

“Short Version: LOVE”

If you drove by **Faith Lutheran Church** any time over the last 10 weeks you may have noticed a weekly change-up under the heading “10 Steps to Success” on the marquee. If you didn’t figure it out the steps were the 10 commandments rendered in a positive paraphrase rather than the usual “Thou Shalt Not ...”. Counted the way we Lutherans count them they were as follows:

1. Trust ONLY in the One True God
2. Only use God’s name to pray, praise, and give thanks
3. Let God serve you at least one day a week
4. Respect Authority
5. Defend your neighbor
6. Honor Godly marriage
7. Protect your neighbor’s possessions
8. Always tell the truth
- 9 & 10. Be satisfied with your own stuff

In a culture obsessed with “step guides to self-improvement” the 10 commandments of God are a natural. I would even venture to say that if we followed these 10 “steps” we would NEED NO OTHER LAWS! Can you imagine all the paperwork and bureaucracy we would eliminate if we just went by these. In fact, ALL of Western law is built upon this foundation. The problem is we have added so much to it, and in so doing have often departed from its foundational principles that were it a building it would be teetering horribly out of balance with all the irregular and flimsy side structures that have been added – like a Jenga tower about to collapse.

So, indeed, a simple following of the 10 Commandments would produce positive effects in any culture. Additionally, a personal subscription to them WOULD yield a much more pleasant and, even, enjoyably “successful” life. The problem is that following the 10 Commandments only yields a modicum of success in THIS life. Following the 10 Commandments will NEVER grant us entrance into the courts of God and ETERNAL Life ... because ...

...because we can NEVER follow them completely or perfectly. We will (and DO) always fall short. We will never be able to measure up to God’s expectations in the 10 Commandments. We will never be able to stand before God and say, “Ya see Lord? I have earned a ticket to Paradise by how hard I’ve worked and how well I’ve met your expectations.” Were we to say that, His reply would most assuredly be, “I see, but what about when you DIDN’T work hard enough, or when you DIDN’T meet my expectations?” And we would have nothing with which to answer Him.

So the 10 Commandment can really help us in the here and now, but can do nothing for us with regard to eternity. On the last week of the Marquee series, I added one more “step” to the “10 Steps to Success”. I put, “Short Version: LOVE”. This comes from Jesus Himself when He is asked what the greatest commandment is, and He sums up the whole law with, “Love God & Love your neighbor”.

Alas again, we are not able to keep even this most simple commandment perfectly. But do not despair, because this coming Friday (What Christians call “Good Friday”) celebrates that God did what we are not able to do; He loved. God poured out His love perfectly when the Father emptied the full and crushing weight of His wrath against all of our sin upon His only begotten Son INSTEAD of upon us who deserve it! And God the Son (Jesus) poured out His love perfectly when He spread out His arms to capture all of that wrath so that not one drop should fall upon us, but rather He poured out His righteousness and Life over us that we should be called the righteous sons of God, and so have Life and have it abundantly.

For this reason, of all the “Holy Days” of the Christian Church, Good Friday stands at the pinnacle (even more than Christmas or even Easter Sunday), because on that day, more than any other in all time, God loved.

And because the Lord God Jesus is more powerful than even death, death could not hold Him and He raised in three days to live forever and never die again. That is wonderful for us, because He who has conquered death has promised to rescue all who trust Him to defeat death for them as well. Because of this *“I know that my redeemer lives ... and I will see Him, with my own eyes and in my own flesh.”* Job 19:25-27 paraphrased.

“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8 ESV