

The Ten Commandments (Sabbath variation)

Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:15

Sunday, October 8, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

➤ Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche

I remember being in a meeting about spiritual care in a hospital setting and the presenter spoke of "making meaning," which I took to mean that reflection on life, or a life situation, can bring meaning to a difficult situation and thus making it easier to manage. Reflecting on life, its joys and its challenges, makes sense to me but I've always had trouble with the idea of "making meaning." I've read that the idea comes from the great philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, whose books are still in print and his ideas still relevant today. Friedrich grew up in a religious family, his father being the pastor of a local church, but he wasn't happy with his life. He didn't like his father, or his mother. The sound of his older sister's voice alone irritated him. He despised Christianity and was certain that God did not exist. Possessed with a brilliant mind, he excelled at school and did so well as a philosophy student at university and they made him a professor upon graduation. He did not get along well with the other professors, so he left and spent the rest of his life writing about the problem of atheism, that if there is no God, then really is there any meaning to life? He maintained that there is, we need only to make meaning. But I think that "making meaning" is self-delusion, and unnecessary. We do not need to make meaning. We have meaning. It is given to us by God. Twice. In the same set of commands.

➤ Set the Stage

We all know that the Ten Commandments are listed twice in Scripture, first in Exodus and then in Deuteronomy. The first time was during the conference Moses had with God on Mt. Sinai and the second was at the very end of his life, shortly before the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land. Both are the same for the most part, except there is one point in which Moses changes the reasoning. It is regarding the Sabbath.

➤ 2 variations in the Decalogue

➤ Create

In Exodus God told Moses to honor the Sabbath, the holy day of rest, for themselves, their family, their servants, everyone. Because in six days God created and then rested on the seventh day, and thus made that day holy. In Deuteronomy He gives the same command, to honor the Sabbath day, but here it is because they were slaves in the land of Egypt and the Lord brought them out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. So there are two points to having a Sabbath. The first point is that we should honor God on the holy day because He created. God created everything and He is great and deserves as sacred day. You, as part of Creation, have a purpose and your life has meaning. You are part of a grand design. You are not a meaningless accident.

➤ Redeem

The second point is that we should honor God because He redeemed. He set Israel free after (over) four centuries of slavery and shows that He is not only great but that He still acts greatly in human life and thus deserves a sacred day. The variation in this part of the Decalogue, in Deuteronomy 5, is due to the Exodus being the new creation of a new nation. The Christian day of worship reflects the church as a new creation. Consider. 2 Corinthians 5:17. It is a day of rest for you and for all under your influence. To observe it properly you need to do something that makes life easier for others.

➤ Application

Here's the application, you don't need to make meaning. You have meaning. Recently we've read of Brock Purdy, the former quarterback for the Iowa State University football team, who was drafted dead last by the San Francisco 49ers. People who are drafted last get the nickname, "Mr. Irrelevant," but Purdy quickly showed that nickname does not fit him. There is a spiritual connection to this, for there are no irrelevant people in the Kingdom of God. All have purpose. All have meaning. You should not make meaning, you should discover it.

Another application is, do not fear challenges, they give opportunity for the outstretched arm. Set aside sacred time-the Sabbath if possible. The Lord gave you purpose when He made you, and the strong Redeemer of Israel's slavery is still alive and still the same today. He sets people free in many ways.

➤ Conclusion

These many centuries later, the Ten Commandments are still in force. All you follow Christ cherish them and try always to keep them, for they are forever relevant. The Sabbath, however observed, contains variations for it reminds us that God is Creator and as such He gives meaning, and as Redeemer He reminds us of His nearness. He is great. He is great in your life.