

March 7, 2021



We have chosen to follow Jesus' commandment to care for our neighbor, especially our most vulnerable neighbors (Matthew 22: 37-40), during the coronavirus/COVID19 pandemic. While we are not gathering at the church building, we have chosen to see this as a time for us to try new ways to worship, learn, pray, and stay connected ...after all, *God is always doing new things (Isaiah 43:1-19)!*

In these difficult times, we are committed to continuing to find ways to be the church.

Don't hesitate to be in touch if you need something, especially help...getting groceries or medicine, figuring out how to do all this online stuff, or just needing to chat. We are here to help!

Grace and Peace,

Pastor Henry, the Elders, and Deacons of the First Presbyterian Church of Corona

In order to open the music, place the cursor on the title, press ctrl and click. That will take you to the appropriate YouTube location to open.

GATHERING SONG [In Christ Alone](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

We sing our praise to God's glory.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.

We open hearts and souls, to receive the comforting presence of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.

The ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, our Rock and our Redeemer. To you we lift our voices in praise!

—Based on Psalm 19

HYMN [Holy, Holy, Holy](#)

PRAYER

Merciful God, we embrace this season of Lent as we prepare again to walk with Jesus to the cross. Speak to us, we pray, the solemn truth of Christ's passion. Remind us that there is no life without death, no communion without separation, no glory without suffering. Give us courage and faith to receive these difficult truths and to align our hearts and lives with them. May we choose to lose our lives so that we may gain them; to endure the pain of separation that we might enjoy the fellowship of all your saints; to enter Christ's suffering by entering the suffering of your children on earth that we may one day share in your eternal glory. For the sake of Christ, we pray. Amen.

CONFESSION [Change My Heart O God](#)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

As surely as Jesus cleansed the temple, he cleanses our hearts. We receive his gracious gift of pardon and live as loved and redeemed children of God. Amen

SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:1-17

¹Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me.

⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸ Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. ⁹For six days you shall labour and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

¹² Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ You shall not murder.:

¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ You shall not steal.

¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

HYMN [The Church's One Foundation](#)

SERMON Our passage for today is the set of laws that we call the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20:1-17. The whole law contains some 613 commandments, but these 10 are primary. They can be understood on their own and as part of the larger program of laws to which they belong.

The Ten Commandments are striking in that their wording differs from most other laws in the Hebrew Bible. The Ten Commandments are stated as imperatives, "You shall ...," "You shall not ...," which makes them laws that are applicable in all times and circumstances, unlike other laws that are casuistic "If you do X, then Y will occur."

One aspect of the commandments that is often overlooked by those who consider the Old Testament to be harsher in its judgment of humanity than is the New Testament, is the last phrase of the second commandment. We often hear it quoted that the Old Testament advocates visiting the guilt of parents upon their children. It does state in the second commandment (in both the Exodus and Deuteronomy versions), that the sin of idolatry follows the sinner's descendants for three generations. What is often overlooked, however, is that the blessing of faithfulness to God follows the faithful's descendants for a thousand generations. This implies that faithfulness is remembered and rewarded for much longer than sin is remembered and punished.

So.....

- We should be kind to one another.
- We should be patient.
- We should share with each other.
- We should put others first ahead of ourselves.
- We should pray.
- We should love God.
- We should love our neighbors as ourselves.
- We should be compassionate.
- We should be humble and resist pride.

The “shoulds” found in this text are both positive and negative. Since Moses first chiseled them on two stone tablets, they have been copied, reproduced, installed, erected, proclaimed, translated, and repeated in a gazillion different iterations. The very mention of “ten commandments” is a reminder of our duty toward God and our fellow human beings.

In fact, they seem to reflect The God Rules (vv. 1-11) and the People Rules (vv. 12-17). But the divisions are intertwined. Our understanding of neighborly obligations flows from our knowledge of God as the God of creation who demands unwavering obedience and worship. There is no ambiguity. There is one God. We know this God. We know what this one and true God wants. We do not murder, lie or steal because this is not the nature of the God we worship.

It’s analogous to the family at home. The behavior of the children reflects the ethical and moral values of the parents.

We don’t have to be religious or super-godly to understand their importance. *If we live in community, we must abide by the shoulds and oughts. It’s the only way a community can survive and thrive. If you don’t live in a community, if you are living life in a cave on the shoulder of a mountain, well, the stealing, murdering and lying commandments don’t apply. You’re by yourself and have only yourself to answer to.*

The rest of us, however, live in communities. Perhaps this may be why God stops the Exodus pilgrimage to Canaan here at Mount Sinai. It is here that God tells the Israelites that they are a family. We are a community and therefore some expectations apply. As we continue the journey to Canaan, we must live by certain rules and observe some specific boundaries. So, just to be clear, here is how we’re going to function and operate going forward.

- This is what our worship space is going to look like.
- This is what we’re going to sing.
- This is how we’re going to worship.
- This is what we’re going to eat and not eat.
- This is who can and can’t get married.
- This is what happens to those who break the commandments.
- These are the leaders we will have, and this is what they will do.

The Ten Commandments, then, are only a small part of all that God explains during this stop at Sinai. Here, the charter is established. Now that they’re organized, they can proceed.

Of course, it didn’t work out quite that way. Somehow, the Israelites managed to turn a three-month trip into a 40-year adventure.

Perhaps they had the same problems — moral relativism and situational ethics — that we have today. What is right is wrong; what is wrong is right. How can it be wrong if it feels so right? If it feels right, do it, because anything goes. The Pleasure Principle. What’s wrong for you might be right for me, and so on.

But even in the face of moral relativism, if there *are moral absolutes in the universe and it would be hard to argue against the notion that commandments 5-10 are right up there at the front of the list. Who would seriously suggest that it is morally permissible to murder, steal, lie and covet your neighbor’s possessions? No reasonable atheist, secularist, humanist, or person of any religious tradition would disagree that these “shoulds” or “should nots” are as absolute and inflexible as possible in any discussion of ethics and moral law.*

This is so widely accepted that every municipality in the country employs a police force to ensure that these commandments are observed.

And why do we hire police officers?

Because we live in community. We're in perfect agreement with the intent of these commandments. We certainly don't want anyone stealing our stuff! And if someone in our family is murdered, we'd like the culprit to be brought to justice. And we don't want anyone to slander our good name, telling lies about us. And although the police can't do too much about how well we honor or how badly we dishonor our parents, or about whether we're coveting our neighbor's Tesla Model X, we do want the police to monitor these other things. We also realize that the officers who serve and protect need to be supported in a broader agency of public safety that includes counselors, social workers and other professionals to deal with the well-being of our communities.

Having some "shoulds" in our life is a good thing. If all of us respect the "shoulds," our communities and cities will be better places to live.

That said, don't we get tired of being responsible citizens, of obeying the rules all the time? Maybe not. Perhaps we're comfortable living within the rules. Some people aren't. They have a problem with authority. They want to blow off some steam, be crazy for a while, flaunt the rules. They want to take off the masks, symbolic of freedom from authority.

We get it.

But the reality is that we can't stop observing the shoulds. We must, absolutely must, respect the shoulds and should-nots. We owe it to ourselves and to others.

But, on the other hand

When you add up all the federal, state and municipal commandments we're required to obey (at the risk of fines or jail time), and add to that the religious, ethical and moral commandments we're supposed to follow, there's no point adding to our "should" burden unnecessarily, is there?

For example: There are many people who have become *slaves to cultural perceptions of beauty and fashion. Is it possible we should stop "shoulding" ourselves about the need for hourglass figure or six-pack abs?*

Perhaps we also have been burdened by the *need to be perfect: perfect parents, perfect super-moms or cool moms, perfect super-dads - or the perfect husband, the perfect wife, the perfect employee. News flash: Thou are not perfect and thou shalt not strive to be, Jesus' comment in Matthew 5:48 notwithstanding. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect." Jesus does not suggest that it is possible to flawlessly impersonate or imitate the moral perfection of the Supreme Deity. The word translated "perfect" did not mean 10 out of 10 perfect the way we use it today. It is best translated with an understanding about the process of maturing toward a goal of reflecting the glory of God. It is absurd to think that we might ever achieve the purity of perfection that is found in God, and we would be dangerous to assume that we could achieve it!*

For the Greeks (primarily from Aristotle, not Plato), perfection had to do with *function or utility. Something is perfect if it functions or behaves in the manner for which it was planned, designed and made. The potter intends to make a bowl that will be used for stew. If it cracks and leaks, if the design is off, if the size is wrong — well, it is imperfect, and he begins again. God is God — perfection in essence,*

being, function and attributes. God the Potter has formed us and made us. We are purpose-built creatures. To the extent that we human beings fulfil the purpose and plan for which we were created and made, we too are perfecting or maturing. Jesus calls us to be such persons continuing to grow in faith and discipleship.

It is also possible that we are oppressed by the need to keep up with everyone else. We feel that we must match the achievement of our peers, that our lifestyle should be similar to those in our income bracket. We are slightly embarrassed when we lag behind others — our friends, family or colleagues — in terms of professional advancement or material and financial status.

We might also feel pressure to yield to certain ideological positions that in our hearts we know to be antithetical to our religious convictions. We might feel a lot of pressure to think and act in certain political ways, but inside, we are just not feeling it.

We also might suffer in a general way from the “shoulds” and “oughts” of expectations. In the effort to meet the expectations of others, we might bring calamity down upon ourselves physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Striving to meet anyone’s expectations except God’s and those reasonable demands we place on ourselves can have serious negative outcomes.

When to obey the oughts and the shoulds of the world is a call only we can make. The counsel of friends and family is important, but ultimately, we alone must decide what we should and should not do.

But when God is talking, there is no ambiguity. There is no argument about whether to be obedient. We should.

- “But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than any human authority...’” (Acts 5:29).
- Jesus said, “You are my friends if you do what I command you” (John 15:14).
- “Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it” (Psalm 119:35).

The psalmist is on to something. He “delights” in obeying the Lord. Do we chafe under a spirit of obligation when we do something that brings joy to our spouses or our children? No! In fact, it gives us joy, too! Freedom is lived in responsibility – wonderfully, mysteriously, duty bound and free.

When we can delight in obeying God’s laws, the “should” factor has been removed. It is no longer an obligation; it is a joy — even as it is a joy for us to serve those we love on this earthly plane.

“Happy are those who ... delight ... in the law of the Lord, and on his law, they meditate day and night. ... (Psalm 1)

AFFIRMATION

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God. Jesus proclaimed the reign of God: preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives, teaching by word and deed and blessing the children, healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted, eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners, and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.

Joys & Concerns

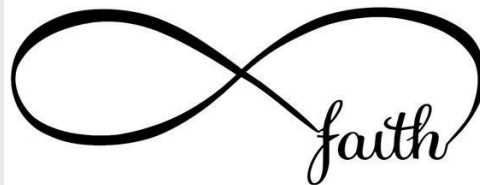
Please keep Pete & Marilyn's friend Steve Groneberg and his family in prayer. His wife Laura passed away after a 13-month battle with cancer.

Continuing Prayers

Continued prayers for Rochelle. Prayers for our country and elected ones. All people, law enforcement & civilians, affected by current violence in this country. Lynn Rodisch - healing. Pete - healing. Kofi - prayer. Loren Nelson - continued prayer.

Please Pray During This Week for the families of:

- ◆ Jean Marsh
- ◆ Don McNeil



if you have a prayer request or joy to share, contact any session member, Pastor Henry, the prayer chain at mom4tc@sbcglobal.net, or judy@fpc-corona.org.

During this time of being apart,
remember that your Deacons are
available if you are in need of help.

PRAYER

God of grace, come to us in this time of worship, prayer and thanksgiving. We come into your presence with gratitude, O God, that you hear our prayers.

Help us when we struggle to carry the cross of Christ faithfully this Lenten season. For those who tread on ground that is rocky with instability in their homes or jobs, we ask for your calming presence. For those who cannot find their way in the quagmire of grief and loss, we ask for the light of the Lord to guide them on the journey. For those who are ill or providing care for them, we ask for the peaceful serenity of the Holy Spirit. For those who feel abandoned because they have taken a stand for what is right, we ask for the assurance of your love.

We know that to carry the cross is a commitment to a way of life; we try to carry the cross proudly. But sometimes we falter. Help us in our travels that we might walk steadfast and sure to Jerusalem -- and beyond paying as Jesus taught us to pray:

Our Father, who is in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.

HYMN

[Jesus Thy Boundless Love to Me](#)

BENEDICTION

Let us go now into the world following the example of our Lord Jesus.

May our lives reflect God's love and grace.

May our lives reflect the life and teachings of Jesus.

May we continue this Lenten journey, ever growing closer to Jesus Christ and ever growing more perfect in God's love. Amen.

RESPONSE

[The Lord Bless You and Keep You](#)



AN AGAPE MEAL

While we cannot be together in worship to celebrate the Lord's Supper, we can celebrate an agape meal or "love feast" that recalls meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry. We may be apart from one another, yet we may celebrate a sacramental time at each of our homes as members of the "household of God"

PRAYER Be present at our table, Lord; be here and everywhere adored.

God of earth and heaven, your hungry children feed,

Your grace be to our spirits given, that true immortal bread.

Grant us and all the human race in Jesus Christ to prove

The sweetness of your pardoning grace, the manna of your love.

HYMN [Come Share the Lord](#)

SCRIPTURE **The Bread of Life – John 6: 27- 34**

²⁷“Don't waste your energy striving for perishable food like that. Work for the food that sticks with you, food that nourishes your lasting life, food the Son of Man provides. He and what he does are guaranteed by God the Father to last.”

²⁸To that they said, “Well, what do we do then to get in on God's works?”

²⁹Jesus said, “Throw your lot in with the One that God has sent. That kind of a commitment gets you in on God's works.”

³⁰⁻³¹They waffled: “Why don't you give us a clue about who you are, just a hint of what's going on? When we see what's up, we'll commit ourselves. Show us what you can do. Moses fed our ancestors with bread in the desert. It says so in the Scriptures: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

³²⁻³³Jesus responded, “The real significance of that Scripture is not that Moses gave you bread from heaven but that my Father is right now offering you bread from heaven, the *real bread*. *The Bread of God came down out of heaven and is giving life to the world.*”

³⁴They jumped at that: “Master, give us this bread, now and forever!”

Those gathered may pass a loaf/slice of bread, share a meal, and discuss joys concerns or matters of mutual concern.

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself.

6 He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what.

7 Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a servant, became human!

8 Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death - and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion.

9 Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever,

10 so that all created beings in heaven and on earth - even those long ago dead and buried - will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ,

11 and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.

PRAYER

God, you loved us so much that we should love one another. No one has ever seen you. Yet, as we love one another, we pray that you will live in us and your love will be completed in us

HYMN [We are the Church](#)

DISMISSAL The grace and peace of Jesus be with us all