

Sun., Jan. 12

2020 Winter Message Series: Set Free to Live Free: The 10 Commandments

Love God, Love Others

Message: Set Free to Live Free

Scriptures: Exodus 20:1-2, Matthew 22:37-40

Exodus 20:1 Then God spoke all these words: “2 I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

Text: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” -John 14:15

Memory Verse: “I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.” -Psalm 119:43-44

Blurb: As we begin a new year, we commit again to the plan God has given us for living well. So, we go back to the 10 Commandments as God’s intended path for how we should live in order to live best. They are not antiquated or “downer” rules. They unlock abundant life. Our message series looks as the first four of these commandments, rules that focus our love singularly on God. From this foundation our future is built!

Opening Song: *Build My Life* -Sanctify

Welcome: -David

Memory Verse: -David

“I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.” -Psalm 119:43-44

Worship Music Set: -Sanctify

Lift High the Name of Jesus

God Will Take Care of You

No Longer Slaves

Worship Prayer -Andrew

Offering: *Go Down Moses* -Sanctify

Lemuel the Lion -Andrew

Prayers / Affirmation: *UMH #888* -Andrew

Bumper:

Message: 10 Commandments: Set Free to Live Free

PP#1: 10 Commandments: Set Free to Live Free

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” -John 14:15

10 Commandments: Set Free to Live Free. John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

We now begin the new year, and the new decade! And to begin well, I want to ground us, anchor us, on the *bedrock* of abundant life. I want to go back to our foundation *stones*.

PP#2: *Image for starting off at the beginning of a journey, with many path options ahead.*

How can we live well? How can we live the deepest desires of our hearts, live the lives we were made for? Now, maybe perhaps you have made some New Year’s resolutions, some goals you’ve set for yourself, to get you on the right path. Let’s see...day 12...how are you doing? So far, so good? Already struggling?

You see, we have all these yearnings for more, for better, for different. And we start out with strong conviction. But then, we make little compromises, slip a little here and there. We make some mistakes, or can’t see a clear path. And by the time we hit February, we’re already struggling again.

As Jesus-followers, we know we have a path of life. We believe that God created us for a purpose. He has a plan for us that makes us whole, gives us true joy, and that strong inner peace.

We have *wholeness*, and are made *holy*, when we give ourselves *wholly* to God. Rightness comes when we are right with our God. When we don’t have God, we are stuck, trapped in an unhealthy life, a life that saps our vitality and drains our hope. We strive in our own strength, but that strength quickly peters out.

So the good news is that God did not leave us stuck, trapped. We celebrate Christmas that God came in Jesus to rescue us from a life of wandering in a fog, striving for what we cannot grasp, stretching for what is beyond our reach. Jesus came and died for our sins, earning forgiveness for when we stray. He came to be the sacrifice that puts us right, back with our God, so we can live abundantly. He came to rise again to break the power of death, so we can live forever.

This is the God we come to as we begin our new year! You, O God, are our help and rescuer! You offer us a life of abundance. You call us, to not just survive, but to thrive! You are our hope!

So, as we begin this new start, we go back to our life-giving God, and give Him our beginning. We give Him our year ahead. We commit to live for Him, and to live His way, because His way is our best life! I want you to write that down on the sermon note sheet in your bulletin: “God’s way is my best life.”

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. When we choose Him, when we follow Him, we thrive. We live abundantly. We are whole.

PP#3: 10 Commandments: Set free to live free**1. Submit to Jesus as Lord**

So, first and foremost, as we begin, we again commit to take Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior. He calls us to a life of discipleship, to following Him. And as a church, we here at Forest Hills, we call people to earnest discipleship. Only this is the path of life. We strive to follow Jesus, who calls us to be holy, just as the Father is holy. Only then can we be who we long to be. We commit to following.

Let's stop there a moment. Let that sink in. This may sound right to our ears: We choose God; we are disciples of Jesus. But this may be more dangerous than we expect. God's way is my best life. So, we commit to *following*. We choose to be disciples.

I think that one of our biggest problems is that believers today believe in Jesus and take Him as our Savior, but not as our Lord. But this Savior, who earns for us forgiveness, life, and eternity, also said that we can only have all this when we make Him as our Lord. One of Jesus' most stinging questions comes in Luke 6:46 where He asks, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord' and don't do what I say?" He said to His closest followers during their last meal together, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15)

You see, people today want the benefits that Jesus earns but still want to stay in charge. But if we're lost and can't see our way forward, we must stop walking out front *and instead follow the Guide*, doing what we're told!

PP#4: *Image from Mary Poppins Returns, where the kids and she are lost in a fog.*

We watched the new *Mary Poppins Returns* this past week, and at one point the children are running out in front of Mary Poppins. But after a bit they stop, realizing they're lost in the fog. Then, the children turn to Mary Poppins and ask, "Which way do we go, Mary Poppins?" And she says, "Now, why would you ask me? The three of you are leading the way, after all." And they look around, and stammer, "Us? But we were...[and then they realize]...walking around in a fog."

We treat Jesus like Mary Poppins. We want Him along, to work wonders and to make life special and fun. But we zoom on head, leading the way, even though we're lost in a fog.

So, as we begin our new year, I want us to stop walking out in front of Jesus, lost in the fog of life. Instead, we turn to God and say, "Which way? We'll stop trying to lead and going in circles. We'll follow where you lead." We proclaim that Jesus is our Way, and we commit to make Him our Lord. That means living life very differently. We live submitting to God's way, not ours.

Here is our biggest New Year's resolution: Make Jesus truly our Lord. And that means all those words we avoid: obedience, submission, humility, admitting we're lost, not being in charge, not doing it our way, not staying selfish. But, if you're trying to make your way in a fog, it's best to follow the one who knows the way.

Again, we may commit to following while sitting here in worship. But in truth, following comes every day, all day long. It takes tenacity. It takes an ongoing attitude of humility. It means on Tuesday, it means when you're at work, it means when your neighbor is yelling at you, it means when you're hovering over the click bait.

PP#5: *Image used on the cover of Mary Evan's study book: 10 Commandments: Living God's Way*

So, for our new message series in the new year, we're going to unpack how to follow God's plan in our daily lives. What does it look like to have God in charge? How do we do that?

And you know what? God has not kept this path hidden. He's not kept it a secret. In fact, He blazed it out there bold and obvious. He listed it out for us, clear and simple. We call them the 10 Commandments. They anchor all of God's plan.

So, we're going to go back to the 10 Commandments, one by one, and unpack how God has written in them the path of abundant life, the path of holiness, the path of true self-actualization.

But before we look at even the first one, we need to see them correctly. We need to approach them how they were intended. You see, we often look at God's laws and precepts as heavy rules,

burdens to be carried. We give up the good stuff because we're told we have to. And so, we try to obey, but half-heartedly, and because of obligation. "Put down that doughnut and eat your brussel sprouts. Do what you're told." And the moment mom turns her back....

PP#6: *Image of God's people in slavery, and Moses coming to free them bringing hope.*

We do that with God's rules and commandments. But that's not how they're given. We need to see them in their context.

You see, the people of Israel were trapped as slaves in Egypt. They were owned by the Egyptians and could only do what they were told.

But then God showed up. He reminded them that they were His people, and He created them to be more than what they were. He worked a mighty act of salvation, freeing them from their slavery. But God is way too awesome to simply release them into the desert, letting them go on their own, letting them drift aimlessly in the fog. Because He loves them and wants fullness for them, He leads them to His mountain, and sets them up for success.

PP#7: 10 Commandments: Set free to live free

1. Submit to Jesus as Lord
2. Rules from a loving Father given for our own good

Pharaoh also had given them rules, right? But rules are different when they come from a loving father rather than a dictator. The dictator gives rules that benefit the dictator at the expense of the people. The loving father gives rules that benefit the people at the expense of the father. Without rules, the people die in the desert. With Pharaoh's rules, the people live in slavery. With God's rules, the people live abundantly and eternally.

I need you to stop and make the jump to your life. We're not in Egypt 4,000 years ago, but our reality is still the same. We may think we want to be in charge and call the shots. But the truth is that left to our own, we get lost and expire in the desert. So, we follow rules from dictators we think are helping us, doing what we have to do to fit in, to be accepted, wearing certain things, behaving certain ways, pursuing what is billed as success. But in reality, it serves the dictator of acceptance, of society, of judgement, of consumerism, of comfort, of those who wield power over us.

Notice, God doesn't say, "Follow these rules and then I'll accept you." This, by the way, is every other religion's god. No, our God chooses us first, accepts us while we are still slaves, works to free us at great personal cost, and then says, "Here, follow this: this is the path of best life." "I love you and want the best for you, better than you can understand. These are for your own good. I want you to flourish. I will not leave you without a guide in the fog. Do you trust me?"

PP#8: *Image of kids in a playground right against a busy road full of cars, perhaps with a fence.*

True freedom is not doing whatever you want. Why? Because doing whatever you *want* is bad for you! You cannot trust your wants! Your *wants* urge you to choose candy over food, to choose to spend your money quickly rather than save to pay your rent, to tell that person off rather than act civil or forgive, to give into the moment and forfeit your long-term goals. Your wants are a harsh, life-sucking dictator!

True freedom is not doing what you want. And it's not doing what other powers demand. True freedom is living the abundant life that comes from operating within the limits of safety and health. You can swim freely in the ocean within the boundaries that rope off the sharks and keep you under the eye of the lifeguard. You can play freely within the fenced yard that keeps you from wandering into the street. This is God's plan, the commandments God gives. Do you trust Him?

PP#9: *Image of Moses carrying down the two tablets of the 10 Commandments...Charlton Heston?*

Turn to Exodus, chapter 20. Exodus begins with God's people in slavery in Egypt. He raises up Moses to lead them out. God battles with Pharaoh, and wins. He has Moses lead the people out and toward the Promised Land. But their first stop is at Mt. Sinai. There, God creates a covenant with them. He says, "I will be your God, and you will be my people. If you follow me, I will bless you and prosper you. Come, let's make a covenant together."

So, the people gather around Mt. Sinai, and God calls Moses up the mountain. And while up there, God gives what we call the 10 Commandments. God had Moses carve two stone tablets and take them up with him. God then carved—He spoke, and somehow His speaking also carved into the tablets—the 10 words and phrases that carried the meaning that Moses then wrote down in Exodus, chapter 20.

PP#10: Exodus 20:1-2 (CEB)

1 Then God spoke all these words: "2 I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

But notice how chapter 20 begins. We're looking at just the first two verses today. God begins speaking the rules of abundant life. But before God gives the first rule, He reminds them why they can trust Him, and why they can expect these rules to be life-giving and not a heavy burden. "Then God spoke all these words: 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.'"

You can trust me! I've already proven to you that I am in this for *your* sake. I chose you. I called you mine. When you turned away, I came after you. When you were in a mess, stuck in slavery, I came to rescue you. I brought you out from under the strongest power on earth. I have shown I am more powerful than Pharaoh, more powerful than the sea, more powerful than nature. I have fought on your behalf. I have protected you, been a cloud over you. I have fed you manna and quail. I have provided you with sweet water to drink. I have brought you into my very presence. Do you think you can trust me? Look back. What kind of God am I? Whose interest to I have at heart? Any instructions, any rules I give, will they not bless you? I want you to live, prosper, thrive! You are stuck and lost. I know the way. I have a plan. I will guide you because I love you. These rules I'm about to give you, they are not for my benefit. They are for yours. If you follow them you will live. If you don't you will struggle and die. Not because I will punish you (although I do promise to discipline you to help you grow and thrive), but because life will go hard for you. I know you are lost. I know you don't know how to lead. I know that when you follow your wants, you will get back into a mess. So, because I love you, here is your best way to live."

PP#11: 10 Commandments: Set free to live free

1. Submit to Jesus as Lord
2. Rules from a loving Father given for our own good
3. Eagerly embrace God's way wholeheartedly

Tell me, now that you see the context in which God gave the 10 Commandments, how do you feel about them, even before you hear them? Aren't you eager to hear what they are? Don't you already want to follow them, follow them to the detail? Isn't your response to commit to doing whatever they may be? We know we can trust our God. Anything He says, we know is only good. Our coach has called a time out. We huddle up, and he says, "I've got the play that I know will work. I've been here before. I know the opposition. And I've got this plan that is guaranteed to work. Here's what you each need to do..." Aren't you excited that God has provided such an awesome gift? Won't you treasure it and follow it above all else?

Remember this! Next week we're going to start looking at the commandments themselves. But hold on to this context. Preserve your heart's cry to pledge your allegiance and compliance. Commit to say first, "I trust you God! This is for my benefit. I will do it!" Prepare to eagerly embrace them wholeheartedly, because as you begin, you're not focused on the rules, but on the loving Father who is gifting you the game plan.

PP#12: *Image of gripping God, hanging on to God, with all one's might, while God grips you.*

Here is the bedrock for full life. Here are the foundation stones. We seek abundant life. We seek a way through the fog. This year, as we begin, make your primary resolution, your tenacious commitment, to see God as your loving heavenly Father. All the rest of what we see Him saying in the weeks ahead, just comes out of this.

Next week we'll look at the first rule. It's the most important. It's the greatest commandment. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and mind, and soul. We hang onto our loving Father, while our loving heavenly Father, is hanging on to us!

Happy New Year!

Amen.

Closing Song: *The Way* -Sanctify

Announcements:

Wednesday

Community Care

Ministry Fair

Memory Verse: -David

"I will always obey your law, for ever and ever. I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts." -Psalm 119:43-44

Benediction