



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THIS SUNDAY March 4 & BEYOND

“Beyond a Handshake”



An old lament still exists among people who carry on some kind of business, or personal agreement, or any kind of agreement, which is, “It used to be that a man’s word and a handshake was good enough.” It may still be that way between two friends, but it is so much harder to see that happen in today’s

world of knee-jerk litigation; law suits galore mean extensive contracts, and if you are not careful, tricky small print. There was a very funny movie starring Tim Allen along that line, called “The Santa Clause.” Watch it some time.

I think it is worth considering the Ten Commandments in this same way. Usually, this reflection is focused on something from the Gospel reading for the upcoming Sunday, that is, something regarding the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, so that by reflection you might come to know who he was (and is) better. But this week I want to consider the Ten Commandments, which will also be read. And to consider them in terms of what God intended, and why these ten were brought into being.

Let’s consider them to be the necessary contract for establishing a relationship between God and his People, the Hebrews, the descendants of Abraham. We’ve been reading about Abraham, too, for a few weeks. If the Ten Commandments are like the necessary contract, then the handshake and mutual verbal agreement was between God and Abraham.

What we know about God and Abraham (first known to God as Abram) is that God decided at a point in time of his choosing, to speak to Abraham and asked him to believe in him and trust him. Just like that. And Abraham did! That trust and belief was considered by God to be the Faith needed for an everlasting relationship between He and Abraham. The deal was this: you do and believe and trust in me as I ask of you, and I will be your God forever -- AND I will give you “ALL THIS”

pointing to Canaan (that was then referred to as The Promised Land) and you will have as many descendants as the grains of sand on the seashore. Abraham agrees, and that is the word and the handshake.

That word and handshake is renewed then with Abraham's son, Isaac and then his son, Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel). The story then gets picked up after the Hebrew people had migrated into Egypt at Pharaoh's invitation due to his respect for Jacob's son, Joseph. And they were there for over 400 years.

At this point, with Moses being sent to pull them out of captivity, the Israelites were not trusting anybody. They were considered contentious and stubborn, and far away from the handshake and word between God and Abraham. But God decided, especially through further intercession by Moses, that he would agree to a new covenant. This time, however, the matter of faith in God would have to be made concrete by an agreement. Yes, he would be their God and they would be his people, and he would get them to the promised land, but they would have to abide by these ten commandments, and the first one would be that they have no other gods but Him.

In a sense, their faith in God was still the handshake. But the word of truth between them would be God's words of right living with him, and their word would be to agree to make him theirs. The ten commandments were not salvation. God was salvation. But this is how they would stay in that relationship.

Even then, God knew that people like you and me were never going to be able to completely fulfill the contract. And so he would let certain other leaders, prophets, speak out about one who would come to bring fulfillment through his own sacrifice. That is why a new and better and eternal contract was established through the Messiah, Jesus Christ. By his sacrifice on the cross, and then his victory over death in rising again, he fulfilled every bit of the ten commandments for being right with God. The contract was not only satisfied but now completed.

God still wants his people to follow his commandments as his standard for our lives while here on this earth. But it is faith in and baptism in and following Jesus that makes us the new descendants of Abraham.

There is so much more to the Ten Commandments than this reflection allows. But perhaps just this will encourage you to decide now to spend time in church during the first week of March as we are reminded of the work of Jesus in providing us all an

opportunity to be in covenant with him, and to celebrate as well his victory (niki) over death and unrighteous living.

Father Rob Eaton, Interim Rector

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: The Second Sunday in Lent

8:00a Low Mass (Church)

10:30a Solemn Mass (Church)

5:15p Evening Prayer, Soup, and Study (Parish Hall)

—*The entrance to the church is on 6th Avenue*—

Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.

MONDAY: 7:00p (AA) Doctors' Group (Fireside Room)

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)

WEDNESDAY: Noon Stations of the Cross (Church)

FRIDAY: 6:15pm Stations of the Cross (Church)

SATURDAY: AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)