

After the Sermon Hymn: *Stepping down to the congregation:*

Ex 32: 1-14 **“God Matters”** (10/09/2011)

- by Rev. Peter Dennebaum -

Material needed: DVD “The 10 Commandments”

- Scene Selection: no. 43
- 2:38min / II. 3:31min / III. 3.00min / IV. 2:50min
- Total time: 11min (10:59 min)

God’s peace with you!

Have you ever watched a movie in worship? ...No? Welcome in the 231st century! ☺ ... Then this will be today your first time! Ramon and I managed to carry this huge monster TV upstairs. ... Today’s sermon style should give you an idea, how sermons could be done with more video material if you would invest around a thousand dollars into a projector and a screen. It would allow for example to do a meditation about a picture, which could be projected onto the screen or a short YouTube video clip, which could be played from a laptop.

Today we will watch in total 4 scenes from the 1956 movie “The 10 Commandments” by Cecil B. DeMill, starring Charlton Heston. (in front of the National Rifle Association “With my cold hands...”). All 4

scenes are taken out of the last part of this monumental opus [opus].

We connect therewith last weeks reading of the 10 commandments with today's reading about the Golden Calf. The scenes I picked are not only interesting from their artistic point of view –I just love the often so dramatic, compared with today often simple and but impressive realizations -, no, the scenes are also interesting from their THEOLOGICAL interpretation. Each English bible translation already is an interpretation of the scriptures as each film adaption is an interpretation. In this regard the movie is already a sermon in itself to which we react. Today we do not only talk between you, the text & me – today we also get in communication with a visual translation as fourth partner.

This is the way I propose to proceed:

First we read the text together. Then I will draw for us the contemporary background for our text and introduce the first movie part. After the first and second video presentation I will give us brief impulses for a conversation. After the third presentation we open the space for comments from your side and we end with watching together the fourth and last scene of the movie. Could you agree with this procedure?

Ok, then let us read together the text for today: From the second book of Moses, Exodus, chapter 32, the verses 1-14:

Ex 32: 1-14 - The Golden Calf

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron and said to him, 'Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' ²*Aaron said to them, 'Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.'* ³*So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron.* ⁴*He took the gold from them, formed it in a mould, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'* ⁵*When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord.'* ⁶*They rose early the next day, and offered burnt-offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.*

⁷*The Lord said to Moses, 'Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; ⁸they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" ' ⁹The Lord said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. ¹⁰Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation.'*

11 But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, 'O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians say, "It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth"? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, "I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it for ever." ' ¹⁴And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

AMEN

A) **Oswald von Nell-Breuning** and his sociaethics & introduction in the 1st movie part

The Hebrew and Christian scriptures do not propose a specific economic system. But in stories we all know we easily can get an idea what God expects from us. A few weeks ago for example we had Jesus parable, how the owner of the vineyard paid workers, who started at different times during the day working in his vineyard, at the end of the day all the same wage. This allowed all day laborers to work and to make a living for themselves and their families. Jesus' request for us in the name of God is: It is about us and not the

economy! This means to replace OUR justice with God's justice.

God wants obviously that everybody can have live in dignity. Stupid wise we cannot find in the bible a parable about wall street – but therefore for example the story about the young rich man, who get told by Jesus to give his money away; It is the famous story about the camel and the eye of a needle. Who ever has a little bit of money in the savings account might feel discomfort to even think about this kind of message. And I think it is pretty normal; nothing to be ashamed about. It is the way how we learned to think and how we grew up.

If we look for indications how Jesus in the New Testament and God in the Old Testament would like us to think and to build up our societies we prefer to look at the parable with the talents; The servant, who buried the entrusted talents in the ground, gets criticized, the one who worked with them, complimented. We usually take this as evidence, that our market thinking is Christian.

It is a social ethical question we deal with: We don't get a clear economical concept in the bible, but we get values. These values need to be socially discussed. Depending on the social covenant within a society the biblical values get interpreted differently. In the Western world alone, 3 kind of market systems got developed – all of them influenced, even developed by Christian thinking. The Anglo-Saxon model, realized here in the States, but also in Great-Brittan,

focuses on the individual freedom. On the other side we observe in the Scandinavian Countries social covenants, which allow market mechanism to work in exactly defined corridors; everybody accepts high taxes, but expects therefore free Health Care, free education or a meaningful jobs. The continental European societies finally are some where in between. Conclusion: Based on Christian thinking different kind of economic and social systems are possible. But even more important for us in this moment: Social covenants can change! – IF THE CITICENTS OF A SOCIETY DECIDE SO AFTER A SOCIAL PROCESS OF DELIBERATION.

One of the most important social-ethical thinkers of the 20th century, the Jesuit Oswald von Nell-Breuning, requested a third form of economy compared to capitalism and communism. He called it “Laborism”. What he meant was: extensive profit-orientation is not according to God’s will, but also not the exclusive focus on the community side of our human nature. In countless publications and conversations he campaigned for a social-economical system, in which humanity and our human needs are in the center of attention. He fought for a system, in which our personal needs would be first – with enough paid times to rest, paid times to raise children and paid times to learn. ... with other words: less profit for few, but therefore more life quality for all. He proposed to get the idea of democracy also into the field of economy and to strengthen co-ops and employee-co-management-models.

Oswald von Nell-Breuning became the founder of the catholic social

teaching. His teaching is today official doctrine of the Roman-Catholic church. Sad only, that we hear so rarely about it!

We watch now the first scene from the ‘Ten Commandments’. It is 2 min, 38 seconds long. Please turn your attention how Dathan starts the rebellion against Moses. His role is confirmed in the Hebrew Bible; in the movie he is also a former overseer of the Hebrews and informant for the Egyptians. Watch how clever he isolates Moses wife and mother from the rest of the Israelites [--leits] and how he promises the safety in Egypt in exchange for the trust and freedom in God. Please notice also how he manipulates the masses and ask yourself where you can see this motto of “dividing and ruling” happening also in our times. Last comment: You will see Dathan asking Aaron, the older brother of Moses and first High Priest of the Israelites, to make a Golden Calf. Then he will turn to the man on his other side and will proclaim this man as the new High Priest. This man is Korach. Korach is also bequeathed in the bible as insurgent against Moses. He and 250 rioters [reie-ters] got according to the bible swamped by the earth through God’s sentence.

I. (2:38min) 1:10.10 – 12.48; The Defection

B) “Occupy Wall Street” - introduction to movie part 2

This standing picture speaks a lot. It shows a politician, a High Priest

and an Egyptian. It shows how the interest of a few can manipulate a whole nation. For me this is very up to date.

Today at 2pm a Golden Calf will be carried from Judson Memorial Church to Wall Street. And I hope we will be many when we will worship at 3.30pm together with Jews, Muslims and other people of faith not the Golden Calf, but God.

Four weeks ago a few young people started to express on Wall Street their frustration as forgotten people. No jobs. No perspective. Everything just about money and success, all responsibilities individualized. Profit greed over all. No social cohesion. Within four weeks the numbers of protesters increased last Wednesday to 15,000. The protest is about to become a social movement.

When you see now the next scene, please turn your attention how the music underlines Israel's dance, OUR dance on the volcano. Wonderful staged is the contrast between God's will and Israel's / our behavior. Watch how uncomfortable, yes afraid even Moses seems to feel, when he receives the commandments; he seems to feel already in which political fights he will have to get into while fighting for God's law among his own nation. ... The following scene lasts 3 and a half minutes.

II. (3:31) 1:12.50 – 16:23; God's law against Wall Street

C) “Freedom” & introduction to part 3 of the movie

Freedom alone is brutal and merciless. The freedom to do what we can and want, is not the freedom in God, is not the freedom God wants us to be in. Our freedom ends there where we cannot take care anymore about ourselves. Social-economical systems can manipulate us to exploit ourselves, our human fellows and creation – or they can stir our energies and needs towards each other and our human needs. How much competition do we want? How much social security do we want? Economy is NO law of nature – economy has to be formed and framed by God’s commandments – or we betray our own faith, our people and ourselves.

When we go into the ‘next to last’ scene you will see the wonderful impressive encounter of God’s will and the social experience of most people today. Like Moses came from the Mount Sinai and asked his people to do a decision we reach out this afternoon to Wall Street to ask for a decision. We cannot make a deal with God; God is a jealous God. God wants ALL attention. You cannot corrupt God. Moses is like Jesus: You cannot serve two masters at the same time. You need to decide if you want to follow God OR the greed. You need to decide between life and death. There is no compromise possible! Says Moses, says Jesus!

A last comment to the following 3 min - scene: The man, who appears in the first seconds behind Moses’ is Joshua, Moses’ former

servant and later successor. Please turn your attention to the short dialogue between Moses and Dathan, the Wall Street representative. Dathan says: “We are free”! Moses holds against it: “There is no freedom without God’s law!”

III. vorspulen von 1:16.23, (3min) 1:20.59– 23.59; Judgment & separation

D) Congregational Conversation, then: Introduction to the last movie part

Is a new social covenant, a new American Contract possible? Do you want one?

Let us watch now together the last 2 min and 50 seconds of the movie. Moses is not allowed to get into the Promised Land. He knows why: Because he disobeyed God by the rivers of strife. Moses refers here to the incident, which is bequeathed to us in the 4th book of Moses: The Israelites doubted God and Moses accommodated them by asking God for a sign, which was approved through water by hitting twice a rock. For this compromise Moses gets now punished. When it comes to God’s commandments we cannot buy or steal ourselves out of the contract!

You will see Sephora, Moses wife, with whom he had two sons. Her words to Moses hold also a message for us: “You taught them not to

live from bread alone. You are God's torch, which lights the way into freedom." God's freedom, not Wall Streets freedom!

And you we will see finally how Moses hands over his heritage to his brother Joshua and the priest Eleazar.

Moses last words content our mission statement still today. Listen what he has to say:

V. (2.50 min): 1: 24.00 – 26.50; Handing over the legacy and end

AMEN.