

Sunday 13th July 2008

Ten

10.8

Do Not Steal

Exodus 20.15 CEV

Do Not Steal

The 8th Commandment is very short – just 3 words and we may think it doesn't really apply to us.

It's about: SHOPLIFTERS ('Shop lifters will be prosecuted')
HOUSE & CAR BURGLARIES
ARMED ROBBERIES

Stealing is defined as '*not taking what belongs to someone else*'. When this commandment given it was very much about the 'protection of property' (Exodus 22:1-4)

The Psalmist writes Psalm 24:1-2 '*The earth is Lord's and everything in it*' Psalm 8 talks about God in His majesty making humans in His image and giving us responsibility to care for all His creation (V6).

Biblical Examples of Stealing

Genesis 25 & 27	Jacob steals Esau's birthright
I Kings 21	The taking of Naboth's vineyard
Matt 9:9-10}	Matthew and Zaccheus tax collectors working for the
Luke 19:1-10}	Romans
Acts 5:1-11	Ananias and Sapphira

As we look at these accounts we may feel quite smug. We are not as bad as these Folk!

However stealing comes in many forms.

Cheating: Borrowing without Repaying, Pilfering, Embezzlement,
Misusing Funds, Fiddling Expenses, Dishonesty, Fraud,
Loopholes in the Law, Tax Evasion, People Trafficking.

If we look at the implications of the 8th commandment again we see it speaks about injustice, selfishness and greed. Don't we all want 'something for nothing'?

Read/sing Prayer of General Confession time of silence.

So far very much concentrated on the negative aspects of this Commandment and it can make us depressed, but the converse of 'taking from' is 'giving to'

Malachi 3:6-12 Shows how God will bless us and His people when we give Him what is rightfully His. Throughout His ministry Jesus calls His followers to care for others – especially those in need (Matt 25 31FF)

There are many ways we can give besides using our finances which of course are important. (Jesus encouraged us to tithe and is this something we are called to do?)

However CARING; SUPPORTING, ENCOURAGING, LOVING, LISTENING, GIVING TIME TO PRAYER, - are all ways we can give to others.
II Corinthians 9:6-15

Ephesians 5:15-21 Paul entreats Christians to support others.

Philippians 2:1-8 We read of the great example of all – Christ's own life and ministry.

How does our life style match with this?

Do we need to change our attitude, our interests and our commitment to God and to others? Are we willing and ready to stand up for justice so not only our lives can be improved but we can be involved in transforming the world?

Questions for Personal Study and Reflection/Home Groups

1. How relevant is this commandment for us today?
2. Spend time reviewing your own life style.
3. How can we as individuals and as a group become involved in transforming the lives of others?
4. Read and Study following passages:

Malachi 3:6-12

Matthew 25:21 ff

II Corinthians 9:6-15

Ephesians 5:15-21

Philippians 2:1-8