

Sermon for June 28, 2026 – The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 20:1-6 (EHV)

Theme: The LORD is a jealous God

- 1) Who deserves your love, having delivered you from your slavery
- 2) Who demands your fear, for He alone is God.
- 3) Who encourages your trust, promising mercy to all who love Him

Then God spoke all these words: ²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, where you were slaves. ³You shall have no other gods beside me. ⁴You shall not make any carved image for yourself or a likeness of anything in heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. ⁵Do not bow down to them or be subservient to them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God. I follow up on the guilt of the fathers with their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren, if they also hate me. ⁶But I show mercy to thousands who love me and keep my commandments.

What does God mean when He says, “*I the LORD your God, am a jealous God?*”

He does not mean He’s suspicious or envious, but that He is fiercely protective of His honour, His name, and the people who bear it. Just as a good parent is fiercely protective of their children, so the LORD is fiercely protective of us. And just as a good parent expects respect from their children, insisting they listen and obey, so the LORD expects the same from us; for we are His children.

Let us consider these truths under the theme: **The LORD is a jealous God**, who deserves your love, demands your fear, and encourages your trust.

Part One: Who deserves your love – having delivered you from your slavery.

Our sermon text takes place at Mt. Sinai, about two months after Israel’s exodus from Egypt.

Picture the scene: Two million people stood at the base of a rugged desert mountain, enveloped by a thick, dark cloud. A cacophony of thunder and lightning accompanied angelic trumpet blasts as a great fire descended on the mountain, causing it to quake and smoke. Through this terrifying display, God announced His presence and the importance of what He would say.¹

Then God spoke all these words: the Ten Commandments, which teach us to love God first, and then our fellow man. But before God tells Israel how they should love Him, He gives them the great reason why:

²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt, where you were slaves.

God wanted Israel to obey Him not merely out of obligation, but from a grateful desire –

recognizing the great saving love He had for them. Shortly before this, the LORD reminded them:

⁴‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now if you will carefully listen to my voice and keep my covenant, then you will be my special treasure out of all the nations, although the entire earth is mine. ⁶You will be my kingdom of priests and my holy nation.’ⁱⁱⁱ

God didn’t just save Israel from something; He saved them for something: to be the object of His love and a reflection of His glory on earth.

The LORD, therefore, had every right to be jealous of Israel’s love – and of ours. Why? Because of how He rescued us from our slavery to sin.

Even though we don’t see fire and smoke, hear thunder and a trumpet, or feel the earth shake beneath us – that doesn’t mean God isn’t present.

Jesus said:

“In fact where two or three have gathered together in my name, there I am among them.”ⁱⁱⁱ

As the LORD was present with His people at Mount Sinai, so He is present with us now through His Word and Sacraments, reminding us of how He saved us from our slavery to sin, death, and the devil.

Ever since Adam and Eve rebelled against God’s command, humanity has been lost in sin and doomed to hell. Our gracious God saw our plight and saved us. How? By sending His only-begotten Son to earn for us the righteousness we need to stand before God. Having kept His Father’s law perfectly in our place, Jesus took all our sins upon Himself and went to the cross, suffering and dying for them all. It is finished: Jesus has paid for every hurtful action, spiteful word, and lustful thought of yours in full. His resurrection from the dead proves they are forgiven.

But God didn’t stop there. After ascending into heaven, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to lead you to repentance through His preached Word, awakening faith in your heart to trust in Christ alone for salvation. Through the sacrament of Holy Baptism, the Father washed you clean from all sin, declaring you to be His dearly loved child and heir of heaven.

And just as every good parent wants their children to obey out of love, acknowledging that the household rules are for their good, so the LORD wants us to obey Him, trusting that everything He commands flows from His heart of love.

That is the proper reason for a Christian to keep God’s commandments: not out of fear of punishment or to earn God’s favour, but in gratitude for the great mercy God has shown in saving us and declaring us to be His dearly loved people.

Part Two: Who demands your fear – for He alone is God.

Therefore, the LORD expects our fear, demanding that we put nothing else before Him.

³You shall have no other gods beside me. ⁴You shall not make any carved image for yourself or a likeness of anything in heaven above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. ⁵Do not bow down to them or be subservient to them,

God is exceedingly jealous of His honour – and rightly so. It is a great shame to ascribe creation, preservation, and salvation to anyone who is not the LORD; for only He can accomplish such great things. Only He can help us in our time of need.

Now, we might be tempted to think: “This is an easy commandment to keep. I proudly consider myself a Christian and would never dream of worshipping Allah, Buddha, or any other god. I wouldn’t even consider praying to Mary or lighting a candle for a saint.”

It’s good that we would never do such things, but that doesn’t mean we’ve kept this commandment. As Luther explained in his Small Catechism, whenever we fear, love, or trust in someone or something ahead of the LORD, we sin against this commandment.

Consider what that means:

Whenever we work hard for money, thinking that the more we have, the safer we are, money becomes our god.

Prioritizing sports, leisure, or hobbies over worship and the Bible makes those interests our gods.

If fear of family or friends' opinions prevents us from joining a church that teaches God's Word, those people have become our gods.

When fear of people's reactions keeps us from telling them about sin and our Savior, they become our gods.

And the LORD hates it whenever we put anyone or anything before Him in our lives.

“But what’s the big deal? I still love Him even if I pursue these other things – shouldn’t He understand that?” No, He should not; for just as a wife flirting with other men mocks her husband’s love, so we insult God’s love when we fear, love, or trust anyone or anything above Him, as the LORD Himself explains:

For I the LORD your God am a jealous God.

The LORD is so fiercely protective of His honour that He demands our fear – not that we are terrified of Him, but that we respect His righteousness, mercy, and power. He wants us to find refuge in Him, and not in our bank accounts, for only He has the power to give and take away. He wants us to care more about what He thinks of us than what our family and friends do. He tells us

not to worry about how people will receive our confession of Him; but simply to proclaim His Word, promising to accomplish His purposes through it.^{iv}

Yes, the LORD wants us to pursue Him and His Word as our highest treasure, because, as the Bible says: *The world and its desires pass away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.*^v

For I the LORD your God am a jealous God. I follow up on the guilt of the fathers with their children, their grandchildren, and their great-grandchildren, if they also hate me.

What does the LORD mean by this?

It does not mean God will send any child to hell merely because his father or mother was an unbeliever. God's Word is crystal clear on this point: *The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share in the guilt of the father, and the father will not share in the guilt of the son.*^{vi}

What it means, rather, is that the earthly consequences of sin often affect future generations. For example, when the Israelites refused to enter Canaan, fearing its people more than they trusted the LORD's promise, God made them wander in the desert for 40 years. Even though this affected their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, God's mercy was still with them, forgiving everyone who repented.

Those, however, who revealed their hatred of the LORD by refusing to repent were not forgiven. Sharing in their fathers' sin, they would share their condemnation as well.

God is deadly serious about His commandments. His holiness has not changed. We worship the same God whom Old Testament Israel worshiped: the LORD who demands our total fear, honour and obedience. Why? Because He alone is our holy God, who not only created us but also mercifully saved us to enjoy His loving presence forever.

Part Three: Who encourages your trust – promising mercy and every blessing to all who love Him.

Therefore, the LORD is not only jealous of the honour He is due; He is also fiercely protective of those who fear, love and trust in Him above all things. He states:

I the LORD your God am a jealous God.... I show mercy to thousands who love me and keep my commandments.

The "thousands" to whom God shows mercy should be understood as "thousands of generations." Let me explain why:

Abraham exhibited incredible faith in the LORD's promises, and the LORD credited it to him as righteousness.^{vii} The LORD so delighted in Abraham's faith that, throughout Old Testament

history, He pointed to His promise to Abraham as the reason He stayed faithful to Israel – even when they turned against Him.

Think about this in contrast to what the LORD said about those who hate Him: even though His anger may have an earthly effect on a few subsequent generations, His divine mercy extends to a thousand generations of those who exhibit their faith in Christ through loving obedience

The greatest fulfilment of this truth is found in Jesus. Because of His perfect love and obedience on our behalf, God has shown mercy in Christ to all sinners of every generation, declaring everyone forgiven in Christ. That mercy becomes yours through faith in Jesus.

Whenever you are tempted to worry about your finances, He invites you to trust His promise that, for Christ's sake, He will graciously provide everything you need.^{viii}

Whenever the future looks frightening, and you wonder what will come of your life, God wants you to trust His promise to be present and work in all things for your everlasting good.^{ix}

For God has said:

*I will never leave you,
and I will never forsake you.*

⁶So then we say with confidence:

*The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid.
What will man do to me?^x*

And why will God do all these things for you? The LORD tells us in Psalm 91:

*Because he clings to me, I will rescue him.
I will protect him, because he acknowledges my name.
He will call on me, and I will answer him.
I will be with him in distress.
I will deliver him and I will honor him.
With long life I will satisfy him,
and I will let him see my salvation.^{xi}*

Brothers and sisters in Christ: the LORD your God is a jealous God who deserves your love, demands your fear, and encourages your trust. Therefore, do what He commands and be as zealous for Him as He is for you – understanding that when you fail, and you will, you don't have to run away from Him in fear. Instead, trusting in His love, you can run to Him in faith. For *if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*^{xii}

You can be confident of this because the same LORD who rescued Israel from its slavery has rescued you from yours. He is a jealous God – not only jealous for His honour, but jealous for you – so fiercely loyal to you and loving you that He gave up His own Son to save you.^{xiii} Amen.

ⁱ Cf. Exodus 19:16-20 and Hebrews 12:18-21

ⁱⁱ Exodus 19:4-6 EHV

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- iii Matthew 18:20 EHV
 - iv Cf. Isaiah 55:11
 - v 1 John 2:17 EHV
 - vi Ezekiel 18:20 EHV
 - vii Cf. Romans 4:3
 - viii Cf. Romans 8:32, Matthew 6:31-33
 - ix Cf. Matthew 28:20, Romans 8:28
 - x Hebrews 13:5-6 EHV
 - xi Psalm 91:14-16 EHV
 - xii 1 John 1:9 EHV
 - xiii Cf. John 3:16