

## Jewish roots

8 10 17

Almighty God,  
you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:  
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself  
and so bring us at the last to your heavenly city  
where we shall see you face to face.

Our text may be found today's psalm, Psalm 19 and verse 7:

'The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul;  
the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

From time to time, I think it's worth reminding ourselves of our Jewish roots – that Christianity has its roots in Judaism. Our Bible has a wealth of scripture in the Old Testament: poetry, prophecy, history, moral laws, revelation – all embodying the promise of salvation. Then, the New Testament with its four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, twenty-one Epistles and the book of the Revelation of St John, the apocalypse, looking forward to the end times. To better understand what it means to be a Christian, we need, too, to understand something of what it is to have been Jewish. So this morning, let me look briefly at this morning's reading from Exodus 20, the Ten Commandments, our basis for right living.

Ten Commandments – actually there are 613 – but let's focus on just the ten and consider what it might mean to live a life informed by God-given commandments. And, of the ten, the first four are our duty to God and the next six are our duty to Man.

So what do we owe God? First, a recognition that the Lord God liberated us, his children, from slavery in Egypt and that we should have no other God but him. The first commandment is simple – we should only worship the one true God – only he merits our respect, loyalty, obedience and love.

The second is almost in parallel with first – not to be tricked, deceived into worshipping idols, false gods, mirages that pervert our love and attention. In modern times, the idols we might worship may well be wealth, power or sex, false dreams that have all the potential to become nightmares.

The third is about respect, not to use the name of God lightly as an ejaculation, oath or swearword but only to speak the name of God with love care and reverence.

And the fourth is about rest on the Sabbath, a day rest and relaxation, one day in seven when we need to stop working and give our attention fully to God. Not easy in these days of 24/7 working, being connected and on duty all the time but unless we take a break and focus our attention on God, it is easy to be distracted and forget him.

The next six are all about our duty towards each other and the word respect informs all six of them.

The fifth is about respect for parents – honouring our mum and dad and if we do, then that is surely the basis of respecting all people.

The sixth is not to murder – to have due respect for the sanctity of life, the innate value of all human beings.

The seventh is not to commit adultery; to respect the institution of marriage by not sleeping with someone else's husband or wife.

The eighth, not to steal, is to respect other people's property, that what they own is not there for us to take away from them.

The ninth, not to bear false witness, is essentially not to lie, i.e. to respect the truth.

And lastly, not to envy, is to respect the fact that other people have things we'd like to have and not to resent the fact that they do but to rejoice in the fact they do have something worth enjoying.

So today let's remember that our faith has its roots in Judaism and that the principles that inform a good Jew, in part inform what makes us in turn good Christians.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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