

The Patio Pulpit For August 26, 2020
The Eighth Commandment
“You shall not steal.”

The first Christmas at my first church, my family and I spent back home here in Charlotte enjoying friends and family and a great meal. We then drove back to the Eastern Shore of Virginia to our little town named Nassawadox, which means “land between two waters.” That was our mailing address. We actually lived in a community of 7 homes scattered around the area called Red Bank, Va. When we got home, we were unloading our stuff when someone noticed our television was gone, then they noticed other items missing and we slowly realized that our home had been burglarized while we were gone. So we called the Sheriff’s department and they sent out one of the most incompetent deputies I had ever met or heard of.

He looked around while standing in one spot and agreed that we had indeed been burglarized. He said to us, “If you hear anything let me know.” Apparently, he wanted us to do all the leg work and investigate the crime ourselves. And it turns out that he already had a good idea of who the culprit was, a distant relative of his family.

Well, that Sunday I announced from the pulpit at my church what had happened, including the deputy’s attitude, and after the service one of the young men in our congregation who happened to be a deputy sheriff, told me he would take care of it himself. And he did. The next day he had arrested a known thief in the community and my youngest daughter was able to identify one of the items stolen and he was convicted in court shortly after. His liberal defense attorney got him off without having to do any time because as she said, “He’s really a nice man.” Now here was a man who was known on the Eastern Shore for being a thief. He had a long rap sheet documenting that he made a living stealing other people’s stuff and selling it and he got off easy because “He’s really a nice man.” That is teaching the antithesis of the eighth commandment. *“You shall not steal.”*

By the way, the thief was caught because on the night he broke into our home, he had parked his car in the unused driveway to a long-

ago abandoned house just down the road from our house and it was raining heavy that night and when he was leaving he got stuck and had to flag down one of our neighbors and acquaintances who was driving by. When our neighbor heard about the break in, he immediately called our deputy friend and told him who it was.

Another “by-the-way,” did you know that one of the ordinances God gave to Israel said that if a thief is caught breaking into a house the man of the house had the right to kill him on the spot? ² *"If the thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account. (Exod. 22:2 NAU)*

That reminds me of the horrific act that has come of late called “home invasions.”

Exodus 20:15 "You shall not steal."

I did a little research for tonight’s lesson on the eighth commandment and in my research, I discovered that violent crimes are the most common type of crime worldwide. I thought for sure thefts would take that honor. But it turns out that people everywhere are more prone to various kinds of violence than to stealing. But thefts are still pretty high up on the list of crimes compiled by the world’s law enforcement organizations.

I have always thought of thieves as scum bags and lowlifes, ne’er do wells, lazy, shiftless scalliwags. I see them as people too lazy to get out and work for what they want. Instead they would rather take what others have worked hard for. *Eph. 4:28 He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.*

That verse from Ephesians might seem unneeded since it was written to church folk, but it was in fact needed. One would expect us to know better, wouldn’t one? Paul had to tell the folks in the church to stop stealing. It’s a given for us not to steal, isn’t it? But for those Gentiles way back then who had just come to faith in Jesus, they had to be told not to do certain things anymore, like stealing and lying and cursing. And the verb in that verse tells us that there were people in that

congregation who were stealing after their conversion. Paul had to command them to stop doing something they were at the time of this writing still doing. It would be like me having to tell someone at Eastway that it is stealing to cheat on his or her income tax. It is stealing to take cash out of the offering plate as it passes in front of you. It is stealing to borrow church equipment and never return it.

There is a deeper side to stealing than just stealing stuff.

⁷ *Two things I asked of You, Do not refuse me before I die:*

⁸ *Keep deception and lies far from me, Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is my portion,*

⁹ *That I not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or that I not be in want and steal, And profane the name of my God. (Prov. 30:7-9 NAU)*

²⁹ *"Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"*

³⁰ *"Therefore behold, I am against the prophets," declares the LORD, "who steal My words from each other.*

³¹ *"Behold, I am against the prophets," declares the LORD, "who use their tongues and declare, 'The Lord declares.'*

³² *"Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the LORD, "and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares the LORD.*

(Jer. 23:29-32 NAU)

²¹ *To show partiality is not good, Because for a piece of bread a man will transgress. (Prov. 28:21 NAU)*

A little reminder of why this commandment made it into the top ten.

For this particular sin to make it into the top ten of sins it had to be very common among the Jews. Again, I will remind you that the ten commandments were added because of transgressions committed by the Jews and Earth's other occupants since the fall. That's how a Jewish expert on the law put it, that expert being the apostle Paul who was formerly a Pharisee of Pharisees named Saul. **Galatians 3:19** *Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, (Gal. 3:19 NAU)*

This is a statistic I found online:

Of the different forms of property crime, larceny-theft is the most common in the U.S. with over 5.2 million reported cases in 2018.

And out of that statistic, what would you guess is the most common type of larceny-theft? Let me give you a hint. When you go shopping and you're driving you park and go into the store to enjoy, or not, doing a little shopping. What should you do before you walk away from your car? You should lock it. And what else are we told to do time after time? Put away from sight any items of value you may have lying on your seat. Leaving items and bags on your car seat just begs a thief to break into your car and take your stuff.

Among such cases, larceny-theft cases, theft of items from motor vehicles is the most common type.

Beverly and I had the Ring security system installed in our home so we can see what's going on outside our house. It also lets us know when someone is at our front door or is walking in our front yard. No matter where we are in our side of the US, we will get a tinkling sound on our phones when someone has walked up to our front door. It's really cool. And should we so choose, we can talk to whomever it is. We can see them and talk to them and with them.

And not only that, we are connected with everyone else in our community who has the Ring security system so they can let us know if someone is prowling our neighborhood trying to break into homes or cars. And that happens almost on a daily basis in the community just across the way from our community. There are scaries out there. While I was working on this lesson at 5am, I received a notice on Ring that a

neighbor who lives about 2 miles away got a picture of a young man who had just come onto her property and stole something and the neighbor posted the picture on our Ring system.

So, a public service announcement, never leave anything of value lying on your car seat and always lock your car.

What do we call someone who practices stealing?

A thief.

What do we call someone who steals the truth of the gospel away from those under their care? A false teacher, a false prophet, a false apostle, a false pastor.

¹⁰ *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (Jn. 10:10 NAU)*

Do you remember the context of John 10:10? Jesus was exposing the false leaders of Israel as the thieves who comes only to steal and kill and destroy. False religious leaders of every stripe are thieves who have come to make merchandise of the souls who fall for their lies. **2 Peter 2:1** *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.*

² *Many will follow their **sensuality**, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;*

³ *and **in their greed** they will exploit you with false words; (2 Pet. 2:1-3 NAU)*

^{NAU} *2 Peter 2:3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words, false stories of their exploits and how God has blessed them because they planted a seed into some ministry. their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. They will not get away with their thievery, even if they are really nice.*

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Let me leave you with several modern-day examples of these thieves who steal souls and money.

Jim Bakker, Joel Osteen, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Creflo Dollar, T.D. Jakes and Mike Murdoch, just to name of few of the thousands of such thieves in our day. But you, beloved of God, have followed my teaching and my preaching and my lifestyle and you know.

In Jesus' name. Amen.