

Grace and peace to you from God the Father, Son and Spirit. Amen.
Whatever things were written before were written for our learning. That
Scripture which forms the basis for our patience and comfort today comes
from

Leviticus 18:1–5, 19:9–18 (NKJV)

- 1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,
- 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘I am the Lord your God.
- 3 According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances.
- 4 You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the Lord your God.
- 5 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord. ...
- 9 ‘When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.
- 10 And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God.
- 11 ‘You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.
- 12 And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.
- 13 ‘You shall not cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning.
- 14 You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I am the Lord.
- 15 ‘You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.
- 16 You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord.
- 17 ‘You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.
- 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

**I am the LORD:
"Do this and you will live"**

1. Unchangeable: If a man does these things, he will live
2. Unchangeable: Jesus did do these things, died, and now lives
3. Unchangeable: We now live, therefore we do these things

PRAY: Lord, Sanctify us by Your Truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.

In the name Jesus our Savior, dear fellow redeemed,

The LORD never changes. It is the meaning of His name. The name "LORD" with all caps in the Hebrew is "Jehovah" – which means "He is." This special name reminds us of God's eternal, unchanging essence. We find it repeated 8 times in our text.

The LORD never changes. The same LORD who visits Moses and speaks to the children of Israel 3500 years ago, who also visits and speaks to Israel at the time of Jesus, is the same LORD God who visits and speaks to us today. So He says in Micah: "I am the LORD, I do not change."

Jesus speaks as LORD God when He addresses the lawyer in our Gospel text from Luke 10 – "do this and you will live." He speaks an unchangeable truth.

The man is a lawyer; meaning, he is an expert in the Law of Moses. He poses a question designed to "test" Jesus. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus' response is to go directly to the Law of Moses, "what is written in the law? What is your interpretation?" In a sense, the lawyer is right to call upon the great commandments to love God and love your neighbor. So Jesus agrees in this unchangeable truth – "do this and you will live." The man who does these things, that is, performs perfect love for God and perfect love for his neighbor, shall live eternally. On the flip side, anything less is death.

5 You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord.

1. Unchangeable: If a man does these things, he will live

The phrase is both unchangeable and unachievable: If a man does these things, he will live. Just as with that lawyer, we need to hear this. We need to hear the Law's impartial condemnation. The Law concerns itself only with righteousness which is gained by works and is impartial in its judgment.

We need to hear this because, just like the lawyer in our Gospel reading, our flesh is busy rationalizing questions like, "who is my neighbor?" Think about why the lawyer is asking this. It says in Luke 10:29 that he "wants to justify himself." That is, he wants

to declare himself righteous. Now why would he need to declare himself righteous except for the reason that he was not already righteous and he knew it?

The lawyer quotes an Old Testament phrase found in our text, v.18 – **you shall love your neighbor as yourself**. In the original Hebrew, this word translated “neighbor” could mean anything from “family member” to “friend” to “business associate.”

As we consider the Law of Moses which comes to us in our text, we find God speaking in two ways. He speaks one way when He addresses the people as a geographical community. As a nation the children of Israel were made up of both believers and unbelievers. When governing such a people, God had to enforce civil laws. The unbelievers would not be guided by faith and love in Christ, He had to tell them who and how to love. He had to force them through threats and promise of reward, even as we today are governed by laws that threaten and promise reward.

God speaks in a second way when He addresses the hearts of the people. In spiritual matters, God would have the people realize that they cannot do perform these things and live. The lawyer quotes this text, trying to constrain that word “neighbor” to suggest that love has some sort of proximity, some sort of partiality.

We often think the same way. Our flesh does not want the Law to speak of love in its boundless terms. We want a list of rules that we can handle. I’ll love my family – at least most of the time. I’ll love my friends – at least as long as their nice to me. I’ll love those who are in need – at least when they deserve it.

“If a man does these things he shall live by them.” So who has? The fact that we have to be told who and how to love should say something in and of itself. When we see that person who has so wrongfully treated us, who has injured us financially, or physically, or emotionally, or who always does things their own way, or who never appreciates what I do for them, or who has squandered their money and welfare and health on selfish living – when we see them on the side of the road, when we see them stumble, when we see something go wrong for them – do we pass by or do we stop? Do we leave our gleanings as it says in v.10? Are we willing to part with the overabundance we have been given? Are we willing to part with our precious time to listen to someone who we feel doesn’t deserve to be listened to?

And so Jesus says – “From the heart proceed evil thoughts,” and John writes, “whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life.” Love has no proximity. There is no geographical association or contingency that would say who and how to love. In the words of Jesus, *Matthew 5:43-44* 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

As our hymn just stated: It was a false, misleading dream that God His Law had given that sinners could themselves redeem and by their works gain heaven. The Law is but a mirror bright to bring the inbred sin to light that lurks within our nature."

For the Law of God speaks not just to our actions, but ultimately is a matter of the heart.
17 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. ... 18 but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

2. Unchangeable: Jesus did do these things, died, and now lives

Who has done these things? There was One who did accomplish the unchangeable, unachievable things required of him. But before He would live, He first had to die. The Unchanging LORD who said "do this," who declared these judgments and ordinances, also walked in them.

Notice how Jesus poses a different question back to the lawyer in our Gospel text. He recounts the story of the Samaritan helping the injured man on the side of the road (cf. Luke 10), and concludes by asking – "And which one do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves."

Jesus did not think in terms of "who is my neighbor?" but in terms of "who can I be a neighbor to?" Who can I love and serve and save? Jesus would stop for every helpless body lying on the side of road – He would stop for you, left for dead, lying abused and beaten by your own sins. He would aid you in a way that no one else could.

The LORD was unchanging in His service toward us and God, under the Law, in perfect obedience and boundless love toward His neighbor. God did not have to tell Jesus how and who to love. "We love Him because He first loved us." His neighbors were his enemies. Previewing the ways our sinful flesh would rebel, reject, and reinvent the will of God; Jesus still loved us with boundless love. – He did not deal falsely, He did not cheat, He did not deal partially loving some more than others.

But His work would not be done there. After doing all these things that God would require, and truly deserving to live, God would have one more act of love for His Son to offer.

Romans 5:8 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus loved His enemies – He loved you by being the sacrifice to atone for your sins; He would stand in the guilt of your weakest moment, your most crooked sin, your own unbelief; He "who knew no sin, became sin for you." The LORD God says to Jesus: "do this and you will live." Thus Jesus has risen from death and lives eternally, Your savior.

This redemptive work will never change. Heaven and earth will pass away, you will go on to fall into sins daily, but the LORD has forgiven you and will not change this promise: "whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."

I am the LORD – unchangeable. And you now live.

3. Unchangeable: We now live, therefore we do these things

Now that we live, what shall we do? If there is no more burden or unachievable expectation to do these things, what is left? Love is left. Love is all that is left in Christ – the freedom to do these things because you love and believe in Jesus.

Scripture compares this deliverance from sin to God's deliverance of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

3 According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances.

To go back to the constraints of the Law, to be told how and who to love, and to do it with expectation of reward is to return to the ways of Egypt, to walk in the ways of the world.

Unchangeable – the Israelites had been delivered from Egypt, God was going to overthrow the Canaanites, and all this to set them free. Even our own faith in Jesus is a work of God's salvation. We do nothing. And yet we do everything.

"For the love of Christ constrains us..." Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5. We are now slaves of Christ and taken captive to His will. Not by compulsion, but by free grace, we love and serve our neighbor.

Now we don't need to be told how and who to love except when we need to rebuke our flesh. Bound, slaves of Christ, free to love. He says, "I am the LORD who works in you to will and do of My good pleasure."

So we leave our gleanings behind. We don't take the second helping – the extra boat, the extra car, the cushion in our budget, the cushion in our investment package – these gleanings are left to the mission of Christ. Our offerings are the gleanings. By supporting our congregation, our pastor, the CLC, ILC, all these things serve our fellow brethren, they reach out to the poor among us, they feed the stranger with the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This love drives our unity and fellowship. When we look around at each other today, we see ourselves. We see souls bought with the blood of Jesus – "for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

It would make no sense to be partial toward one another, to bear a grudge, to love one more than another; we are all one. It would make no sense to gossip (v.17) about one another's sins even as it would make no sense to ignore such things. For we share one another's sins. As Paul writes in Galatians, "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." We go to each other individually to rebuke and bring forgiveness.

So also in our outreach, to the poor, to the deaf, to the blind, to the spiritually lost, to those who you might suppose have nothing to offer in return, we have no partiality. We share the truth of Jesus our Savior as He has shared this with us.

It is unchanging. We live, therefore we do these things.

So what does God say?

I am the LORD who never changes, therefore you should fear me in repentance because you have not done these things; I am the LORD who never changes, therefore you should fear me in faith remembering that I have given My Son for you and have forgiven your sins for His sake. You have died and now live in Jesus. Go and do likewise...

Amen.