

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation today is the Ninth and Tenth commandments and their meanings found on page 332 of your hymnal.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

Boys and Girls, I pray that you are doing well today. Our commandments today say 'You shall not covet.' what is coveting? Coveting is setting our hearts, setting our desires on things God has given to others, but not to us. For example, your friend gets a new toy. It is awesome. It is wonderful, colorful, and makes awesome dance music. You have fun sharing it together, but then, you must give it back to your friend. Coveting is not wanting to give it back. You want to keep it for yourself. You desire to have not just any new toy, but that specific one that your friend has. How can we stop that feeling? How does Jesus help us to live as His people with these commandments? Ponder those questions as you hear the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

Both of these commandments deal with desiring things that are not our own. They do not belong to us, either inanimate objects or people and living things. We all have that sinful desire, the inborn discontentment that lives in all of us. The desire for something other than what God has given us, even if

we can't put a name to it. You know what I'm talking about, don't you? That general discontentment with life then zeroes in on something—our neighbor's house, our neighbor's car, our neighbor's wealth or property, our neighbor's spouse or friends, our neighbor's life—and then our desires settle on that thing. What effect does it have on us? Does it feel good? No! It leaves us bitter, unhappy, disgruntled. Sometimes that unhappiness and discontentment leads us to do whatever we can to get what our neighbor has, including scheming, including deception, including manipulations of the legal system, including voting your neighbor's rights or property away from him, so that what you did was perfectly legal, yet in the eyes of God, your coveting and lack of love for your neighbor led you into a sin just as damning as murder.

Coveting worms its way down into every other commandment. Why do you disparage your neighbor with your tongue? Because you covet something he has, his popularity, or his acceptance, or because you covet a higher social position than you have, so you try to build yourself up by tearing him down. Why do you steal? Because you set your desires on something your neighbor possesses. Why do you commit adultery? Because you lust after someone God hasn't given you as your spouse. (By the way, the word "lust" and the word "covet" are exactly the same word in the Greek.) Why do you murder? Again, because you covet your neighbor's possessions or popularity or acceptance, as Cain coveted Abel's acceptance by God. Why does a woman commit the sin of murder by abortion? Because she covets the easier or "more fulfilling" life that baby would take away from her. Why do you dishonor your father or your mother? Because you covet something they tell you you can't have, or because you covet their authority, which was given to them, not to you. Why do you fail to sanctify the Sabbath Day? Because you covet all the other things you could have if you don't sacrifice the time to hear and learn God's Word. Why do you misuse God's name? Because you covet the popularity false teaching can bring, or because you covet the knowledge only witchcraft can provide, or because you covet God's power to curse His enemies, or because you covet the security you could have by swearing falsely. Why do you have other gods? Because you covet the very supremacy that belongs to God alone. You covet the ability to believe as you want and to do as you want. You covet being like God, just as Eve did in the Garden of Eden.

Coveting leads to every other sin, because coveting is part of what makes up original sin, the corruption of our very nature, a corruption that includes both a lack of something and the presence of something—a lack of true fear of God, love for God, and trust in God, and the presence of something which we call “concupiscence,” which is just a fancy word for sinful desires or “coveting.” And so original sin, which includes coveting, is the wellspring of all actual sins.

So, where have you failed to keep the Ninth and Tenth Commandments? Where have you coveted? Where have your desires gone astray, to long for something that someone else has, to set your heart on something you’re not supposed to have? Where has discontentment displaced contentment? Where has it led to even more sins against your neighbor in your quest to get what you were never supposed to have? And where has it led to the greatest sins of all, of seeking to rob God of the glory and honor that belong to Him, because you weren’t content with Him?

It’s helpful to put a name on those sinful desires and to recognize them as the ugly sins against the Ninth and Tenth Commandments that they are. Because in recognizing the sin, you can hear God’s call to repent and apply it to yourself. In recognizing the sin, you can now begin to appreciate God’s love for coveters like you and me in sending His Son Jesus Christ to live a life of contentment in His Father’s care, although He had far fewer possessions and earthly things than you or I have. In recognizing the sin of coveting that always stirs in your heart, you can look away from your heart to the Savior of sinners, to Christ Jesus, whose death on the cross paid even for the ugliness of your heart and for your darkest desires, and who cleanses you of covetousness through faith.

In Christ Jesus we see that He has indeed cleansed the darkness of our hearts by the shedding of His pure and precious blood. Even more, He gives us of the Holy Spirit, that we may deny those desires and to set your heart on things above. That we may indeed not desire our neighbor’s harm, nor even assist, nor give occasion for it, but gladly wish and leave him what he has. That we help him keep and gain the things that may be profitable and serve him. The same as we should wish to be treated. God especially would have

us do this out of a pure heart, although we shall never attain to that as long as we live here; so that this commandment will remain, like all the rest, one that will constantly accuse us and show how godly we are in the sight of God, and always look to Jesus Christ, the Savior!

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.