**10 COMMANDMENTS** ***MM O/L***

**I thought I’d look at God’s ten commandments today. You’ve heard of the Ten Commandments! Here’s the first one:**

1. ***God said, “Let there be light (Gen. 1:3)”*; and the others follow, that’s God’s *original* Ten Commandments :**
2. ***God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters (v. 6)”*;**
3. ***“Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place and let dry ground appear (v. 9)”*;**
4. ***“Let the land produce vegetation (v. 11);***
5. ***“Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky (v. 14)”;***
6. ***“Let the water teem with living creatures and let birds fly above the earth (v. 20)”;***
7. **number 7 comes with a blessing: *God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas and let the birds increase on the earth (v. 22);***
8. **number 8: *God said, “Let the land produce living creatures (v. 24)”;***
9. **then number 9, having made humans in His image, comes with another blessing: *God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground (v. 28)”.***

**All those nine commandments can be found in Genesisch.1, the first chapter of the Bible. Now, some people take these words literally while others take them metaphorically or poetically, but, either way, do you see what they teach us? God created the universe and, although in the beginning, it was formless, empty and dark (1:2) - it was literally *Chaos* - He brought structure and order to it - He turned *Chaos* into *Cosmos.* And how did He do it? By issuing COMMANDMENTS.**

**Now, it’s a long while since I last issued a command and saw it obeyed! Even my dog is a bit reluctant and prefers to be bribed with a bit of dried sausage or cheese. But every time God gave a commandment, it was obeyed. The first one is the most famous and it can stand in for the rest: *God said. “Let there be light,” and there was light (v. 3).* How many times have you heard a joker act out that little drama as he flicked the light-switch on? But, of course, we don’t *create* the light, do we? We rely on the *laws* of physics to make the lightbulb start shining. As God issued His commandments and they were obeyed (time after time in that first chapter we read, *And it was so (v. 7, 9, 11, 15, 24)*),He is writing the laws of physics and chemistry and biology - and all the other ologies, too!**

**Until, that is, we get to mankind: He treats us differently. First*,* He didn’t issue a commandment. Instead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit held a conference: *Let us make man in our image, in our likeness* He saidand, after the conference, we’re told, *God created man in his own image (v. 27). Then* He issued His ninth commandment that we are to continue the process of turning chaos into cosmos on the earth by obeying Him as His stewards (v. 28). But, this time, it doesn’t say *And it was so.***

**You see, to rule the earth for God takes great resources of knowledge and power and God knows that great resources can be dangerous (3:22), so He issued the *tenth* commandment that you’ve all been waiting for to complete the sequence. For the first time, it’s a negative:**

1. ***You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die (v. 17).***

**Now, again, some take this literally and some metaphorically, but what He’s saying is this: “Trust Me for what is good and you won’t need to know evil”. And we know what that means because we are all familiar with *temptation* – that desire to find out just what the forbidden fruit is like! Well, as we know, that tenth commandment was broken and is consistently broken, so we’ve been unable to fulfil the ninth and wise stewardship of God’s earth has all too often turned into selfishness and greed.**

**So, later He issued another, more familiar, Ten Commandments in Exodus ch. 20 (vv. 1-17) which we also haven’t done too well at obeying. Jesus helpfully reduced them to just two commandments. He summarised numbers 5-10 by saying *Love your neighbour as yourself (Mt. 22:39)* and a lot of people agree that’s a good idea but nobody quite manages to do it; while numbers 1-4 are far less popular: He summed them up when He said, *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (Mt. 22:37).***

**So, the Commander issued His commandments and nature obeys His laws. That’s why the sun rises every morning and water’s wet. Neither the sun nor the water has a choice. But those who were invited to co-operate – that’s us - all too often rebel against our Commander because we *do* have a choice. But there is a penalty for disobedience: *You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.* Mutiny is punishable by death: rebels will die.**

***Oh, thanks Steve! That’s just what we need to hear when there’s a deadly virus going round!*  Please don’t switch off – I have to give you the bad news in order to get to the good news! Rebels do have to die and, about two thousand years ago there was a rebel in jail in Jerusalem. His name was Barabbas. Matthew calls him *a notorious prisoner* *(27:16)* and Mark confirms that he was both a rebel and a murderer (15:7) and Luke (23:19) and John (18:40) agree. So the verdict is unanimous: Barabbas was a Bad Man. Surely all of us want to keep men like Barabbas in jail and there may even be some listening who believe men like him should be hanged. Because *we* believe that rebels should be punished, too. It’s just that we reserve that for *other* rebels….**

**But he wasn’t the only prisoner that Passover. Jesus was also on trial. Unlike with Barabbas, there was no case to answer, so men perjured themselves to condemn Him (Mk. 14:56-9). Even the Governor said He was innocent (Jn. 18:38), but, because it was Passover, he offered to release one of the prisoners to the crowd. They chose Barabbas, so Jesus died in his place (Mt. 27:24-6).**

**I’m guessing that not too many of my listeners today are murderers – but we’re all rebels! We have all chosen the forbidden fruit on many occasions and none of us has consistently loved our *neighbour* as we ought, let alone God! And if we deny that, we make our rebellion even worse - if possible! As John wrote, *If we claim we have not sinned, we make [God] out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives (1 Jn. 1:10).* It’s like the guilty criminal caught red-handed, still protesting his innocence even as sentence is pronounced.**

***Steve, this is getting worse and worse!* Hang on – here’s the good bit: we’ve got an eleventh commandment! I wonder what Barabbas did when he was released: we’re not told. Did he go back to his old ways? If he did, I’m guessing he either ended up on a cross anyway or, at the least, lived a miserable life as a hunted desperado until he died some other obscure and unpleasant death. Or did he go to see Jesus - who was dying in his place?**

**You see, the eleventh commandment is this: Jesus said, *Come to me (Mt.11:28).* But, if Barabbas *had* come to Jesus, dying on the cross, wouldn’t Jesus have sent him away because he was a Bad Man? No, because Jesus clarified His command to come to Him when He said, *I will never turn away anyone who comes to me (Jn. 6:37).* And, to prove it, didn’t He forgive one of the criminals – one of those Bad Men - who died with Him (Lk. 23:39-43)?**

**God’s first set of commandments to nature are obeyed every time the stars twinkle, snow falls or a frog croaks. His next set, addressed to us, hang over us like a charge-sheet. Do your best - won’t you? – but make sure you obey the eleventh commandment and come to Him. Make your confession and receive His forgiveness. And receive His Spirit, too. Jesus doesn’t leave you empty – that way you’d quickly revert – He fills you with new life, new hope, new purpose and not just the desire, but the *ability* to love God, love others and to play your part - no longer as a rebel, but as His steward until He comes to take you home.**