

# **ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE**

## ***Topical Bulletin, November 2019***

This month's topic for consideration is the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment: **"Thou shalt not steal." (Exodus 20:15)** The Hebrew root word translated into English as "steal" is transliterated as "ganab" and pronounced "gaw-nab" which Strong's Hebrew/English Dictionary defines as follows: "a primitive root; to thieve (literal or figurative); by implication to deceive: - carry away, x indeed, secretly bring, steal (away), get by stealth."

The fact that the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment remains valid for New Testament times is plainly evident since Jesus Christ Himself quoted it, for we read in Matthew 19:16-19, "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The Greek root word translated into English as "steal" is transliterated as "klepto" which Strong's Greek/English Dictionary defines as follows: "a primary verb; to filch: — steal."

Concerning the word "steal" Webster's New World College Dictionary's definition mentions: "to take without permission, dishonestly... to be a thief." Accordingly, to steal includes every kind of robbery, which is forceful taking of another's money or goods; every kind of theft, which is sneaky and subtle taking of another's money or goods; and, every kind of fraud, which is dishonest dealing by which another's money or goods is taken by cheating.

Therefore, in accord with Holy Scripture, Luther's Small Catechism states:

### **THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT**

#### **PROPERTY AND BUSINESS**

#### **Thou shalt not steal.**

*What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we may not take our neighbor's money or goods, nor get them by false ware or dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and business.*

**Thus, the sin of stealing is what God forbids in the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment, and includes every kind of robbery, theft and fraud. Additionally, raffles and other forms of gambling are also sins of stealing since by such means one takes (or at the least attempts to take) another's money or goods. The following Scripture passages clearly state the facts:**

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Ephesians 4:28)

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10)

*Comment: God would have us work for our daily bread, NOT steal it from others by robbery, theft, fraud, or any form of gambling.*

“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also *his* coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.” (John 19:23-24)

*Comment: Jesus’ clothing was stolen from Him at His crucifixion and divided among four soldiers; and then, His sinfully acquired coat was again stolen from three of the four by gambling— sin begets sin. {See January 2018 ILC Topical Bulletin for more information on gambling.}*

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.” (Malachi 3:8)

*Comment: Failing to willingly and cheerfully give offerings to the Lord is stealing from Him, for He is the Source of all we have and we owe Him thanksgiving. Yes, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17) And, God’s Word commands: “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.” (Proverbs 3:9)*

“Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.” (Leviticus 19:35)

“A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight.” (Proverbs 11:1)

“Divers weights, *and* divers measures, both of them *are* alike abomination to the LORD.” (Proverbs 20:10)

“He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.” (Proverbs 28:8)

“Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; *that* useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work.” (Jeremiah 22:13)

*Comment: Fraud, cheating, is indeed the sin of stealing, which shall not go unpunished by God.*

“The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.” (Psalm 37:21)

*Comment: To intentionally borrow from one’s neighbor without returning what was borrowed is the sin of stealing.*

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” (Matthew 15:19)

*Comment: It is also the sin of stealing to lust after anything that belongs to our neighbor with the desire his or her property be our own.*

**God requires certain right behaviors of us in the 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment, as the following Bible verses demonstrate:**

“If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.” (Exodus 23:4)

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” (Matthew 7:12)

*Comment: We are to help our neighbor improve and protect his property and business, treating our neighbor with kindness and honesty.*

“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.” (Proverbs 19:17)

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.” (Matthew 5:42)

“To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” (Hebrews 13:16)

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15-16)

*Comment: We are to help our neighbor in every need of body and soul.*

“Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5)

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” (Romans 12:15)

*Comment: In Christian love, we are to rejoice when we see our neighbor prosper and we are to sympathize when our neighbor is hurting.*

In honesty we must all admit that even if we have not actually stolen another’s money or goods we have certainly longed after that which is another’s at one time or another, “For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20) Therefore, we have need to repent and turn to Jesus Christ for forgiveness, because it is written: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 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. ” (1 John 1:9; John 3:16) Let us ever be grateful for the forgiveness of sins and salvation that Jesus our Savior provides.

m.e.l.