WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

SERMON STARTER

John 2:24

In the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. 24But Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men, 25And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

John 4:11

11Then there arose a question between some of Jesus' disciples and the Jews about purifying. 12And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. 13John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. 14And the Father sent his Son into the world. 15The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. 16He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

The people of The United Methodist Church®
United Methodists join Christians of different traditions to celebrate World Communion Sunday on the first Sunday in October. World Communion Sunday began in 1936 as a way to recognize our ecumenical oneness in Christ and to bring Christians together in a spirit of unity and peace.

In The United Methodist Church, congregations throughout the denomination will also join together to receive a Special Sunday offering that helps students from around the world reach their full potential through scholarships, training and mentoring. The World Communion Sunday offering is one of six churchwide special offerings received throughout the year.

Adapt this sermon starter based on passages from Exodus 20 to celebrate World Communion Sunday in your congregation. For a fully integrated service, coordinate them with the accompanying Offering Talk and Liturgy.

“NOURISHED FOR HOLY LIVING”

Pop Quiz Time:
Do you remember the commercial from 1975 about a certain fast-food burger?
Sing along if you know it.
Two all-beef patties...special sauce ...lettuce...cheese...pickles...onion...(on a) sesame-seed bun.

Now, without looking at the Scripture reading, can we name the Ten Commandments from Exodus 20, which are also found in Deuteronomy 5?

- You shall have no other gods before me.
- You shall not make idols.
- You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
- Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- Honor your father and your mother.
- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet.
Excellent! We listened well this morning, and we remember our Sunday school lessons!

According to a 2007 article in the Christian Post (https://www.christianpost.com/news/survey-more-americans-familiar-with-big-mac-ingredients-than-10-commandments.html), most Americans know their burgers better than they know these commandments. Eighty percent knew about the all-beef patties, but only one person out of 10 recognized “Do not kill.”

These Ten Commandments are foundational documents of our faith. And certainly, this guide to holy living is more satisfying, life-giving and nutrient-rich than fast food.

As we look at these commandments, we may notice that the first four are about how to be in relationship with God, and the other six are about how to be in relationship with one another. God offers these commandments as a gift. They offered a way for people wandering in the wilderness to have a framework to live in community. They allowed them — and us — to have a common understanding, a covenant in our relationships and day-to-day work.

Each commandment serves to shape our identity as God’s people. Each is a reflection of God’s characteristics. Each individual law reflects God’s desire for justice and forms a moral compass.

While the Ten Commandments seem simple, like the ingredients in a fast-food burger, we know that we gain more nourishing and wholesome values when we live in holy covenant with one another and with God.

We are reminded that these rules are not about placing restrictions on the people. Exodus 20:2 reads, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” These commandments, instead, provide a way to live with the freedom found in loving God and loving our neighbor. We find liberation in God’s directions about how to live wholehearted lives. We don’t have to figure it out on our own!

On World Communion Sunday, we recognize that following the laws, the prophets and Jesus bind Christian denominations together. When we come to the table of Holy Communion, hungry for justice and mercy, we are all equally valued by God who has liberate us.

When we present our special offering today, we recognize that our hopes and dreams are interconnected with those of our siblings in faith. Through training opportunities and scholarships,
we invest in the God-given strengths of United Methodist students around the globe.

We realize that as students pursue their dreams as leaders in different parts of the world through teaching, medicine, theology or human rights, the impact of our connection is limitless. These scholars bring their understanding of holy living guided by foundational rules like the Ten Commandments.

Entering fields where a center of faith may not exist, these students carry a spirit of discipleship into their work. In Matthew 22:37-38, CEB, Jesus reminded his disciples, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.”

Supported by the church, students put their trust in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

On World Communion Sunday, we live out our faith with life-affirming practices, recognizing the needs of our neighbors and investing in thriving, wholesome, healthy and long loves. We go above and beyond the basic commandments and live into the spirit of them. We support measures that lead to peace, not just as an absence of tension, but as contributors to abundant, remarkable life.

We grew up learning these laws, these Ten Commandments. Perhaps, sometimes, they are too familiar, and we forget the full sense of their meaning and purpose.

It is important to study them, especially at times when moral authority seems lacking. These Ten Commandments, this guide to holy living, was given out of love for us from the source of divine authority. They give us direction during chaos or crisis, and God nourishes and nurtures us every step of the way.

When we strive to be our best selves, using God’s direction and Jesus’ example as our guide, we show up in the world in transformational ways. We touch others and are invited to enter into something that is more amazing than anything we imagine. When our starting and ending points are love, the rest falls into place.

I encourage you this week to study the Ten Commandments. Pray for strength and guidance to engage them. Think about the nutritional density of these foundational laws.

As you come to the table of grace this morning for Holy Communion, experience a nourishing meal that connects us in divine love for holy living.