



This article is written by Pastor Tom Eckstein of Concordia Lutheran Church in Jamestown. "His Word is Truth" will appear in this paper every 3rd Monday.

His Word Is Truth!

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Today's article is about the 7th Commandment found in Exodus 20:15, which reads: "You shall not steal." God gave this commandment because we sinners forget that God gives money and possessions to individual people as **HE** decides. Sadly, we sinners don't always like the way in which God decides to distribute His wealth. We wrongly think that we deserve to have what God has given our neighbor. *This evil attitude leads us to break the 7th Commandment by desire and*

deed.

In his Small Catechism Martin Luther gives this explanation of the 7th Commandment: **"We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions, or get them in any dishonest way, but help him to improve and protect his possessions and property."** Luther shows that we not only break the 7th Commandment by the evil things we do but also by the good things we fail to do!

We all break the 7th Commandment simply by having evil **desires** such as greed or envy. Even if we don't act on such desires, we are still guilty of sin because such desires are condemned by God. In addition, we break the 7th Commandment by various evil **deeds**. Some steal by force or violence. Others steal by stealth, hoping no one notices (for example, shoplifting). Some sell

defective items at full price. Others steal from their employers by failing to work during all the time they are paid. Still others rob the government by cheating on their income taxes.

However, God not only forbids stealing. He also commands us to help others in need. In Ephesians 4:28 we read: **"He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need."** Therefore, we also break the 7th Commandment when we refuse to help our neighbor protect or keep his property when we have the opportunity. I could give numerous particular examples of how we break the 7th Commandment. The point is that we're ALL guilty of stealing and so we deserve God's eternal wrath! (See Romans 1:18-32 and 2:5-24)

What hope is there for us thieves?

Our hope is JESUS! In Mark 15:27 we are told that Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One thief refused to confess his sin and mocked Jesus. But in Luke 23:40-42 we read what the other thief said: **"Don't you fear God since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong! Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom!"** Then Luke 23:43 records Jesus' answer: **"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."**

Jesus died on the cross and suffered God's wrath for ALL our sins – including our sins of theft by desire and deed (see 1st Corinthians 15:1-4 and 1st Peter 2:22-25). Those who justify their sin and reject Jesus have no hope (see 1st

John 1:8 & 10). But those who confess their sin and trust in Christ have complete forgiveness and the certain hope of eternal life with God (see 1st John 1:9 and Hebrews 2:9-18).

In fact, you who believe in Jesus have eternal life NOW because nothing can separate you from the love of God (see Romans 8:28-39). Jesus' love will help you resist breaking the 7th Commandment by desire and deed. Jesus' love will also help you be content with whatever money and possessions God has decided to give you. Even more, Jesus' love will move you to give of your money and possessions to help others in need.

In Holy Baptism God calls us to live a new life in Jesus! Romans 6:1-4 reads: **"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin;**

how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Repent and live for Jesus today!

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Please read the next **"His Word is Truth"** on Monday, September 18th! Pastor Eckstein will continue his series on **The 10 Commandments** with the 8th Commandment: **"You Shall Not Give False Testimony Against Your Neighbor!"**

For more resources about Christian teaching and issues, go to Concordia Lutheran's web page: www.concordiajt.org
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