

You Shall Not Steal

Good morning, church family. Would you bow with me, O Father of lights in Heaven, from whom every good gift is given? We come celebrating that You've given us all of Heaven in Christ Jesus, the God-Man who's taken nothing from us except our sins and miseries and given us eternal life in Himself, our value fixed, our ransom paid at the cross. We'd rather have Him than to be a king of a vast domain and be held in sin's dread sway. Thank you, Lord, for giving and giving and giving from Your throne of grace. This is a time of need and so we come to receive. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Well, if you would join me in the second book of the Bible. You've got Bibles there and the seats in front of you. You could take a copy. If you don't have a Bible, take that as our gift to you and turn past Genesis to the second book of the Bible, Exodus, chapter 20, chapter 20, verse 15. Chapter 20, verse 15 is the eighth commandment, which reads, you shall not steal. You shall not steal.

Now, I'm embarrassed to admit that my favorite fictional characters are famous for breaking this command. Robin Hood stole from the rich to give to the poor. Bilbo Baggins is a burglar for hire. Felt awfully bad about myself as I recounted Jean Valjean of Les Miserables. Victor Hugo gave us a famous character who stole food for his sister's starving children, spent 19 years in prison, then released on parole, shunned by society. He's homeless, he's helpless, he's hopeless and he cynically and bitterly ends up stealing silverware from the very bishop who had brought him in and given him food and shelter. He's caught by the authorities immediately. And that bishop shocks the authorities, shocks Valjean, shocks the readers when he declares that the silverware was not stolen, but was indeed a gift, and then says to Valjean, you forgot to take the very best. And then hands him two priceless silver candlesticks. Jean Valjean is completely and permanently transformed. My prayer is that we thieves would be transformed by this command and by our God, who is far more compassionate than any fictional bishop.

And so today, we've got just a few directives and a very brief verse. Read the context, obey the command, look to Christ, be content, and don't steal.

Read the context. If you would look with me, in chapter 20, verses 1-3, the Ten Commandments begin. Then God spoke all these words, saying, I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. What do the demon gods do? What do the fallen gods do? What does Satan, who's called the god of this world, the god of this age, the prince of the power of the air. What does he and his horde do except steal, kill and destroy?

And what does the most High God do? What does the God that created all things and all beings, both visible and invisible? What does He do except give and give and give? He actually gives to plunder the fallen gods of Egypt. He gives Pharaoh and the Egyptians 10 opportunities to repent. And every time Pharaoh declines. He loves his greedy fallen gods, he hates the giving God. And so Egypt is forced to a position where they are begging the Jews to leave.

Chapter 12, verses 35-36. Now the sons of Israel had asked from the Egyptians for articles of silver and articles of gold and clothing. And Yahweh had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have whatever they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians not by theft, but by donations. They just ringing their bell and the Egyptians came and gave them whatever they asked. Just get out of here, they're saying, take whatever you want. And not only this, but so miraculous the event that Moses goes on to record that a foreign multitude, a non-Jewish multitude, also went up with Israel. Egyptians said, we serve his God. Now we serve their God. We're going to leave this place and go with them. The Giving God even saved Egyptians who repented by the legions. What God would you and I rather serve? Which of the gods would we rather serve than the Giving God? I mean, He's wonderful. And what else will Yahweh give his people along the way?

As we read in chapters 12 -19, a Passover feast to celebrate His great salvation and to foretell a greater salvation. A bread festival to expect and anticipate. His land of promise that is gushing with abundance. A tornado by day, a fire, cyclone by night to guide them to the land. A split sea to pave their path to punish their pursuers. A song to sing and sweet water to satisfy their souls. A bakery from Heaven and quail until they sneeze feathers. A weakened. A river out of a boulder. A victory over giant enemies. A league of leadership structure. A love covenant, hand-delivered Word of God.

Chapter 20, verse 1. I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of Egypt out of slavery. Who would we rather worship than this giving God? The giving God whom Psalm recounts, Yahweh is my shepherd. I shall not want. Yahweh gives grace and glory. No good thing does He withhold.

Isaiah, he gives power to the weary.

Christ Himself in Matthew's Gospel if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him?

James Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights who never changes.

Corinthians Though being rich for your sake, Christ became poor so that you through His poverty, might become rich. That's the Gospel in a nutshell. He's rich. He became poor so that we poor beggars are now rich in Him. God is able to make every grace abound to you, so that in everything, at every time, having every sufficiency, you may have an abundance for every good deed.

Philippians, my God will fulfill all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ.

John, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans He who indeed did not spare His own Son, but gave Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? We worship the Giver. We were made in the Giver's image. We were redeemed to reflect the Giver. We were saved, not to be takers, but givers. Christ gives and gives and gives and gives, and He never stops giving. The only thing He's taken from you and I is our sin and our guilt and our shame. And He didn't even ask our permission to take our heart of stone and to give us a heart of flesh for which we are eternally grateful.

And so I want to encourage you, for context sake, read all of the ten commandments in light of the eighth commandment. Here we go. Number one, give glory to the Giver. Number two, give no glory to the Taker. fallen gods. Number three, do not take the Giver's name for no reason. Number four, rest in the Giver. Number five, give honor to those by whom the Giver gave you life. I lost count. Do not take a life. Do not take a wife that the Giver has not given. And number eight, do not take a thing the Giver has not given. You can read all 10 through the eighth.

So let's obey the command. You shall not steal. This is a command that we need to hear from birth because you and I are thieves from birth. We're born thieving parents all said amen. I see it. Young people, if you don't understand this, if you don't remember your own personal history, go visit the nursery and the preschool and the Sunday schools.

Never forget hearing about some kids years and years ago at another church who were stealing from the offering basket. Book one of Augustine's Confessions cries out, who brings to remembrance the sins of my infancy. Augustine is confessing so much, he even confesses the sins that he cannot remember from his birth, when he at his mother's breast, would reach for the necklace and scream if he could not get it. He would scream if he did not get the milk on time. And he says, Lord, forgive me for my sins as a baby. He quotes

Psalm 51. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin. My mother conceived me. Why? What's brought us into this mess?

Well, our parents were thieves, Eve and Adam. They were stewards of God's garden, and they stole from God. They took what He had not given them. They took what He commanded. They took the only thing He commanded them not to have. Genesis 3:6. So she, Eve, mom, took from its fruit and ate. And she also gave to her husband, Adam, Papa. And he ate. They stole. The entire fall of humanity can be summarized as a violation of the eighth command. You shall not steal. Yes, the wages of that one sin for all of us is death. But the gift of God, the gracious gift of God is what? Eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now we forget all that we stole when we were in elementary school, hiding goods and all that. But a couple weeks ago, I had a bunch of guys in my house, and afterwards I told them I was going to be preaching on this text. And we had a lot of fun recounting sins for which we've repented. Our thievery in our infancy, in early years. One who shall remain nameless stole a thermos from his friend's kindergarten cubby, tucked it into his sweatshirt, went home rejoicing over his findings, and was horrified the next morning when he woke up, ate his breakfast, and saw on the counter that his mom had made his lunch with that thermos filled with juice, ready to be sent to school, where he would be found out. And I know that he was found out. I was there when he was found out.

Another young man told me that he would smuggle Lego men from his friend, one by one, contraband. And soon his friend came over to his house and was astonished to find he had all the same Lego man that he did.

Another was telling a story about his young son who snatched A DVD in the store, and all the employees rushed to get it from him. And he would not let it go. And so his wife called him. You've got to put the fear of God in our son. He is a thief.

I heard about a little girl that would secretly put little things in the shopping cart while she shopped with her mom and hoped that they would make it through the cashier and out the door.

We are thieves from birth. One in ten people shoplift. Billions are stolen every year in shoplifting alone. Employees at stores are not going to enforce the law in California, but God will. And it's to Him that we must give an account.

I want to ask you really quickly. I did a little survey on all the types of theft, and I want us. I want us to posture ourselves under the Word of God and understand that we are sinners in need of God's mercy. We have no righteousness of our own. If you're here this morning and you think that you can live a good life and somehow tilt the scales in your favor, you are dead wrong. But the good news is this, that our good God, who's not only good in that He must tell the truth about sin and deal rightly with it, is also gracious beyond our wildest imagination. And He'll blot out your sins. If you say, I'm guilty and I need a savior. I need you by your mercy to blot out my sin. He'll do it.

So as I read these. Freely come to the cross. Freely come to the throne of grace and hear these and say, ouch. That hurts. But praise God, I've got a Savior in Heaven. Have you ever taken anything by force? Of any kind? And I'm going to encourage you to think back on the playground when you were a kid, if not in your adult years. Have you ever taken anything by force? You're a robber. Have you ever pressured anyone to give you something? You're an extortionist. Maybe not pressure, but you've manipulated someone to give you something. You're a fraud. Have you ever snuck in anywhere? Burglar. I don't know why you're laughing. I'm talking about you. Now we're hurting together, aren't we? Ever borrowed something with no plan to return it? You're a Larcenist. Have you ever used anything for an unauthorized reason? Embezzler. Do you sympathize with the looters during COVID? Perhaps you've used a fake ID or you've lied about your age. Identity theft, intellectual theft. Ever use any ideas or work without permission or copy without citation? You're a plagiarist. This one's probably my favorite. Have you ever watched any pirated content? What does that make you? Pirate? I'm looking at a room full of pirates. Scaliwags all of you. Ever conducted any personal business on

company time without approval? You are a thief. And what is the penalty for your theft? Death. Death. Have you ever. Let's get a little bit more troublesome here. Have you ever failed so, not just taking, but have you ever failed to give the love, the respect, the honor, and this is maybe most painful of all, the forgiveness that God has commanded you to give. If you have withheld, you are a thief.

Romans 13 says, pay your taxes. Owe nothing to anyone. Love everyone, do not steal. Love fulfills the whole law. And by the way, theft is theft, even if the government does it.

Socialism and communism are some of Satan's best designs. They are theft. They take without consent. They abolish private property. They destroy the ability to give cheerfully as God commands. They devalue God's plan and design for work. They promote sin by heavily taxing the toilers in order to subsidize sluggards. They are anti-God. They are pro-theft. Sadly, I've heard from Christian influences that the Bible teaches socialism. Look at the year of jubilee, they say.

Look at the early church practices. And it didn't take long to realize that the year of jubilee was a practice that was predicated upon private property. That was a lot of P's, wasn't that? That people were willfully contracting with one another and then it would reset and they all knew this is how the economy worked. The early church practices were based upon private property. People were giving generously, voluntarily, cheerfully to meet needs. You get rid of private property, you get rid of all of it. You get rid of any ability to please God out of your wealth. Satan loves that. God hates that. The kingdom coming is going to have private property. Each man will sit under his fig tree and beside his vine and will celebrate the goodness of God. Private property's sacred. You shall not steal.

We bear God's image in this way. Look at this, for example. Israel wants a king, a human king, like the rest of the nations. They want to fit in. And God says in 1st Samuel 8, they have rejected Me from being king over them. So now, verses 9- 22. So now solemnly testify to them and tell them of the custom of the king who will reign over them. And I will summarize it for you by quoting excerpts. He will take he will take. He will take. He will take the best and you will cry in that day. God is against big government.

And while we're on the subject, what is the Old Testament welfare system? Leviticus 19 and Leviticus 23. Work and work hard. What's the New Testament welfare system? 2nd Thessalonians 3 and 1st Timothy 5 changes it up, gets really creative. Work and work hard. Deuteronomy 15, which Jesus Himself quotes, says that you will always have the needy in the land. Jesus says, you will always have the poor with you. You will never solve poverty in this age. So let's run to the worker, let's run to the Giver and let's worship Him and let Him change our lives. Worship the Worker, worship the Giver. In the beginning, God worked and work was very good.

Jesus says in John's Gospel, My food is to finish His work. The belly of my soul growls to finish My Father's work. Isaiah 65 looks into the future, even in our future sees that you and I will work in the coming kingdom, constructing houses, cultivating vineyards. My favorite phrase in Isaiah 65 is that we will wear out our work. You know what that means? This is a kingdom coming. That's not the new heavens and new earth. It's Christ coming to earth on a sin cursed earth with the effects of the sin still here. So what we build, though great and marvelous, will still have the effects of the curse and decay. We will build and we'll watch year after year after year, century after century after century, as ancient ivy and moss overtake what we've built. We will watch our new buildings become ancient ruins, which is so exciting we will outlive our work.

Historians will come and they'll interview us. How did you do it? Archaeologists put the mic up in front of our lips. How did you build it? What is it? Sommier or whatever, wine taster, connoisseurs will come up the finest vintages, 400, 500, 600 years ago. How did you do it? And the immortals will answer with a smile.

Beyond the coming kingdom, Revelation 21:22 says that you and I will work on the new earth and the new universe, bringing the very best of the nations to Christ, with whom we shall reign forever and ever and ever. I just thought about this.

I just thought, what does this look like for Clovis here in the future age of the kingdom? Clovis Christians, we've got Yosemite Valley up there. We're like the gateway to Yosemite. Gorgeous, world-renowned beauty. I wonder, will Clovis Christians during that millennial kingdom. Will we go up to El Capitan, that monster of a rock that people from all over the globe come to climb and photograph? Shall we carve a citadel, a castle, out of El Capitan the captain, and name it after our captain? Shall Half Dome, some of you have climbed up Half Dome. I think that's a good space to carve Christ's face after He comes. You have Bridal Falls, the famous waterfall of Yosemite Valley. Bridal Falls. It's like we don't even have to rename this stuff Bridal Falls. Will we carve out columns? A palace courtyard from which Bridal Falls will fall, the place where Christ's bride comes and gathers and rules this area of the world? Perhaps we'll hear church bells ringing from Cathedral Peak in Yosemite. Perhaps we'll be able to invite a resurrected Johann Sebastian Bach to come and perform in her hanging valleys.

Think. Think about the world to come. Think about the reign to come. Meditate on it. And I assure you that the mandates of Scripture which once burdened you will boost your soul. And where you gasped and sighed, you will now gasp and sigh with a longing.

You see why Revelation 21 declares that the cowardly will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is no place for the cowardly. Those who live cowardly lives in this age, they won't inherit the age to come.

First Corinthians 6. Do not be deceived. Thieves will not inherit the kingdom of God. My friend, if you are living a life of theft, if you're seeing where you can cut corners, get what you can get, and you're not repenting from your sin and turning to a God who only gives and gives and gives and only takes away sin, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But, oh, for those of you that say I am a struggling thief, I battle with the temptation, and I slather the cross with my sin, trusting that Christ bled for my theft. And I'm turning from it. And I'm trusting a Savior who gives. And I want to image Him, and I want to reflect Him. What would a co-regent of Christ think to steal? What do you have to steal? You've got everything and a world to come. Meditate. Meditate.

Ephesians. He who steals must steal no longer, but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. For by grace you have been saved. It is the gift of God, not of your works, for we are His workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared before him. It's all giving, we're only receiving. And so James 1 says, I will show you my faith in this giving God by my works which He gave me to do. Colossians for this purpose I also labor striving according to His working, which He works in me. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the LORD you will receive the reward of the inheritance. Serve the Lord Christ. Galatians Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. First Corinthians Brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Hebrews God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work.

I wonder how many of you came today and didn't realize that that alone is what you needed to hear. Your work in the Lord is not in vain. Sometimes we can think. It is. Many times we're tempted to think, what am I doing? Is it doing anything? Does it count for anything? Does it matter? Oh, it matters more than we can possibly dream.

I think of men in this room who perhaps you don't have a job that provides financially the way you would like to provide for your wife and your children. Your work in the Lord is not in vain. He sees you. He's not unjust to forget you.

Now look at wives, mothers. Perhaps you've got a little gaggle of toddlers, or perhaps you've got a herd of teenagers, or you've got a dispersion of adult children. And you think, does it matter? Am I doing anything? Sweet dear wife, Mother, you are doing more for the kingdom of God than all the armies of angels in heaven.

Young people, single people. You're thinking, is God going to forget me if I give my life to do His work? Is He mindful of me? Oh, your Father sees you, and He knows how to give good gifts. If good gifts should be marriage, He will be good to give it to you. If it not be a good gift for you, then He will not give it to you. Why would He harm you in such a way?

An old brother or sister, your outer man is wasting away. You're winding down. And you think to yourself, sometimes all I can do is pray. And the Lord says, all you can do is pray. You should have been doing that most of all, all along.

I wonder sometimes if part of the curse and God's gracious redemption. To allow us to grow old and gray and wrinkly and tired is to teach us there at the very end what we should have prioritized all along. To seek His face, to ask Him to act. To pray for those that are coming up under the wings.

You've never been more valuable than you are now. Older saints, the church has never needed you more than they do now.

Yes, of course God did not forget the theft of Achan and Canaan. Of course He did not forget the theft of Judas Iscariot. And so we never forget that God is just. Never forget God's justice. And always remember His grace. Always remember his grace.

God brought mankind out of two thieves, Adam and Eve, and then He brought his nation, Israel, out of two thieves, Jacob, Rachel, both of them stole grievously. And God has brought about His purposes through thieves, that He has brought by his kindness to repentance. And so what do we do? We look to Christ. We look to Christ.

What did He say to that short little tax collector who grew fat off his own people? Zacchaeus, I must stay at your house today. There are just moments in scripture that pull you in, and you just want to be there. He's in the sycamore. He's this dignified, luxurious man up there in the tree, just to catch sight. Zacchaeus, come down. I have to stay at your house today. You can almost feel the chill run up your spine. The sins of Zacchaeus were many, but, praise God, the mercies of Christ were infinitely more. Zacchaeus cannot believe his ears. Is there grace for a sinner like me? I've spent my life preying upon other people. I've spent my life taking advantage of other people. I've spent my life robbing people. You have to stay at my house. I wonder if Zacchaeus was thinking he was in trouble. Zacchaeus volunteers, he freely says, far exceeding the legal demands of what was required of him. I'll liquidate over half my estate and I'll pay up to 400% what I've extorted from people. And Christ just happily cries out today, salvation has come to this house, for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

You might say to yourself, yeah, but Jesus was just in a good mood that day. In crowds, cheering. Maybe He was amused by the little man in the tree. But how does Christ react to thieves on a bad day? How did he react to thieves on His worst day?

Luke's Gospel swiftly brings us to Christ crucified between two Thieves. And both of them began that day mocking Him with all the rest, fitting in even in their execution. And Jesus prays, Father, forgive their ignorance. One of them hears it, and he cries out, we are guilty. He's innocent. Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And he can't even move his arms like I am now. He's nailed to a cross. He can do nothing. He can bring nothing. He can neither take nor give anything. Oh, I'm sure he will never forget the sound of Christ's voice for all eternity when He said, truly I say to you today you will be with me in Paradise.

Satan gives a piece of fruit and robs Paradise. Christ sheds His blood and then gives Paradise. After that, a life of theft, absolved after one humble prayer. Such is the grace of the Giver. Such is the salvation of the Worker. Such is our God. And so look to Christ, O thief. Look to him. Look to the Giver on the throne of grace, who gives and gives and gives. And when you think He can't give anymore, he says, I've got an infinite supply. My storehouses are endless. I'll give and I'll give and I'll give grace upon grace until grace brings you

into my glory. And then I'll give and I'll give and I'll give for all eternity. Look to Him, O thief. Turn from your ways and receive from Him. Timely. That was timely.

Finally, be content. What do the content think to steal? What do the content want to steal? Godliness with contentment is great gain. Philippians 4:11. Paul writes, I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I've learned, I've learned. It's been a lifelong process, but I've learned, and I'm learning it.

My friends here at Trinity Community Church, you and I, this is a community project. We are learning together to be content in whatever circumstances we find ourselves. Matt Lang is learning contentment in whatever circumstances he finds himself. I have learned how to be content in whatever situation I am.

Jeremiah Burroughs wrote a classic, a Puritan classic, I think it was 1648, the rare jewel of Christian contentment. Because contentment is hard to discover and more precious than treasure. So it is a rare jewel. Contentment learns to trust and to obey a wise Father who loves me. And it's that sweet inner frame of spirit that trusts and believes that all His dealings with me are good and beyond disputing.

It depends on Christ. And it looks at Christ dying for me on the cross, and it learns to be so suspicious and distrusting of my condition.

It loves the Spirit's work indoors. I love that phrase, the Spirit's work indoors to quiet my heart. And it realizes that my every complaint is not against my grievances. My every complaint is not against my griefs. My every complaint is not against the things that grieve me in my life. My every complain complaint is against my God, who orders all things for my good.

And so contentment drinks even suffering is God's good medicine. And it's satisfied with His grace, especially at our weakest as we bow with cheer that God is far too wise to make a mistake and far too good to commit any crime against us. So what do you and I have to steal? Let's go to the Giver.

Father, we thank you for Your grace and Your mercy in Christ Jesus. Father, we ask that You would, out of Your abundance, as You've promised, supply our every need for every good work. We thank You that You do not forget our works. And we thank You that our every work has been prepared beforehand by the God who loves us. O God in heaven, give and give and give again and again. We trust You for it, and we obey You, our gracious God, in Jesus name, Amen.