

Pastor Greg Briggs

Sunday, June 10, 2018

1. Prayer and Introduction
 - a. “May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, our rock and redeemer.” Amen. (Psalm 19:14)
 - b. “The Horizontal Commandments: Be nicer to one another”
 - c. **Sermon synopsis – Be nicer! Yes, I’m talking to you! Especially to those you don’t like, and in the ways you don’t want to be nice. DEVOTE MORE TIME TO IT, BECAUSE THE WORLD DESPERATELY NEEDS IT NOW**
2. Horizontal Commandments
 - a. Most of 2nd Tablet
 - i. #5-9, Protestant and Jewish, 4-8 for Catholic, Lutheran, and Orthodox
 - b. Between humans –
 - i. Making a triangulated relationship a direct relationship
 1. Not just other followers, but other peoples too
 - c. Relating to God is to relate to one another
 - d. **Simple truths, need to be reminded of and reflected on often**
 - e. Horizontal, or equitable, part of the relationship – arms to embrace one another
 - f. God saved them from slavery, too
 - i. Same way as Israelites or
 - ii. Different ways
3. Emphasizing the Power of Relationship
 - a. Starts with God’s relationship to God’s people
 - b. Moves on to how we relate to one another
 - c. Again and again, relationships overrides doctrine
 - i. Recent UCC advert “Be careful who you hate; It could be someone you love.” Then quotes
 - d. Matthew 22:36-40 Common English Bible (CEB)
 - i. ³⁶“Teacher, what is the greatest commandment in the Law?”
 - ii. ³⁷ He replied, “*You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being,* ^[a] and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: *You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.* ^[b] ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”
 - e. Commandments are valuable, but can also use some contextualizing
 - i. The form of the world is vastly different now, vs. then.
 - ii. We live a world of structures today, of systems, that did not exist back then.
 - iii. Commandments need to be expanded and enmeshed in same structures
 - f. Page 4 of bulletin, a modern reinterpretation #5-9
4. Do not kill
 - a. Again, could do a sermon on each of these
 - b. Debate between killing of any kind and murder
 - i. This had much more of an impact when physical violence was much more prevalent in society – pre police, or other societal structures
 - c. Still, the overall idea is to avoid violence
 - d. Help others live
5. Do not steal

- a. Not just active taking, but ignoring systems that steal from others
 - i. \$1.5 an hour in 1969 is about \$10.25 today
 - ii. American society year after year funnels the vast majority of wealth increases to the highest income earners, while lowering their taxes
 - iii. “Since 1979, the before-tax incomes of the top 1 percent of America’s households have increased more than four times faster than bottom 20 percent incomes.” Inequality.org
6. Do not commit adultery
- a. Using understanding from the time these were first written, adultery was understood as sexual relations between a married (or betrothed) woman and man other than her husband. A sin against the husband
 - b. In New Testament, Jesus expanded it to also apply to married men with other women.
 - i. Read more at <http://www.beliefnet.com/love-family/relationships/affairs-and-divorce/what-the-bible-really-says-about-infidelity.aspx>
 - c. Legalistic reading, separated from any sort of contextualization reinforces the image of
 - i. women as property
 - ii. Gender bias
 - iii. Purity culture
 - d. Recognize this commandment does not consider modern understandings of mutuality in a marriage, not arranged, and modern concepts of divorce, which while rarely pleasant, are generally healthy for everyone involved.
 - e. Be faithful to the commitments you make
 - i. Adultery specifically linked to sex, infidelity can apply more broadly
 - f. Refers Relationships that don’t enhance other relationships in your life –
 - i. leads to lack of honesty
7. Honoring Parents
- a. A bit of word play – honor in Hebrew also means to make heavy. Both in the sense of weighty with importance, and burdensome
 - i. Honor does not mean obey without question – sorry, parents and grandparents
 - b. Different societal structures then and now
 - i. This was main, if not only, societal structure back then
 - ii. Family not as central to society today
 - iii. Conversations around Mother’s Day and Father’s day
 - c. Care for those who have cared for you
 - i. Paying it forward. Care for your parents, and your descendants will care for you
8. Bearing False Witness
- a. Least referenced, most worth of extra evaluation
 - b. Widest range of application
 - c. Legal – don’t lie, omit, or cloud the truth
 - d. Relationships – wider application. Gossip, passive aggressive behavior
 - i. Holding on to grudges, or past decisions, or when a person’s been wronged
 - 1. But not healing, letting it fester
 - ii. Anecdotally, seems to be on the rise, especially in churches.

9. Love your neighbor as yourself
 - a. Where churches can shine, but haven't yet – healthy relationships
 - b. UCC – no matter where you are on your faith journey, you are welcome here
 - i. More often, we accomplish this through silence, than honest and deep conversations
 - c. Next Sunday, coveting, is about not loving yourself as you compare to your neighbor
10. We need to love our neighbor and ourselves
 - a. Re-affirm that our relationship with God is also in our relationship with other people
 - b. Could go political, or national, but want to stay closer to home
 - c. Three topics, suicide, Pride next Saturday, and congregational relationships, especially as you are changing they type of pastor you are calling
11. Suicide
 - a. This week, two high profile deaths by suicide underscore the release of report saying that suicide rates have increased by 25% between 1999 to 2016.
 - i. Anecdotal evidence indicates things have gotten even worse in the last two years, though the data isn't in yet.
 - b. Reaching out to others, not just saying "I'm here if you need me."
 - c. Especially during difficult times
 - d. Regardless if they seem a happy person
 - i. 50% of deaths by suicide are people who have not been diagnosed with mental illness
 - e. National Suicide Prevention Hotline - 800-273-8255
 - i. Not just for them, but also for you, if you don't know what to do
 - ii. Or your pastor
 - iii. Or 911
12. Pride
 - a. Mi. Pride next Sunday – positive affirmation of God's love.
 - b. Helping to heal the False witness of hateful Christians
13. Congregational Relationships –
 - a. Has not been focused on much in majority of churches – due to all the others strains and shifts in church life.
 - b. Much work in recent years
 - i. Behavioral covenants
 - ii. All people are welcome, all behaviors are not
 - c. I view it much as I view pre-marital counseling
 - i. If it truly isn't needed, then it will be easy, and still a good use of time
 - ii. If there are deeper issues, important to deal with them
 - d. Loving neighbor
 - i. Sharing love includes sharing frustrations
 - ii. Listening
 - iii. Forgiveness!
 - iv. Anything else is false witness
 - e. Does it sound like something this church could work on as well?
14. Distinct Relationship with Pastor
 - a. Starts with pastor

- i. Not just an employee
 - b. Expected to be there for each of you in your most sensitive times
 - i. Help you honor your parents especially at funerals
 - ii. Expect to offer only honest witness – even when it makes you or the congregation uncomfortable
 - 1. Protected
 - iii. Deal with all kinds of stressful, painful situations
 - c. A Sure Foundation: Resources for the relationship between pastors and congregations
 - i. how do you honor your relationship with your pastor, recognizing they both represent a relationship with the divine, and are human?
 - ii. UCC Ministerial code on wall,
 - iii. Will include “the local church in relation to its pastor” this week
 - d. Coming into a space that is usually a new community, expecting to rely on their faith community for support
15. UCC Pastor persecutions this week
 - a. After writing a short article encouraging people to love those they disagree with, received multiple threatening letters, one referring to her as a “woman in a costume” disparaging her calling
 - b. Pastor being slandered via websites set up so it’s the first thing that comes up when googling their name - set up by former congregants who disagreed with the action a church took – having to consider suing because this is interfering with their ability to be foster parents
 - c. Openly gay pastor getting ready to start a new call, receiving death threats from a congregant, an open acts of hostility from others – debating getting a restraining order
 - 1. Search committee, make sure you share an accurate portrayal of the congregation
 - d. Another pastor slandered on the news because their church hosts AA and NA meetings, so neighbors accuse church of being a drug den
 - e. Another pastor harassed by neighbors, including vandalism and slandered in community
 - f. Again, this is all this week.
 - g. Could easily happen here, too
16. Simple but true
 - a. Your relationship with God is also your relationship with other people
 - i. Take the risk! Care for others, especially those different from you! It will enrich your life!
 - ii. Manage your anxiety, don’t take it out on others! If you don’t know how, ask for help!
 - b. Especially the ones who are most vulnerable to you
 - i. Immigrants
 - ii. Ones you hold power over
 - iii. Those that have already been laid low, thru finances or mental illness
 - c. Care for one another, especially those who have cared for you
 - d. Do not kill, instead help live
 - e. Honor your commitments –

- f. Do not take from others what is not yours
- g. Do not bear false witness, or lie to or about your neighbor
- h. Insist on this from others and for others as well.
- i. Matthew 22:36-40 Common English Bible (CEB)
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17. Sermon synopsis Re stated – Be nicer! Yes, I’m talking to you! Especially to those you don’t like, and in the ways you don’t want to be nice. DEVOTE MORE TIME TO IT, BECAUSE THE WORLD DESPERATELY NEEDS IT NOW

Readings

Exodus 20:1-2,12-16 (pg.65)

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.

¹²Honor your father and your mother so that your life will be long on the fertile land that the Lord your God is giving you.

¹³ Do not kill.

¹⁴ Do not commit adultery.

¹⁵ Do not steal.

¹⁶ Do not testify falsely against your neighbor.