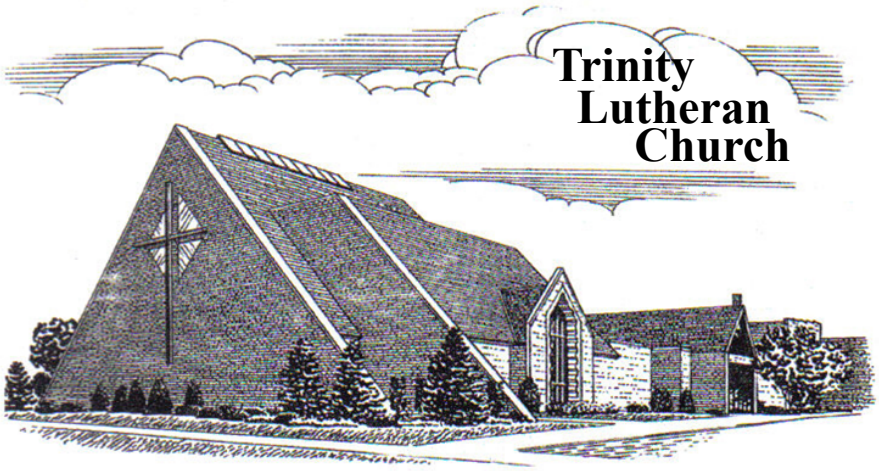
The Eighth Commandment



Nov. 9-15, 2026

Weekly Outline

Invocation
L: You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you
C: because he trusts in you.

L: Let us pray:

Almighty Father, Lord of heaven and earth, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us after your great goodness; according to the multitude of your mercies, do away our offenses; wash us thoroughly from our wickedness, and cleanse us from our sins; for Jesus' sake,

C: Amen.

Scripture

Nov. 9 : Psalm 5

Nov. 11: Ephesians 4:25-30

Nov. 13: Matthew 18:15-20

Devotion

Closing Prayer
L: I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me.
C: Amen.

Monday

God says to us in the Eighth Commandment, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." This commandment places us in a court of law, where we could gain an advantage over our neighbor through lying, and God says, "You shall not." But the commandment is much more wide-ranging than that first application.

The second table of the Law (commandments 4-10) focuses on what we must not take from our neighbor. We are not to take his life (You shall not murder), his family (You shall not commit adultery), his property (You shall not steal), or his reputation (You shall not bear false witness). But we can steal our neighbor's reputation in more ways than by lying about him in a court of law. We can also take his reputation through needless gossip. We can take his reputation by slandering him in some way, such as by attributing motives to an action that may not be true. In Psalm 5, we have a wide view of how God views the misuse of our lips. Those who break the Eighth Commandment make their throats open graves that cause the downfall of others. They are not just liars, but often bloodthirsty as well. Those who break the Eighth Commandment are threatened by God's destruction.

All of us have broken the Eighth Commandment many times. The motivations for this sin are endless, but a common one is that we see ourselves in competition with another person for some good, such as a promotion. We want it to be ours, and so we seek to gain an advantage over our neighbor with a lie. We ought to fear God, who threatens to punish us for these sins, more than we desire whatever we might gain by breaking this commandment. But we are also to trust in God’s promise, not only that he has forgiven our sins in Christ so that we can now use our lips rightly, but also that he will cover us with his favor as with a shield. We have no need to gain through lies what God has promised us through his grace. Full of faith in God, may discretion and truth always be found on our lips. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Wednesday

When we think about the Eighth Commandment, we think first about what it forbids, lying, gossip, and similar sins. We could also think about what it requires, telling the truth. But have you ever considered why God requires us to tell the truth?

There are two reasons we could give. First, God requires his children to tell the truth because he is truth. Since Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, how could those who belong to him be liars? Second, Paul writes in Ephesians, "Let each of one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." In other words, you owe the truth to your Christian brother because you are one body with him. If both of you are in Christ, then both of you are members of the same body. And as members one of another, you owe one another the debt of truth.

Sometimes, that truth is hard to tell because the truth is ugly. As we will see in Matthew 18 in the next devotion, Jesus gives us an avenue for confronting sin to preserve unity in his body. Should the truth require confronting sin, we still owe truth to our brother because we owe him love, and one who loves should not be content to see another brother lose his life to sin. At other times, the truth requires revealing something about ourselves that we would rather stay hidden. We call that truth confession. But we owe confession to those we wrong because we owe them the truth. We are members of one another. And over all truth stands the cross of Jesus Christ, which binds us together in love and brings us peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Friday

Most Christians have some idea of what Christ commands in Matthew 18. Should our brother sin against us, we are to share the fault privately, only with him. If the sin remains, then one or two other trusted Christians may also be told. Should that fail, the whole church may be told. And if repentance does not follow even the rebuke of the church, Jesus says, "Let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." In other words, treat him as someone who is not a Christian. Many books on forgiveness or reconciliation have been written with these verses as the foundation. But what do they mean and what is Jesus' goal?

Jesus' goal is the restoration of the sinner and the renewal of unity in the Christian church. Sin only destroys. It never builds up. One of the things it destroys is fellowship. Small sins can damage a relationship in small ways; more serious sins can produce an immediate rupture. Because Christ would not have his people live in enmity toward one another, he commands us to renew the unity of the church by having the courage to confront sin when necessary. However, we are not to confront sin with the goal of punishing the sinner, but rather with the goal of restoring him to full fellowship. That is why sin is to be dealt with as privately as possible: we do not want the removal of the sinner but only the sin, which happens through confession and absolution. Only when the sinner is totally unrepentant, and the sin is very serious, is the sinner treated like a Gentile (that is, removed from the church).

Christ's purpose for us in this command is only love. He seeks the harmony of his church through the gracious taking away of sin. So he provides a means by which sin can be confronted and the sinner saved through the application of the forgiveness he won on the cross. When we sin against others, may the Spirit enable our repentance. And when others sin against us, may the Spirit enable a gentle courage, that we would be willing to seek restoration and renewal of fellowship in place of vengeance. 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.

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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.

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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

