

The First Commandment **Ex. 20:1-17; John 5:19-36** by Rev. Tom Aicken

My text this morning is the first commandment, Ex. 20:3, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” Here are 3 points to consider:

(1) This first commandment teaches us that there is one, and only one, true and living God. The words “before Me” are not about an order of preference, as if there really are other living gods but the Lord wants to be honoured above them all. No, the words “before Me” mean “in My sight”. The Lord does not want us to recognize any other gods at all – period. If anyone supposes that he can worship a false god secretly, behind closed doors or even just in his own heart, let him be reminded that that, too, is still in God’s sight.

We must not think that only unbelievers are inclined to idolatry. In fact, the roots of such blindness and error are to be found in us all, believers also. We may be tempted to cling to false gods (such as power, position, or money) before our conscious mind is even aware of what we are doing. We need to search our own hearts carefully, therefore, and we need to remember that an idol is not necessarily something we hold to in place of the Lord; it may be something we hang onto in addition to the Lord.

(2) The first commandment teaches us that the one God whom we own and confess must be the right One, the true God, the One who has made us and made Himself known to us only through His Son. There are many people, even here in Canada, who may believe that there is only one God, and yet the one to whom they pay lip-service is not the God of Holy Scripture. This is why we need to look at the preface to the commandments, where God introduces Himself as “the Lord” (Jahweh), as “your God” (the One who has entered into covenant with His people), as the One who brought them “out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”. This is the true God who makes Himself known to people through Jesus Christ, and through no one else (John 5:23; 14:6; Acts 4:12).

(3) The first commandment teaches us that we must be wholly devoted to this God. 1. This devotion requires that we serve Him, not merely in theory, but in practice. 2. This devotion requires that we serve Him, not carelessly, but wholeheartedly. 3. This devotion requires that we serve Him, not proudly, but humbly and be completely emptied of ourselves. May the Lord our God grant us all the selflessness of John the Baptist, whose attitude was that he might decrease so that Christ might increase, and that in all things He be made pre-eminent!