

I am the LORD your God. Now that is a way to get someone's attention. And it is kind of hard as a homilist to offer anything more to whatever it is that follows an introduction like that. The best I can do is say, pay attention to these verses: God really means it.

I do not think there is a more famous part of the bible. "In the beginning..." is close, but nothing beats the ten commandments. I mean really, think Chareilton Heston... They are the most famous set of rules known to the western world and are the foundation, in many ways, of our entire system of morals and the laws that society uses to enforce cultural understood morality. It is a very clear set of directions of how we need to relate to God, and through that, to each other. Or is it...

I was down in Cambridge on Friday for a meeting at the monastery and afterwards spent an hour with Br. Robert, one of the monks, my boss. It is kind of weird to have a monk for a boss, (I guess I have priest for a boss here, that's kind of weird, too... Oooii.) No, Robert is great to work with (Martha, too), but we were talking about Emery House business, and the election and the debate, and I mentioned that I was preaching on the decalogue today. He lit up and said that he had just heard about some work that has been done on the source Hebrew of the Ten

Commandments that utterly changes the meaning of this most famous of biblical passages. There are indications that the “Commandments” were not injunctions at all, but can be read as promises. Promises.

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. If you stick with me, you will not murder. You will not steal, you will not be envious, you will not need to use the name of That Which Is in a profane way.

If we have no other Gods but God, I mean the God, YHWH, I AM THAT I AM, truly, all of existence will be harmony and we will not, we are promised by God, we will not need to, be tempted to, want to do any of these things. If we hold God to be true and real above all else, lions will lie down with Lambs. Peace will reign when we accept God like this. The Kingdom will be present on Earth when we accept God like this. God promises this. Now that changes things doesn't it?

It is a bit more edifying than a list of rules, no? Promises from God. It is said that each preacher has one sermon in him or her. One theme at the root of their vocation. This promise from God that if we are in right relationship with God we can not even imagine how good things will be... that's my sermon. It is all about relationship. And when I say all, I mean all with a very big A. Everything, from our christian Trinitarian conception of God to the importance of sitting down

together as a family for at least one meal a day, it is all about relationship. Our God is in itself a relationship. Father, son and holy spirit, three and one; three distinct persons of one substance, it is mumbo-jumbo in any logical sense until you see that our very conception of the fundamental ground of being is swirling dynamic cloud of relationship. Now that is good theology. That is something worth worshipping.

Relationship. Right relationship. That is not a term we use in Christian churches much, but we should. We use words like atonement, reconciliation, redemption which are good, but always imply fixing brokenness, it is rearward looking, or future looking. Right relationship refers to what is happening now, what is, not what was nor what is to come. It is a Buddhist term, but it is very useful, it is very clear, very concise. To be in right relationship is to be in a place of equilibrium. Of equanimity. It is a place where we transition between giving and receiving fluidly. We get a glimpse right relationship with whatever when we feel forgiving (like Martha talked about a couple of weeks ago), when we feel gracious, peaceful, when we feel free from fear or anxiousness. God promises that when we are in right relationship with God, we feel those things and naturally, organically we'll walk lightly in the world. Now that is a promise worth holding someone to.

But right relationship with God... I can imagine what it looks like to be in right(ish) relationship with my wife, or daughter. Maybe with friends, or a community, but God? What could that possibly look like?

First off, I need to say, I do not really know intellectually. No one really knows, intellectually at least, just about anything about God. It is all rambling conjecture, theology, that is. But I have no doubt that I have personal experience of knowing about God and right relationship, but it is felt here, in our heart and in our hands, and not so much not here, in our minds.

Windy and I farmed out in Amherst, Mass. We knew about God there. Now we take care of 144 acres of God's land right across the Artichoke River in West Newbury. We are learning more about God every day. What does right relationship with God look like? What does it feel like? What does it smell like? Walk across a mature, well kept hayfield on a warm June day before the hay is cut for the first time of the season. Feel the sun on your face. Hear the wind blowing through the life giving grasses. Smell the freshness of the creation. Know that the land is not poisoned with petroleum based fertilizers. Appreciate the vast and unknown communities of bacteria, fungi, nematodes, insects and mammals that make up the soil food web, a web of relationships so noble and balanced that

nothing but God could be behind it. That is what I have known God to look like, feel like, smell like. In my little world, at least, God tastes like an heirloom tomato that was grown in your own backyard in soil that you care for through work that you and your family have offered.

Right relationship with God is living in harmony with the creation. It is not taking life for granted. It is not taking the gift of good land, the movement of the moon, the change of the seasons, enough food to eat, for granted. We are part of the creation; not above, not separate; utterly immersed in that which is. The nature of things is all of this. So here we are this morning; a beautiful morning I might add, and we are sitting here in this lovely sanctuary with its widely appreciated clear glass and resulting great light. Are we any less in nature than walking across a hay field in June? Really, at the most fundamental level, how different, categorically, is a space like this from a bee hive, where collectively a group of organisms transforms a portion of the creation into a form more useable to the group? Not much, in the end. Not much of a difference at all.

I had a friend who was working on a PhD in Materials Science, plastics and hybrid metals and stuff. Well, he was working on an algorithm that would simulate new molecules and test them for some sort of useful application. I didn't understand

any of it or how any if this came to be, but somehow, this algorithm that synthesized organic compounds was discovered to also produce data that modeled fluctuations in currency markets. He's head of research at a Swiss bank now. So a computer model that simulates molecules also reflects the movement of economic systems. Human economics are a natural occurrence. We, as a cultural species, are not as far from a hay field as we might like to think that we are.

Now a quick note on the naturalness of human economic systems in light of the boiling over of the past week's crisis. Economic systems are natural, but think of them in terms of the model of population control. What is the classic story, rabbits living in a meadow. The foxes are hunted out, eliminating a natural control, the rabbits multiply, eat all the food, then suffer horribly as famine and disease take over and bring the rabbit population back to a balanced level. That is the story of our economic system now. The system has been out of balance, speculation on the value of valueless things. A house of cards built on unsubstantiated debt by people so wrapped up in desires and wishes that the reality of work, substance and actuality wafted away into the ether of greed. Not a whiff of right relationship with anything in the current landscape. Will \$700b of our money staunch the gaping wound that reckless capitalists have left in our economy? That the idea was put forward by the same people who got us into this mess is one indication that it is

business as usual. Nothing right in these relationships. I recommend praying a lot about now.

God promises that when we are in right relationship with God, we will not be so anxious to improve on that which is. This is the heart of the eco-agricultural work, the sustainable agricultural efforts that I aspire to. When we are in right relationship with the very systems that sustain our bodies, our families and our culture, how can we be on anything but the right trajectory towards right relationship with God? Conservation is important. Preservation is important, but life is a complex system of giving and taking, life and death, killing and living, that we as the dominate species on the planet (or at least the most violent), must understand our role in. We must kill to live. That is the simple truth. No matter how sustainably you grow food, there is a lot of blood involved. Plowing land kills billions of organisms. Running a rototiller through your garden is a genocide of worms. The farmland we cleared on the most organic, vegan farming system you can imagine displaced millions of animals... But we gotta eat. God knows that. In right relationship, we live, we eat, we live, we kill, we live, we die. That is the nature of things. We do not murder, that is we do not kill unlawfully, but we do kill. That is the nature of things. The key is that living in right relationship with God is taking none of this for granted,

I can not think of a more Christian activity than growing food sustainably. Well, besides teaching children, raising a family, building human community, serving the poor, healing... These are all one and the same; cultivating right relationship through offering one's self to the service of others, be it a classroom full of eight year olds or two acres of winter squash. Living through giving. Understanding in our hearts and minds that all of this, all of it, here in this place, in the fields and forests of Emery House, in the streets of Dorchester, thirty miles off the coast on George's Bank, in our office complex; we have the opportunity to, the responsibility to try to understand through our hearts and/or minds what a God who promises us peace needs us to do. It's at our finger tips, it is our finger tips. God loves the world so much that he gave us his only begotten son. God is in right relationship with us. We, through our lives, our livelihoods, our efforts... we must strive to be in right relationship with God. We have a merciful God who loves us. We have a gracious God who reminds us that living in balance with that which is most apparent is the most important thing we can do. Thank God for that.