

Challenge beyond Our Comfort Eighth Week in Ordinary Time Monday, May 23, 2016
8:15 AM 1 Pt 1:3-9; **Mk 10:17-27** (Jesus is leading always, way ahead of everyone else, but that's his way, lead people beyond where they are.)

I don't know about you, but when reading the commandments one of these stands out as being incorrect, at least the way I learned it. "You shall not bear false witness"—that's what I learned, the eighth commandment. The ninth, the tenth: "You shall not covet—you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his house or his female slave or his ass." Some say it's one commandment; some say it's two, but the word is "covet." And in Hebrew it is "covet," and in our American translations and in the English translations it's "covet." But this is "defraud"; **"You shall not defraud"—from the Greek. And I'm convinced that this is correct originally, not the Hebrew. Why?**

Because **originally these were not principles**; they were not ethical principles. **They were laws.** And theoretically anyone who broke them was stoned to death. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" means you should not perjure yourself in court. It's not about lying in general; it's about perjury. Stealing is, again, taking valuables from others, perhaps through violence. Killing is killing, murder. Adultery, we know what that is. **These were offenses against the covenant that rendered a person completely unsuitable for community life, and therefore they were eliminated.** It's very drastic, but that is the way it was, or at least that's how it was set up. **Whether they actually followed through or not, we can't say. That was the law.** Now even in Jesus' day these had been transformed somewhat into more principles of ethical conduct than actual laws, although from time to time they tried to make it a law, as the woman caught in adultery. They tried to stone her. That's an example of law.

Here it's a principle. "What must I do to gain eternal life?" A matter of moral principle: how shall I lead my life? And he says, "Well, I have done all these things." I am an ethical person. And Jesus could have said, well, that's enough, but he didn't. **Jesus went to another level, which this young man did not ask for.** The question was: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Obviously one does not have to sell everything and give away to the poor and then follow Jesus as a disciple to inherit eternal life. So Jesus goes beyond what was asked. And that's where he is always going. He is always going beyond what people are asking. He is going beyond what people are thinking. He is going beyond the question. **He is leading always, way**

ahead of everyone else, but that's his way. That's Jesus' method, **lead people beyond where they are.**

You mustn't think that Jesus actually expected this man to do this. I think that's highly improbable. **He was leading him beyond his comfort zone, not to frustrate him, but to give him something more.** If he simply said to him, well son, you are really doing a fine job; just be on your way and enjoy yourself, where would be the challenge in that? Jesus never is just doing that. **He is never just saying, well, you're doing very well; enjoy yourself. He is always challenging people.** If they are really broken, he is trying to heal them. He doesn't necessarily expect them to be completely put back together right then and there, but he is giving them a hint. He is giving them consolation. **He is leading them into the heart of his Father,** not that he expects them to get there that moment, but he is leading them. Here a person who is prosperous, ethical, outstanding really, I'm sure a very fine gentleman, but he doesn't want to leave him there.

He doesn't simply want to approve of what he is doing. Maybe that's what he was looking for, this gentleman, maybe just looking for approval. That's not what he got. He got challenged. **How about this for a challenge: find out who you really are. How we identify with what we own, what we do, our roles in life! Jesus says how about dropping all that, giving all that away and then follow me and discover who you really are? That's a radical challenge. Understood properly, it's really given to all of us.**