tells us that we will **always** have the **poor** among us. (Dt. 15:11, Mt. 26:11)

iii. **Responsibility**

- a. **Responsibility** is God's answer to **scarcity**.
- b. All mankind **shares** in the original sin and in the equal **responsibility** to struggle against its consequences. (II Thess. 3:6-12)
 1. To **refuse** to work is to **deny** responsibility and live off the **toil** of others.
 - i. This is the reason why stealing is **wrong**. It is **unjust**.
 2. Along with our responsibility to fulfill the **cultural** mandate with our labor, we have a responsibility to share in the struggle against the **curse**.
 3. The **money** that you present to the storekeeper **proves** that you have done so.

iv. **Charity**

- a. **Charity** is God's answer to **poverty**. (Ephesians 4:28)
 1. It recognizes **ownership**.
 - i. One genuinely **owns** what one has **honestly** produced.
 - ii. **Common** ownership is not biblical, nor does it lead to **flourishing**. (BC, Article 36 footnote)
 2. It recognizes **stewardship**.
 - i. Each person is **free** to do what he thinks best with what he **owns**. (Mt. 20:10-15)
 - ii. No one is automatically **entitled** to what others have produced.
 3. It invites **compassion**.
 - i. **Compassion** is fundamentally a matter of the **heart**, not the pocketbook.
 - ii. This is the part of us that God wants **engaged** in addressing poverty. (James 2:15-17, I Cor. 13:1-3)
 4. It creates both **thankfulness** and **accountability**
 - i. Receiving assistance directly from one who **produced** it is a powerful experience of **love**.
 - ii. And it **inspires** you to want to be able to **use** it well.
 5. It strengthens the bonds of **community**.
 - i. The able bodied enjoy the **fruits** of their **labors**.
 - ii. The needy are cared for in ways that **affirm** their **dignity** as fellow human beings.

v. When you **remove** the principles of responsibility and charity you get **more** scarcity and poverty.

- a. This is what the **settlers** in Jamestown and Plymouth so **painfully** experienced.
 1. Under **common** ownership they suffered and **died**.
 2. Under **private** ownership they prospered and **flourished**.

5. The **beauty** of the 8th commandment is the way in which God so perfectly **balances** all the variables of our fallen condition in this fallen world in a way that **enhances** flourishing without allowing any **oppression**.

- a. Human life under the 8th commandment is not **perfect**, but it is far **better** than under any other command.