

The End of the Law

Romans 9:30-10:4

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity, August 5, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Last Sunday I told you that all forms of idolatry are really a veil for self-worship. If a worshipper in Israel worships the golden calf he is in fact really worshipping himself. If an ancient Baal worshiper goes to the shrine prostitute to worship Baal, the worshipper is really worshipping himself. If a modern man ascribes to the forces of physics, geology, chemistry, and biology the creation of everything that exists, that is only a veil for worshipping himself. In other words the worship of any idol is an escape from worshipping the true and living God. And by escaping from worshipping the true and living God the worshipper is at liberty to worship himself.

This is why the temptation in the Garden went down the way that it did. The serpent asked Eve whether or not God had forbidden them from eating from any of the fruit in the garden. Eve corrected the serpent and told him that she and Adam were free to eat from any of the fruit of the trees in the garden but from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they may not eat nor shall they touch it lest they die. The serpent then replied, "You will not surely die for God knows that when you eat of it you will be like God knowing good and evil." And there it is. The serpent tempts Eve and Adam by offering them to be like God. They were already like God, but by tempting them to be like God he successfully tempted them not to believe what God had said about their creation and once they do not believe that they are like God and made in His image they are immediately envious of God and desire to be like Him. Such a desire though is based upon a falsehood. The serpent never actually comes out and says what he means. If the tempter said what he meant his temptations would be easy to resist, but the tempter never says what he means. The tempter says something else and by saying something else he suggests what he really means. He tells them that they will be like God and what he really means is that they will be their own gods. All they need to be their own gods is the knowledge of good and evil. And of course the knowledge of good and evil is the law.

Idolatry then is simply a human being loving himself above all things, trusting in himself above all things, and fearing himself above all things. When a human being fears, loves, and trusts in himself above all things, a strange relationship between him and the law evolves.

On the one hand the human being who worships himself hates the law. He specifically hates the law of God. The reason that he hates the Law of God is because the Law of God constrains him in ways that he does not want to be constrained. The law of God forbids a human being from fearing, loving, and trusting in himself above all things.

Take for example fornication that I talked about last Sunday. Fornication is a form of self-love. A man who engages in fornication is using his neighbor for his own pleasure. He does not see his neighbor as his neighbor, but rather as an object to fulfill his own pleasure. Therefore fornication is an expression of his love for himself. God's law comes along and forbids

fornication thereby forbidding the fornicator from the action by which he loves himself and thus forbidding the human being from loving himself.

All of God's law is this way. A murderer obtains power of life and death over his neighbor by murdering him. Such power is a power that only God should have and He gives it only to a few people for the purpose of administering His justice. When a murderer murders another, he obtains power and when he obtains that power over his neighbor, he is not relating to his neighbor as his neighbor. His neighbor has simply become an object for his own use. He uses his neighbor to display his own power over his neighbor's life. He does this by murdering him.

Stealing, disobedience to one's parents, lying are all forms of trying to obtain power over the neighbor and thereby exalting oneself. At every turn and in every corner the Law of God forbids the human being from doing the one thing that he wants to do the most: worship himself.

Now here is the paradox. The human being who wants to worship himself also loves the law of God. The reason that he loves the Law of God is because the Law of God sets down requirements. If those requirements are met God rewards the person who met them. If the requirements are not met, God punishes the man who does not meet them. We human beings love requirements. The reason that we love requirements is not only are they simple, they are also a means for exalting ourselves. If a human being keeps the requirements of God or anybody else, he obtains the right to boast about how he kept the requirements of God or whatever other requirement he may have kept.

If a human being successfully avoids adultery his whole life, then he thinks that he brag about the fact that he has avoided adultery his whole life. If he did not have the law against adultery, he would not have a requirement about which he could brag once he kept it. This is true even if it is not God's law. Even if it is man's law, when a man keeps a man made requirement he uses it to exalt himself. If a man successfully follows a diet plan laid down by his doctor, then he can boast to others about how he kept the plan. He can receive praise from them regarding his discipline and self-control. If a person sticks to his diet plan he can in his heart condemn others who should be keeping the diet plan but don't. He can tell himself how much better he is than they are because he stuck to the requirements of the diet plan and they did not.

We human beings love law. We love the law even the law of God because we can use it to establish glory for ourselves and not for the only true God.

And frankly, law is simple. Law is a simple way to live. When a man raises his children, it is just easier for him to tell them the rules and expectations and what rewards there are if the child keeps the requirement and what punishments there are when he does not keep the requirements. It is just easier if pastor tells us what to do and we do it, that way we can always tell God on the day of judgment, "Well, pastor told us to do it this way." If you say that to the Lord on the day of judgment, I am going to go hide behind a tree! As if that would do me any good!

It is simply easier to live that way than to live in the light of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ and just live the way He made us to live.

Now it is because human beings love the law while at the same time we hate it that Jesus Christ is the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. This is important. The fact that we love the law because it gives us a chance to exalt ourselves is the reason why Jesus Christ is the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense.

God says that He is laying a stone in Zion. This stone is a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Zion is Jerusalem. Therefore God lays this stone of stumbling and rock of offense in Jerusalem. God laid this stone of stumbling and rock of offense in Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified.

The crucifixion of Jesus atones for the sin of the whole world. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the suffering servant who came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. He is the propitiation of the wrath of God. He is the redemption of the world by His blood. He is the forgiver of all sin even and especially the sin of idolatry.

Since Jesus is all of these things, Jesus is the end of the law. The law ended when Jesus died. It no longer has any requirements over you in order to obtain God's favor or everlasting life. There is not one single commandment that you need to keep in order to obtain God's favor. There is not one single requirement that you must meet in order to obtain everlasting life. It has all been done for you by the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. By forgiving you of all of your sins, He has brought the Law to an end. You are saved because He died. You are forgiven because He shed His blood. Life everlasting is yours because He achieved it and gives it to you as a gift.

And this is exactly why a human being does not like Him. This is exactly why a human being hates Jesus. This is exactly why a human being will stumble over Him and be offended by Him. Once Jesus ends the Law there is no longer any requirement by which any human being will be able to exalt himself.

If there is no more requirements to be met, then there is no basis for me to tell myself that I am more righteous than others who do not keep the requirements. If there is no more requirements to be met, I can no longer wallow in self-pity and lament my own wretchedness by using the requirements to say that others are better than me. Jesus takes that all away. How is man supposed to glory in himself if he does not have a requirement that he has met about which he may boast that he has met it?

He can't. And Jesus is the one who took away the basis for his boasting. And any human being that still wants a basis for boasting and exalting himself will hate Jesus. He will stumble over Jesus. He will be offended by Jesus.

If Jesus does not offend you, it is because you believe in Him. If the fact that you no longer have any requirements to keep in order to be saved is good news to you, it is because

you believe in Jesus. If you think that there still is one requirement to keep in order to be saved, then you don't believe in Jesus and you are still stumbling over Him.

If you take comfort in the fact that Jesus has atoned for your sins and ended the law, it is only because you believe in Him. If you rejoice that the Law is ended and you are at liberty to live the way that God created you live, then that is because you believe in Jesus. If you came to Divine Service this day not to earn your salvation before God or to prove how holy you are to others, but rather simply to receive His forgiveness where He gives it, then that is because you believe in Jesus.

If you don't mind the fact that you will never be able to exalt yourself before God and therefore will never be able to exalt yourself over your neighbor and claim that you are more righteous than he is, that is because you believe in Jesus. If you don't mind the fact that you don't get to be absorbed in self-pity by accounting other people as more righteous than you are, then that is because you believe in Jesus.

And anyone, anyone, who believes in Jesus, will never ever be put to shame.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.