

Sermon On The Amount

March 7, 2010

In the year 1491 BC, Moses and his followers, after escaping from Egyptian captivity, trekked across the bottom of the parted Red Sea, which Moses managed to command to split, allowing for his band of exiles to cross, thus drowning his captors. He and his followers continued on their journey and set up camp at their destination, the base of Mt. Sinai. Apparently, as the story is told, God spoke to Moses and informed him that should he climb to the top of the mountain and there God would share with him his Covenant. Now at the time, Moses was said to be approximately 500 years old and I can imagine that scaling the 7, 491 foot slope was a bit of a hassle. Since God could do anything he wanted, he could have given the man some consideration and just popped down to chat. However as we have learned, life in general is not like that and the premise that anything really worth achieving takes work, sweat and sometimes tears.

Anyway, Moses got himself up there somehow, and upon his arrival amid all of the swirling ravages of nature at the top of the mountain; thunder, lightening, smoke and fire, God began his conversation with Moses and allegedly gave him the 10 Commandments, which were craved in stone. Actually there were two tablets, one copy for Moses and one for God. Carbon paper had not been invented yet, so a stone copy had to do. Now, being as old as he was, and I am sure quite exhausted from the climb, he remained on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and nights chatting with God and resting up for the return to his people.

Well down below, Moses "chosen people" became fearful that he would not return and they felt betrayed.

So, being in great need for something to worship, they reverted back to the old pagan ways and created an idol of a golden calf. Well, Moses did return lugging several hundred pounds of stone inscribed with the 10 Commandments to share with his followers.

Upon seeing the golden calf, Moses had a complete meltdown and shattered the idol thus breaking the tablets. Not a good move, so back up the mountain he went to plead for another chance for his people, which God granted, However, this time Moses would have to painstakingly inscribe the tablets himself.

Finally the new Covenant was finished, and Moses and his people continued their journey to the promised land. Those 10 Commandments then became the cornerstone for early biblical law, professed by every Jewish and Christian Community as the guidelines for living a Godly life.

As Unitarian Universalists, we too have pondered and accepted the Commandments as reasonable guidelines for living a good life. However there is one huge difference between the UU's of today and the Israelites of the past . While agreeing to follow the Covenant as commanded by God, no one asked, "Hey, what do we get for all this obedience? What's in it for us?"

This morning as we launch our all member canvas campaign and pledge drive I would like to address that question directly as you are asked to give often and much to the life and the future of this Society. And as we are returning from that mountain which we have climbed and conquered as a congregation, I intend to answer that question as our promise to you in the 10 Commandments of Pledging.

First and foremost, being slightly younger than Moses, incapable of growing a beard, or lugging stone tablets down a mountain,(Waring Road is quite enough,) I am only one part of the leadership of this congregation.

I do not create policy, or determine the direction the church will take in any aspect of its present or future course, nor do I decide how your contributions will be spent. By you own votes and wishes you alone determine who shall serve you in this pulpit.

Commandment #1

You shall have the privilege and the freedom of selecting your own leadership.

#2) The leadership and the Board of Trustees, whom you have elected, pledge their utmost attention to your wishes and desires as a part of our democratic process. As volunteers and active members of this community, their commitment to assure the voice and future of this congregation, is their primary responsibility.

#3.) You have an opportunity to participate directly in the health of this society, to serve on any committee activity or forum that reflects your interests and involvement in the life of this church.

#4.) We shall be fully accountable for every penny you give. Our accounting practices are very tight and the state laws very specific for churches. You may balk at the number of forms required for every cent spent, and for each fundraiser or contribution raised. However it is that diligence from the extensive work of the Finance Committee and the Treasurer that has kept us accountable and solvent in these difficult times.

Commandment # 5

5.) As we view the immediate future and the years to come, we will provide for your children the very best Religious Education program possible to foster the freedoms our faith enjoys through programs and classes that enhance the spiritual and social lives of your children, inside and outside of this community.

#6) As your minister, I am here to listen to your needs, hopes and desires, to serve you in anyway I can during those joyful and difficult times in your lives. I am also here to perform your services of marriage, to dedicate your children and to bury your loved ones. There is no one fill in the blanks boilerplate for each of these rites of passage, they are written and tailored to the individual needs of each family and situation.

#7) As your employee and frequent worship leader, I will strive to create a variety of services that are meaningful to as many of you as possible. I will take your suggestions and your constructive criticisms very seriously. However I will perform no animal sacrifices on the pulpit.

#8) We will provide for you the optimum musical program possible, with opportunities for participation by our membership through individual performance, singing in the choir and bringing the best we can afford to enhance our services and interests.

#9) As we have been looking at our past and molding our future, we will provide more activities for our parishioners and families intended to not only provide for our recreational and social needs, but also to contribute to the welfare of our own community through service to others in need.

Last but not least

#10.) It is our goal to represent Unitarian Universalism at its finest, to give you, the active stockholders, the very best possible representation of our faith, through your pledges, your participation, your voices and your confidence in our future.

This is truly your church. You decide how your contributions will be allocated and for what purpose it will serve and we, your leadership, pledge to fulfill your desires in the very best way we can....

Behold our ten commandments of pledging. We did come through the storms at the top of the mountain.

I am committed to the life of this church, in a way I have never experienced from any other congregation I have served. I do see the pain and disappointment from days past, but I also see much more than a spark of confidence and trust, that we as a congregation can and will do much more than simply limp along. I see us becoming a place where beliefs can be freely expressed, where the search for answers to our deepest and most pressing questions can be shared. I see families gathered, groups meeting, forums happening, service to our community and lots of joyful participation.

I also see the extraordinary value in this alternative to traditional religion, where the right of conscience, the personal exploration of our connections with God, or nature or all of creation, can replace the commands of a few.

Sometimes we need to remind ourselves how extraordinary we are, how Unitarian Universalism has broken a pattern and a mold for religious exclusionism that has permeated our culture for centuries. Regardless of ones religious or non religious philosophy of life and death, the need for the spiritual

part of us to be recognized and nurtured, is as necessary to our physical health as food and water.

What we have to offer is a genuine choice as to how that can happen for each of us, with no restrictions.

I will stop sermonizing and on this pledge Sunday... Please take our commandments to heart, for that is our gift to you.

I would like to close with these words:

A promise is only as good as those who endeavor to fulfill its dream.

So be it
Amen