

Sermon for the 29th October 2023
Love of God and Love of Neighbour

It is amazing how love can be so selective when it comes to God and our neighbour.

The Old Testament passage calls us to be Holy as God is Holy, but it only quotes a tiny section of the Holiness Code found in Leviticus 19. And in this single chapter alone there are some 16 pieces of advice/ laws set out to help God's people get their act together. The faith and life of God's people are bound together and not presented as separate ideals of ethical behavior. Love of God and love of others must be expressed in deeds; there must be equality in justice in civil and religious matters; there must be equality when it comes to mercy and how others are treated.

A. 1-4 This section of the Holiness Code was intended to help God's people imitate their Holy God. Unlike the world around them that kept religion and morals apart, the religious and moral life of God's people were closely tied up with each other-they could not have one without the other!!! They are called to be holy as The Lord is Holy.

- ⇒ It must affect the way that parents are treated,
- ⇒ The way God is revered,
- ⇒ and no room for spiritual competition is to be tolerated.

B. 5-8 Proper preparation must be made for Peace Offerings to be made. This was not to be taken lightly. The rules needed to be followed and there could be no tolerance of lax behavior on the part of the presenter of the sacrifice or the participants, They are dealing with Holy

matters.

- C. 9-10 When harvesting the fruit of the land they are to always remember the poor and the strangers among them. The fields are not to be reaped to their edges, nor are the trees to be glean of all of their fruit.
- D. 11-12 There must be total honesty when it comes to dealing with others. Unfair advantages are not to be tolerated. Do not steal, do not be crooked, let your word be your bond and do not invoke God's name if you do not mean what you are saying.
- E. 13-14 Oppression must not be tolerated. Wages are to be paid on time and the handicap are not to be ill-treated.
- F. 15-16 Hatred, the thought of vengeance and spitefulness cannot be named among the people of God. Do not go around slandering others or profiting from some mishap that you cause to your neighbour.
- G. 17-18 Do not hate others or carry a grudge against any of your people but love your neighbour as yourself
- H. 19 Do not play God by trying to change the created order. A mixture of materials is only used in the Tent of Meeting, but here it is forbidden to be used among the people of God.
- I. 20-22 They are not to take advantage of the slaves among them, particularly of the women.

If it does take place then an inquiry must be made and the offender must make atonement for his sin.

- J. 23-25 After planting trees, the fruit is not to be eaten for three years when they enter the Promised Land. It was believed that the fertility power of the soil under the former people's gods may receive the credit for the fruits of the trees in their first few years.
- K. 26-28 Eating of blood products is forbidden. Witchcraft is forbidden. The magical practice of cutting of the hair and making cuts into the skin (Tattoos) on behalf of the dead are forbidden.
- L. 29-30 Parents are to make sure that they do not encourage their daughters to become prostitutes. To begin such a practice will only cause moral decay to take over the land. They are to always keep God before them.
- M. 31 They are not to seek the advice of mediums and wizards. They have One who already controls their future and destiny.
- N. 32 Respect is to be shown to those whom honour is due.
- O. 33-34 They are not to exploit the aliens in the land. They must always recall where they have come from.
- P. 35-37 No crookedness is to be encouraged in terms of false weights, false measurements, or

quantities. They are to be honest in their dealings.

Conclusion

The God whose Kingdom to which we belong MUST control every area of our lives-BOTH religious and secular!!!

Honest to God, I feel tempted to make us repeat St. Paul's words from Ephesians 4:1-6 to talk about the kind of life we should be living if we really love God and Neighbour:

Ephesians 4:1-6

Unity in the Body of Christ

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."

Do you really love God and your neighbour???