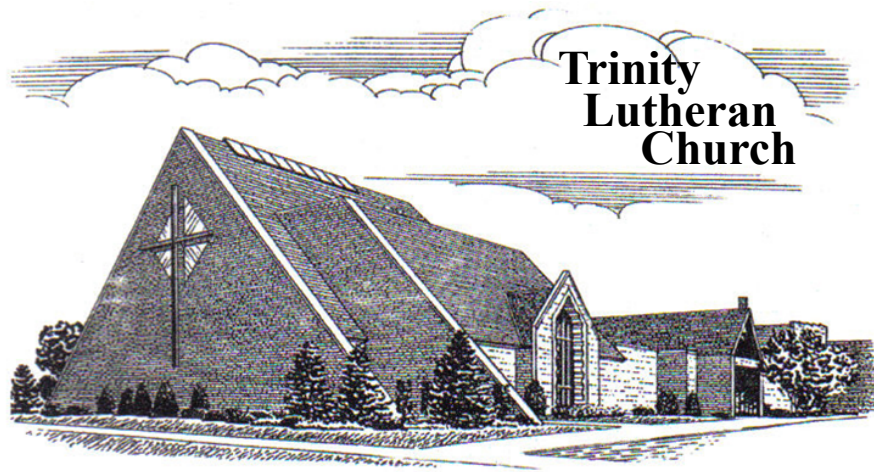


The Fourth Commandment



Oct. 5-11, 2026

Weekly Outline

Invocation

L: In the way of your testimonies I delight.

C: I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

L: Let us pray:

O Lord, take away from me all coldness, all wanderings of the thoughts, and fix my soul upon thee and thy love, O merciful Lord and Saviour, in this hour of prayer.

C: Amen.

Scripture

Oct. 5: Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Oct. 7: Ephesians 6:1-4

Oct. 9: Matthew 19:13-14

Devotion

Closing Prayer

L: Ever blessed Trinity, to thy mercy I commit this day, my body and soul, together with all my ways and undertakings. I beseech thee to be gracious unto me; enlarge my heart and open my lips, that I may praise and magnify thy name which alone is holy. And as thou hast made me for the praise of thy holy name, grant that I may yield my life a sacrifice to thy honor in humble love and fear.

C: Amen.

Monday

In the Large Catechism, Luther gives particular attention to parents in his explanation of the Fourth Commandment. While the commandment is directed towards children, "Honor your father and mother," Luther asks, "Why are parents given to children at all?" His answer is not just so that children can receive food, clothing, and a home, but that they would be brought to faith. God commands children to honor their father and mother because their parents stand in God's place.

Therefore, the main task of parenting is not caring for a child's bodily needs. It is not developing his skills through education or giving him access to extracurricular activities. These things are important, but they are subservient to a greater goal: bringing our sons and daughters to God. Parents are God's representatives in the lives of their children, so every effort must be made to bring them to God. Otherwise, what are we here for? God directs us to do this in our reading from Deuteronomy. He says, "These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children." God desires to reveal himself to your kids. And the person he has chosen for that task is you.

So let us make use of every opportunity we have been given to do that. Sunday morning is the best place to start. It's a chore to get kids ready for church, but if you don't take them, who will? Next is family devotions. They're hard at the beginning but formative in the end, bringing peace and joy into the home. But above everything we do, there is prayer. We must ask God to bless our efforts, trusting that the one who gave our children life in this world would be pleased to give them new life in Christ as we diligently bring them to him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wednesday

In Ephesians 6, Paul gives instructions for the Christian household. To children, he gives this command, "Honor your father and mother," quoting the Fourth Commandment. To fathers, he says, "Do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

The home is intended by God as the place where we learn what our relationship with him is like. As children, we learn what it means to live under God's authority by living under the authority of our parents, who are God's representatives in the home. But God's authority flows from his love for us, which is why Paul adds this promise for children, "That you may live long in the land." As parents exercise God's authority towards their children, they are to use it in the same love that God himself has. In this way, children not only learn what it means to live under God's authority, but they learn to trust God as their heavenly Father who gives them life. But that's only one half of our relationship with God. God also gives us responsibility to act as his image bearers in creation. We not only live under God's authority, but we exercise God's authority towards others. That is why Paul also addresses fathers. They are not to provoke their children to anger, but they are to use their authority in a God-pleasing way. It's as fathers and mothers that we learn what it means to carry God's authority in the world. It's as children that we learn what it means to live under it. And in both circumstances, we are blessed.

The home is the greatest school of all. Through it, we learn what it means to live as God's people, obeying God on the one hand while representing God on the other. The home is the first and greatest calling of every father, mother, and child. So let's not neglect it! But commending one another to God each day in prayer, let us learn with one another what it means to live as his family. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday

Children have a tough time in our world because we do not value them as we ought. The lives of children are made subservient to the lives of adults, mostly for one reason: adults can speak and act in their own interests; children cannot. We could think of abortion, where the life of the child is subservient to the happiness of the mother and father. We could think of surrogacy, where children are bought and sold as commodities. We could think of political campaigning, where, "But think of the children!" is often nothing more than a fig leaf for ambition and emotional manipulation. We think we value children because we spend so much money on them, but their lives mean very little when we get right down to it.

That's why the actions of the disciples shouldn't shock us in our Gospel reading. True, they prevent children from coming to Jesus, but children weren't all that important in the ancient world. They aren't any better off today! What should amaze us instead is the invitation of Christ, who says, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." Even if no one else does, there is one man who loves the little children of the world. His name is Jesus.

Our love is not proven by our actions towards those who could repay us, but towards the little lives who depend on us for everything but can do nothing to pay us back. We have received that love from Christ, who gave his blood for our redemption, even though we can never repay him. The love of a mother for her infant is to be that kind of love. The love of a father for his precious little daughter is to be that kind of love. As we live towards one another in our families, let us put the love of Christ on full display. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Evening Prayer

You may pray one or more of the following after dinner or before bed:

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day; and I pray you that you would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.



Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray thee, Lord, my soul to take; and this I ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.



Visit, O Lord, our home, and drive from it all the snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell in it to preserve us in peace, and may your blessing be upon us evermore; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

A Parent's Blessing

You may place your hand on the head of your child before kissing them goodnight and say:

My loved one, rest securely,
for God this night will surely
from peril guard your head.
Sweet slumbers may he send you
and bid his hosts attend you
and through the night watch o'er your bed. Amen.

Memory Verse

MEMORY VERSE

*For he will command his
angels concerning you to
guard you in all your
ways. On their hands
they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot
against a stone.* PSALM 91:11-12



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