

One of my Education for Ministry classmates is a real hound at sniffing out interesting little articles, and she sent us one this week written by Rabbi Evan Moffic that I thought you would find interesting. It is a sad fact that not many people, particularly young people, know little, if anything, about the Ten Commandments; what they are, or where they came from. So, here's what Rabbi Moffic says in his article, "The Most Revolutionary Part of the Ten Commandments."

With the passage of time, the extraordinary can become the ordinary. The revolutionary can seem normal.

Take trial by jury. When introduced in England, the jury trial was a monumental development, and it spurned great resistance. Now we are so accustomed to the practice that we feel inconvenienced when we have to show up to serve on a jury.

Such is the case with the Ten Commandments. We tend to take them for granted. Even pastors or rabbis who teach and preach about them can forget how revolutionary they once were. We can begin to see them as a decoration in courtrooms rather than a sacred call to live by sacred values.

What made them different

One core aspect of the Ten Commandments is frequently forgotten or overlooked. It is what makes them different from other ancient codes of law. It is what made the Hebrew Bible.....the Old Testament.... a revolutionary document, once destined to shape the entire world.

It is the following: While other religious systems focussed on how we behave toward God, the Ten Commandments centred on how we behave toward one another. Whereas Greek myth focussed on how to please the Gods, the Torah teaches us how to care for one another. We shall not steal, murder or lie. We shall not covet and we shall honour those who brought us into the world. Those are the ways we honour God.

God cares

Now the Ten Commandments do teach some matters of belief. These beliefs frame our lives as part of a much broader canvas than this world and this time.

We do not build idols because they distract us from the true God who teaches us how to live. We observe the Sabbath lest we become so caught up in this world that we forget we are part of a creation much greater than ourselves.

Though they spring from the mouth of God, the Ten Commandments convey an intensely human message. We ignore these truths, the text tells us, at our own peril.

The choice is ours

When we reject them, we lose our way. When we embrace them, we find blessing. And the choice rests in each of us. Our decisions as individuals shape our destiny as a community.

The Ten Commandments remind us of God's concern for how we treat one another. By living responsibly with one another, we honour the God who is the parent and creator of us all.

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