

# Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



## Weekly Sermon Series

### **Taking Root: The Gospel Rules ... Worshiping One God Exodus 20:1–7; Proverbs 3:5–8**

What we call the Ten Commandments was known to the Hebrews as “The Ten Words.” The primitive form of these commandments was probably brief and short. Why ten? Possibly as simple a reason as that we have ten digits on our hands. It is a way to remember. The Ten Commandments are counted differently by different groups. Roman Catholics and Lutherans follow St. Augustine’s numbering, which makes Exodus 20:2–6 the first commandment. Verse 7 is the second. The Jewish community makes verse 2 the first commandment and verses 3–6 the second commandment. The Greek and Reformed churches make verse 3 the first commandment and verses 4–6 the second commandment.

No matter how they are numbered, the Commandments begin with a statement of salvation. Exodus 20:2 says, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” God is a God of redemption and covenant relationship. God gives the law to those saved and redeemed. The first commandment (Lutheran/RC numbering) describes the benefits of fidelity to God and the hazards of idolatry. There is temptation to worship the idols of other tribes and people which should be resisted because it will lead to

destruction. At this point we see described the primacy, the jealousy of God, not yet the claim that there is only ONE God. But it is clear from the text that for the people who were saved from bondage in Egypt, they are to be faithful to the ONE God who saved them.

The second commandment requires a worthy use of God's name. Semitic belief was that the Name of God is the essence of God revealed. The name is all that we have of God. God's name can be used or abused. Thus we are to use God's name only to "call upon (God) in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving," as Martin Luther taught much later. In the practice of Judaism, God's name was eventually never spoken for fear of misuse. So in written scripture where consonants of God's name appear, the reader substituted a title, adonai or "the Lord." Today we can only guess at the pronunciation of God's name. Yahweh is an approximation of what the name may have been.

Monotheism (One God), as we later call this, is born out of the unifying experience of redemption. The people are unified under one God who made it possible for the people to survive destruction. This unifying belief is at the foundation of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the three monotheistic religions. All proclaim that God is One!

What difference does it make that we worship one God? What is your image of God? What is your experience with God? Where do you think your image of God came from? Is your image of God worth worshiping?

Lord, the giver of salvation and the law, draw us together and unite our hearts in love. Amen.

-- Week of May 24, 2009