

## *Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!*



Illustration: Isaac Blessing Jacob

A Devotional for the  
Week of the Second Sunday after Trinity.

SUNDAY.

*Honor thy father and thy mother. – Exodus 20:12.*

This is God's Fourth Commandment. By father and mother our own parents are meant first and above all, but also all those who, according to God's ordinance, are our superiors in home, state, school, and church. We must not disregard this divine order. We must not despise our parents and masters, nor provoke them to anger, but give them honor, serve and obey them, and hold them in love and esteem. Certainly, "we ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5: 29.) If our parents and masters demand anything of us that is against the Word of God, we must not obey them. But otherwise we must give them the honor with which God has invested them, and do so with a willing heart, for God's sake. Young children must obey their parents in all things. (Colossians 3:20.) Adult children must show their parents love and kindness. To other masters we must give that honor which they can claim by virtue of their office and their station.

This commandment "is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth," says the Apostle. (Ephesians 6:2-3.) You may judge what is meant thereby from what is threatened to those who ruthlessly disregard this commandment. If children blankly refuse to obey their parents, employees their employers, subjects their government, pupils their teachers, church-members the preachers of God's Word, – just imagine what that means, – can there be any prosperity then, indeed, would life be tolerable? But if the Fourth Commandment is respected, then things will be well. Alas! many sins could be recorded here. Examine your own conduct.

*PRAYER.* – My God, I know that from a child I am evil and full of sin. Wash me of all my sins by the blood which Your dear Son has shed for me, and grant me Your good Spirit, that He may teach me, while I sojourn here on earth, to live according to Your holy will in me own sphere and calling. Amen.

Hymn 391, 5.

Give to thy parents honor due,  
Be dutiful, and loving too,  
And help them when their strength decays,  
So shalt thou have length of days.  
Have mercy, Lord!

MONDAY.

*Thou shalt not kill. – Exodus 20:13.*

This is God's Fifth Commandment. But they err greatly who think they have kept this commandment as long as they have not murdered any one, or done their fellow-man any other hurt or harm in his body. Anger proceeding from hate, gnashing of the teeth, and abusive language is murder in the sight of God. (Matthew 5:21-22.) "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," the Spirit of God teaches us. (1 John 3:15.) The civil authorities, according to God's ordinance, are to punish murderers and evil-doers.

(Genesis 9:6 & Romans 13:4.)

But we must not harbor thoughts of revenge against those who have harmed us. Wrath and revenge we must leave to the holy God. The Holy Ghost says to us by the mouth of the Apostle: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to (the) wrath (of God); for it is written: Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

(Romans 12:19-21.)

Where are we most prone to transgress the supreme commandment of love to our neighbor? Over against our enemies

and those who do us harm. Hence it is there, too, that we must be most careful to observe its precepts. – We are most miserable sinners. Just because the wicked love of self dwells within us, the still feeble sprig of all-conquering love of our neighbor, which has been implanted in us Christians, has but a miserable existence. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders." (Matthew 15:19.) And how often the thoughts develop into something worse! If we desire to remain children of God, we must live in daily repentance and pray for the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love.

*PRAYER.* – Lord God, dear Heavenly Father, am I not Your dear child? But I am a very weak and miserable child, easily led into wrong paths and seduced to wickedness. Have patience with me for Jesus' sake. Forgive me my sin. I pray You that, by Your Holy Ghost, You would daily check and change the virulent evil, until in the end You will deliver me from the body of this death and renew me to blessed perfection. Amen.

Hymn 391, 6.

In sinful wrath thou shalt not kill,  
Nor hate, nor render ill for ill;  
Be patient and of gentle mood,  
And to thy foe do thou good.  
Have mercy, Lord!

TUESDAY.

*Thou shalt not commit adultery. – Exodus 20:14.*

This is God's Sixth Commandment.

– Matrimony is instituted by God. Therefore we must not profane it nor commit adultery. Neither by fornication, nor by willful desertion, nor by divorce obtained in the civil courts must we

dissolve the hands of holy wedlock. Only when the one party has thus severed the matrimonial ties is the other party free. Christ says: "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." (Matthew 19:6, 9.)

But not only the gross adultery just mentioned is adultery in the sight of God. Christ says: " Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew 5:28.) Each should love and honor his spouse. Each should be true to his spouse in heart, mind, inclination, word, and deed. And all, including, of course, the unmarried, must be chaste and decent in word and deed. "Fornication and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks," says the holy Ghost. (Ephesians 5:3-4.)

We must take this commandment most seriously. For that reason we must avoid all opportunities where our heart, so unclean by nature, is further inflamed with evil desires. We must rather quench the evil desires with God's Word and prayer, by working industriously and exercising due temperance in eating and drinking. Oh, our heart is very unclean! "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts. murders, adulteries, fornication." (Matthew 15:19.) Only in the righteousness of Christ, imputed unto us, can we stand before God: only the Holy Ghost can guard us against suffocating our faith by uncleanness.

*PRAYER.* – It grieves me, O my Lord and Savior, that I am so unclean. Cover my impurity with Your purity in the sight of Your Father, who through You is also my Father. And graciously grant me Your Holy Spirit, that by His almighty help and power I may control the evil desires within me, until the light of Your countenance shall completely dispel all darkness within me. Amen.

Hymn 391, 7..

Be faithful to thy marriage vows,  
Thy heart give only to thy spouse;  
Thy life keep pure, and lest thou sin,  
Us temp'rance and discipline.  
Have mercy, Lord!

WEDNESDAY.

*Thou shalt not steal. – Exodus 20:15.*

This is God's Seventh Commandment. But not only pickpockets and burglars transgress this commandment. Whoever defrauds his neighbor in business, or craftily wrests trade and profit from him, or takes advantage of his neighbor's ignorance or distress to get his money or goods, or borrows without returning what he has borrowed, or is in secret partnership with thieves, and so seeks to profit by the dishonesty of others, or enriches himself by means of usury, wringing his neighbor's sweat and blood from him, or refuses to work, depending on others to support him, -such a one steals.

The world is full of thievery. Civil laws are not able to stop all thievery. And men refuse to be restrained by the Law of God. Trade and commerce are very corrupt. – We must be honest in the sight of God. One day God will judge. He keeps account of every deed of men. We should fear and love Him, that we do not take our neighbor's money or goods, nor get them by false ware or dealing; on the contrary, we should love our neighbor as ourselves, and in word and deed help him to improve and protect his property and business. By word and deed we should seek to keep him from harm. We should lend him money, if by doing so we may help him, without seeking advantage for ourselves. We should take pity on the poor. –Alas! we stand condemned before this Seventh

Commandment: our hand has taken where it should not have taken; it has not given where it should have given. And our heart! How full of thievery it is, how void of pity!

*PRAYER.* – O my God, grant me Your Holy Spirit, that I may learn to know my sin, seek forgiveness depending on Your grace in Christ, and thereupon amend my ways, keep myself unspotted from the world and its sinful ways, love my neighbor and deal with him faithfully and honestly and according to the standards of love, diligently attend to my calling, and expect the blessing from You alone; for You bless those that walk in Your ways. Hear me for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Hymn 391, 8.

Steal not; all usury abhor,  
Nor wring their life-blood from the poor;  
But open wide thy loving hand  
To all the poor in the land.  
Have mercy, Lord!

THURSDAY.

*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*  
– *Exodus 20:16.*

This is God's Eighth Commandment. God forbids us to bear witness against our neighbor with a deceitful heart, give testimony against him to harm him. "Let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor." (Zechariah 8:17.) The most obvious tale-bearers are those who spread vile lies about their neighbor. But those, too, are talebearers who withhold from the neighbor the truth which would benefit him. Tale-bearers are those who reveal the secret sin and shame of their neighbor. "A tale-bearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter." (Proverbs 11:13.)

Those are tale-bearers who speak evil of their neighbor in his absence. Why not tell him to his face if you know any evil of him, and tell him with a true and loving heart? "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone," says Christ. (Matthew 18:15.) Those are tale-bearers who injure or destroy their neighbor's good reputation. An evil word spoken of the neighbor, how quickly does it spread! God earnestly forbids this, and He enjoins us to speak whatever is to our neighbor's advantage. We must defend him against false accusations. "Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:9.) We should speak well of our neighbor as far as it is in keeping with the truth. Lovingly we should cover up our neighbor's faults and failings, emphasizing his good qualities and being quiet about his faults and shortcomings.

Remember we must love our neighbor as ourselves. Oh, miserable sinners that we are! Scarcely another commandment shows as plainly as this does how sinful we are.

*PRAYER.* – Each one of Your commandments, O God, seriously accuses me. How often and manifold have I sinned against my brother with heart and mouth, through speech, but also by keeping silence. I cast myself into the dust, before You, O holy God! Be gracious to me for Christ's sake. Graciously let Your Word and the Holy Spirit effect a change in me, and incline my heart and tongue to true love for my neighbor. Amen.

Hymn 391, 9.

Bear not false witness, nor belie  
Thy neighbor by foul calumny,  
Defend his innocence from blame,  
With charity hide his shame.  
Have mercy, Lord!

FRIDAY.

*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. – Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.*

– *Exodus 20:17.*

This is God's Ninth and Tenth Commandment. These two commandments are alike as to their meaning. And yet they are two distinct commandments, as indicated by the hyphen in the Hebrew text. God would impress upon us that He regards not only the outward deed, but also the desire of the heart. "Thou shalt not covet." (Romans 13:9.) This is what God wants us to understand. And it is so hard for us to understand. We refuse to consider evil lust as sin. We think that as long as we refrain from the outward act, all is well. But God does not want an unclean heart. "Ye shall be holy," says He. (Leviticus 19:2.)

We are not to desire anything, not to covet anything greedily, not to hanker after anything nor endeavor to get into our possession, even though it be with a show of right, whatever is our neighbor's. To do so is against the divine law of love. Just as God enjoins love, so He forbids evil lust. Both dwell within the heart. God wants our heart to be holy. Instead of coveting what is our neighbor's, we should heartily desire that he may keep what is his, and also assist him in this. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," in kind and thoughtful consideration. (Philippians 2:4.) "The love of money is the root of all evil." (1 Timothy 6:10.) "Envy is the rottenness of the bones." (Proverbs 14:30.) Greed and envy are an abomination unto the Lord, and roots of sin, and vicious and prolific seeds of evil. Read James 1:14-15. Who can stand before these commandments?

*PRAYER.* – My God, I am full of evil lust and am most unclean. Evil roots of sin sprout up within my heart, unholy desires are as rottenness in my bones. Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me for Jesus' sake! Hide Your face from my sins; impute to me the

righteousness of Your dear Son! Give to me the divine power of Your Holy Spirit; create and sustain a new spirit within me, that I may serve You in the new mind according to Your commandment. Amen.

Hymn 391. 10.

Thy neighbor's house desire thou not,  
His wife, nor aught that he hath got.  
But wish that his such good may be,  
As thy heart doth wish for thee.

Have mercy, Lord!

SATURDAY.

*I, the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. – Exodus 20:5-6.*

With these words God threatens to punish all that transgress His commandments. In proof of His earnestness and holy jealousy He points to His acts recorded in Bible history, which tells us that He punished the iniquity of the fathers even upon the children unto the third and fourth generation when the children hated Him as their fathers had done.

But He promises mercy unto all that keep His commandments. And here, too, He points to Bible history, which shows that He has done good unto thousands of pious Israelites. Because of His threat we should fear His wrath, and not act contrary to His commandments. And because of His promise we should love and trust in Him, and willingly do according to His commandments.

But tell me, Christian, have the threats God utters the power to keep us from sin, so that we do not act contrary to His

commandments? By no means! And can we obtain His mercy by keeping His commandments? By no means. Sin has too largely, too firmly and completely, taken possession of us. Driven and drawn by the Holy Ghost, through the Gospel, we must flee to Christ, and daily lay hold upon the grace of God for the forgiveness of sins. And then, then, moved by the Holy Ghost in faith, we must fear and love God, that we may shun sin and do according to His commandments. Then, then God looks upon us in Christ with eyes of mercy as upon His dear children, hiding His face from the many sins that still cling to us, and seeing only our keeping of His commandments, being pleased with it, although it is so imperfect, and showing mercy to us. And this is nothing but grace, pure grace, grace only.

*PRAYER.* – My Lord and Savior, here am I, a poor sinner, who has deserved nothing but wrath and punishment. But bestow on me that grace which You have procured for me and promised to me. Forgive me my sins. Let me be a child of God. Teach me by Your Holy Spirit to walk, though ever so feebly, in the paths of God's commandments. And be pleased with it according to Your tender mercy, and bless me, and do good to me, O Jesus! Amen.

#### Hymn 424.

O God, thou righteous, faithful Lord,  
I have not kept Thy holy Word.  
But sinned, and oft offended Thee;  
Now I repent, it grieveth me.

Thou, Father, merciful and kind,  
No pleasure in my death dost find,  
But strong desire doth in Thee burn,  
That I should unto Thee return.

Since Thou, dear Father, callest me,  
I, poor lost sinner, come to Thee.  
Relying on Christ's precious blood  
Which from His holy five wounds flowed.

I pray through Christ, Thine only Son,  
Who for my good here flesh put on;  
Thy love to me let never fail;  
O'er justice let Thy grace prevail.

In mercy, Father, let Thy grace  
Through Jesus' blood my sins efface;  
Then I, the poor lost child, will be  
From all my sins forever free.

Grant that, according to Thy Word,  
I lead a godly life, O Lord,  
And let me, after time is o'er,  
Inherit life forevermore.

These devotions are adapted from *Crumbs* by C. M. Zorn (1914).  
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