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St. John's Burlington

July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015

For every sin, there is a rationalization for it. There are very few sins that are completely unexplainable as to why someone would do it. For example, the seventh commandment says, "You shall not steal." But have you ever seen Aladdin? When Aladdin is introduced he is stealing from street vendors and Aladdin says to one of the street vendors. "I gotta eat to live. I gotta steal to eat. Otherwise we'd get along." Aladdin feels like he needs to steal to eat. For every sin, there is what seems like a reasonable explanation.

Maybe a person has fallen on hard times and thinks, "What does it really hurt the store if I shoplift?" Or maybe the person thinks it's unfair that other people get such nice stuff. I work harder than they do.

There are very few sins that don't have an understandable reason for doing it. But do you know what the apostle Paul calls that? he calls that "the darkening of our mind." Our thoughts are warped so that we can spin just about any sin and make it seem like it's ok. If you are stealing right now in any way, you might have any number of rationalizations. But no matter how we spin it or rationalize it God's command is still there, "You shall not steal."

Jesus was crucified in the middle of two criminals, two thieves. One of them, even on the cross, was still spinning and rationalizing. "I shouldn't be up here. Jesus should get me down." He said in Luke 23:39, "Aren't you the Christ save yourself and us!" But the other thief had stopped all of his rationalization and just admitted his guilt: "Don't you fear God? We are punished justly for we are getting what our deeds deserve." Then he said "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." The thief on the cross stops all his excuses and just depends on Jesus. "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today, you will be with me in Paradise." On the same day that he was on the cross, that thief would be with Jesus in Paradise. Even as he hung there on the cross that thief must have had such joy.

Imagine for a moment that the thief would have been let down from the cross and been allowed to carry on his life. Do you think the thief would have continued life as a thief? No! Of course not.

The Bible says that through baptism we died with Christ to our old life of sin, and now just as Jesus has been raised from the dead we also live a new life of obedience. So for the rest of this sermon let's think about how we can obey the seventh commandment "you shall not steal."

One very common form of stealing is when you are lazy at work. Whether you get paid hourly or by a fixed salary, if you go into work and you don't really do anything but you still collect your

paycheck. That's really stealing. Martin Luther said, "They are lazy and unfaithful in their work. They are far worse than burglars, whom we can guard against with locks and bolts and yet you still collect your paycheck like a thief." Now it's just not plausible to give money back to your employer. But from now on, through baptism let's die to our old life of sin and live a new life. Paul said, "He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work doing something useful with his own hands, that he might have something to share with those in need." (Ephesians 4:28)

Another way we steal is when we withhold money from people to whom we owe money. Cheating on taxes is a good example of this. Paul says, "If you owe taxes, pay taxes." (Romans 13:7). Now the government offers tax breaks for any number of things, but make sure that you are staying within the rules. There's a great verse in Proverbs which says, "Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice." (Proverbs 16:8). It's better to have a little money and still have your righteousness, than to have a bunch of money that was obtained illegally.

There's a Bible passage that says that "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." Circumstances might cause people to steal, but more often it comes down to the love of money which causes people to steal. And the solution to that is to locate your love somewhere else. That's what happened to Zacchaeus. When Jesus came over to his house, his love was now located in Jesus.

Think of it this way. Every once in a while you hear about a celebrity caught shop-lifting and everyone thinks, that's so foolish. This person is a millionaire, why would they steal clothes from a department store? You are more than a millionaire in Jesus. Jesus said, blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. You will inherit the earth. You all already wealthy beyond your wildest dreams in Jesus. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Today, you'll be with me in Paradise." Jesus gives you more than you can steal. So why steal? Amen.