

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

# SERMON STARTER

John 2:24

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in the feast *day*, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. <sup>24</sup>But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*. <sup>25</sup>And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man. [1 Sam. 16:7, 1 Chr. 28:9; Mat. 9:4; Mark 2:8; ch. 6:64; 16:30; Acts 1:24; Rev. 2:23]

**Nicodemus visits Jesus**

**3** There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: <sup>2</sup>The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again: <sup>8</sup>The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. <sup>9</sup>Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? <sup>10</sup>Jesus an-

swered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? <sup>11</sup>Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. <sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: <sup>15</sup>That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. <sup>17</sup>For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. <sup>18</sup>He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup>And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. <sup>21</sup>But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

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John 4:11

**John's testimony to Jesus**

**22** After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. <sup>23</sup>And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. <sup>24</sup>For John was not yet cast into prison. <sup>25</sup>Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. <sup>26</sup>And 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. <sup>27</sup>John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. <sup>28</sup>Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. <sup>29</sup>He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. <sup>30</sup>He must increase, but I must decrease. <sup>31</sup>He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. <sup>32</sup>And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. <sup>33</sup>He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. <sup>34</sup>For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. <sup>35</sup>The Father loveth

the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. <sup>36</sup>He 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. [ver. 15, 16; ch. 1:12; 6:47; Rom. 1:17; 1 John 5:10]

**The woman of Samaria**

**4** When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, <sup>2</sup>(Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) <sup>3</sup>He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee. <sup>4</sup>And he must needs go through Samaria. <sup>5</sup>Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup>Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. <sup>7</sup>There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. <sup>8</sup>(For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) <sup>9</sup>Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. <sup>11</sup>The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from



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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 liberated 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,



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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.



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