



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Understanding the Old Testament The Giving of the Law

... *“Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!”*⁷ *For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him?*⁸ *And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?* Deut 4:6-8

Christians have a much distorted view of the Law of Moses. Too often Christians view the law as a terrible burden; an unforgiving set of rules that constricted the life of the people of Israel. In actuality, the people of Israel viewed following the law in a very positive manner. For instance, consider Ps 1:1-3:

¹ *Happy are those
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
or sit in the seat of scoffers;*
² *but their delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law they meditate day and night.*
³ *They are like trees
planted by streams of water,
which yield their fruit in its season,
and their leaves do not wither.
In all that they do, they prosper.*

Following the law meant living in the way God desires. Moreover, as indicated in the passage quoted from Deuteronomy, living according to the law was meant to be a guide to the world. This view of living is in accordance with the promise of God to Abraham when he was first called. Through the children of Abraham, God intended to bless the world:

³ *I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”* Gen 12:3

God intended the example of the people of Israel to be a light to all the nations of the Earth. Isaiah 49:6. By living according to the statutes of God, the people of Israel would be a light to all the world.

The general pattern of the Law is set in the Decalogue, the ten commandments: Exodus 20:1-17; Deut 5:1-22. At the center of the Law, and of the life of Israel, is God:

² I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³ you shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:2

The people are prohibited from worshipping other Gods or making substitutes/symbols for the presence of God (idols). One day each week is consecrated to God as a time when work stops and people recall that it was God who created them and all that they can know.

Next is a commandment aimed at the basic unit of society: the family; you shall honor your Mother and father. Although people often think of this commandment in terms of young children doing what they are told, it is probably better conceived as a command to adult children to love and care for their aging parents, and to do only those things with their lives that bring honor on the family.

The remaining commandments deal with the proper ordering of society and the areas that most often bring discord to the community. The command not to kill should not be limited to the act of murder, but any act that takes the life of another (although most scholars would exclude the taking of life in war as part of the intended meaning of the text.) Crime is first committed in the heart when we covet what is owned by another, hence the prohibitions against coveting. The legal system falls apart if the testimony of witnesses cannot be trusted. And, throughout all history, great discord has followed the practice of adultery.

Much of the rest of the law is based upon ordering of society around the Decalogue. If you have never taken time to read these before, you would do well to do so at least once. Don't get bogged down in descriptions of liturgies and priestly functions, but focus instead on those laws that deal with how the people are to live together. Among other things, you will find that, embedded in the law in multiple places, is the commandment to take care of the poor and the helpless. Also, watch for two concepts that are repeated throughout the text:

1. The reminder that God freed the people of Israel from oppression in Egypt because God heard their cries and that God will hear the cries of those the people of Israel oppress; and
2. Justice must be given not only to the people of Israel without regard to wealth or station, but also to the alien in their midst.

By keeping the law of God, the People of Israel would show the world how God intended us to live. They would be a light unto the nations. In later centuries when the prophets of God condemned the people it was because they had stopped living lives of justice and right relationship with God (righteousness).

Preacher, What Does the Bible Say about ...?

From the time I came to Trinity I have stated on numerous occasions that I am willing to consider a sermon, or sermon series, on any subject that is of concern. I want to reaffirm that offer since it's been a while since I have stated it. If there is a subject upon which you would like me to preach I will consider it. If I do not think it appropriate for a sermon I will explain why. It might also be appropriate to address some issues as part of a Newsletter article or series or as part of the Sunday School curriculum. But, if at all possible, I will seek to

Speak to these issues that are of interest on Sunday morning. One purpose of worship is to contemplate our relationship with God and if something is bothering you it is likely bothering others as well.

New Disciple Bible Study

Disciple Bible Study is a powerful experience that can open the Bible up for the participants. I would be willing to begin a new class this September if at least seven people desired to undertake the 34 week study. I could do this study on Monday or Tuesday nights between 7 and 9. If participants would prefer to meet on a week day that could also be arranged. In years past I have also taught Disciple Bible Study between 7 and 9 AM Sunday mornings. If you are interested please contact me at the Church. If you desire additional information for yourself or to give to a friend I have some explanatory booklets available.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

The Thursday Morning Bible Study Group will meet this week, August 25th at 10:00 AM. At that time we will start a study of Philippians.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons are part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Leslie Eastwood	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

August 28: Sermon: The Un-dinner Party. What do you do when you give a massive dinner party but nobody comes? My texts are Hebrews 13:1–8, 15–16 and Luke 14:15-24.

September 4: Sermon: My Work is Done. At the request of a parishioner, I have written a sermon discussing the ideas of Charles E. Hummel in his book, *Tyranny of the Urgent*. What we perceive as urgent can come to control our lives and lead us away from God. My texts are John 17:1-5 and Mark 1:35-39.

Worship Leaders

August 28

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Dorise and Bill LeCates, **Greeters**

Maurice and Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

September 4

Stacy Bell, **Liturgist**

Maurice and Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**

Dawn and Richard Stevens, **Ushers**

GraceWorks has a shortage on many items in our food pantry, and we need your help restocking it! Here is a list of some very critical items needed in our food pantry: **Critical Needs:** Canned green vegetables (not green beans), Canned beans, Canned meat (not tuna), Cereal, Hamburger Helper type boxed meals, Soup. Please support this important ministry with your regular donations. The box is located beside the side door.

Parents Night Out: Going forward, Parents Night Out will take place the first Friday of every month. However, the next event will be **September 9 which is the second Friday**. This is a one-time-only change from the first Friday. Please make your friends and neighbors aware of this opportunity.

Hosts and Hostesses for First Sunday Lunch: Please see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Please add your name to host this occasion for the coming months.

The Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School Class is both learning and enjoying a series of videos, narrated by Ray Vanderlann. The videos as well as the narration take place in ancient lands described in the Old Testament. We enjoy discussion about what we are learning and the application of the lessons to our lives. We enjoy fellowship beginning at 9:45 with our study beginning at 10:00. All are welcome to join us as we pursue Biblical truths and the application for our lives.

Birthdays in August

Mike Rohrig, Chuck McKibben, Stacy Bell, Lyndsay Stafford, Jan Bell, Charles Wilson, Dana Bauguess

Happy Birthday to each of you!