

A little voice inside our heads tells us to “do this/do that” or “don’t do this/don’t do that.” It’s a little voice that we carry with us wherever we go. That little voice is the voice of independence.

We like our independence. Don’t we? We are a country founded on independence. Aren’t we? And we’re proud of it. We don’t like people telling us *what* or *when* or *how* to do anything. I wonder why...

This morning I invite you to consider with me the purpose and the power of limits.

Truth is we need limits. We need boundaries. They help us live and thrive together. Laws in general, especially God’s law in particular (which many people find constraining) can actually bring life and order, and freedom, and healing, and restoration. They are for our own good.

This morning we look at two passages — the Ten Commandments and Jesus cleansing the temple — both establish order and define the limits for healthy living.

You received a copy of the 10 commandments and Luther’s explanation here this morning. I invite you to post these somewhere so you can be reminded of them. Study them this week – perhaps one each day or all ten every day. Discuss them with your family, or in your LIFE Group. I hope they become a guide for your life this week. See them as the rumble strips for your life’s journey this week.

When asked, Jesus said the two greatest commandments are, “love God and love one another.” That’s what the Ten Commandments are all about. Loving God and loving one another.

The first three commandments point out the limits within our relationship with God, who loves us and desires for us to live by the abundant freedom of God’s grace. The other seven point out the limits within our relationships with one another, joyfully by grace and at peace with each other.

The Ten Commandments were not designed to be a rigid list or a system of rules and regulations to make life miserable. They display God’s character of love, and grace, and restoration, and freedom. They are a guide for our lives together. Loving God and loving one another are the rumble strips for life.

The story of Jesus cleansing the temple reestablished these two commandments of love. Jesus was, in a dramatic way, affirming and protecting the temple as the place of worship and not a place for making money.

Here’s how it was supposed to work. People who traveled to Jerusalem in the first century often came a long way to worship God in the temple. They came to offer sacrifices and offerings to God. Many people traveled a long way on foot, often taking

weeks to get there. It was common in that day to buy animals for sacrifices at the temple for worship, a dove here, a lamb there. This was an accepted practice. Sellers would set up in the outer parts of the temple to provide these things to the traveling worshiper.

If we used this system here at Friedens the sellers would be outside under the carport, part of the temple but outside.

But these sellers began to take advantage of the travelers, cheating people out of their faith development. The focus moved from a means for making worship to a means for making money. The original intention of bringing one's best to God was reduced to a fundraiser by cheating the worshiper of their faith. God was no longer the focus of getting together, getting money was.

Jesus – keeps the main thing the main thing – literally turning everything upside down. He drives out of the temple all the fundraisers. He chases out the merchants and the money changers, making room for God, the life-changer. Jesus resets the limits. He provides the boundaries. He creates the parameters for loving God and loving one another. That's what we are to be about loving God and loving one another.

Point is -- there are limits to what we should and shouldn't do in this temple. True worship is about a love relationship with God and one another. It's about giving our best not getting something for a few bucks.

- Do you think Jesus would be happy with what we are doing in this place? If not, what do we need to change? There is always room for improvements.
- Do you think our offerings in this place are acceptable to him? If not, what do you think we need to do differently? There is always room for improvements.

How... how can we live more fully into these ancient teaching from the Bible? I have three suggestions. I'm not telling you what to do, I'm inviting you to consider these three...

First, see the law as a friend and not a hindrance. Limits help us live fully and faithfully together. Living together in relationship with God and each other is more important than anything else. Laws – especially God's laws – are for our benefit, to clarify the confusion, to help us travel life's journey together safely. I hope you will spend some time this week with the Ten Commandments. Let God speak to you through these living words. See them as a guide for your life to love God and others.

Second, pay attention to the rumble strips and make the necessary course corrections. If you are in a relationship that is strained right now – rumbling with some sort of problems or conflict – then do something about it before it's too late. Do you need to forgive someone? Do you need to ask someone to forgive you?

Third – and this is the scary part – welcome Jesus into your life to turn things upside-down. What aspect of your life do you need Jesus to come and turn upside down so that you can truly worship in this temple - within your body? Jesus has a deep passion for people to live in a right relationship with God and each other. And he will do whatever it takes for that to be possible, even dying on a cross.

Will you? Will you...

- See the law as a friend.
- Make the necessary course corrections in your life.
- Allow Jesus to show up and rearrange our messy lives, bringing order to our chaos, and restoring our relationships with God and each other.

Rumble strips... Thank God for rumble strips. Amen.