

“You Have Heard It Said”
Feb. 19, 2017 – 7th Ordinary

Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18

19:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 19:2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. 19:9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 19:10 You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God. 19:11 You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. 19:12 And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD. 19:13 You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. 19:14 You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD. 19:15 You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. 19:16 You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the LORD. 19:17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. 19:18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23

3:10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. 3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ. 3:16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? 3:17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. 3:18 Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," 3:20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." 3:21 So let no one boast about human leaders. For all things are yours, 3:22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future--all belong to you, 3:23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

Matthew 5:38-48

5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 5:39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; 5:40 and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; 5:41 and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. 5:42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 5:44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 5:45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. 5:46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 5:47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

With the advent of on demand and subscription t.v. networks like Netflix some of you are familiar with binge watching. That's getting hooked on some t.v. show and watching it episode followed by episode until you are bleary eyed and all but incoherent. Others are like that with t.v. news or sports. Watching the ever expanding circus out of Washington or flipping between 4 basketball games at the time during March Madness. So here we are, back on the mountainside with Jesus for the 4th week in a row. By now those beatitudes are sounding pretty good. We felt kind of good about being the light of the world and the salt of the earth until we found out it meant we have to be righteous too. Then we get the murder, lust, adultery, anger, swearing litany. By now we're feeling a little bit raw. And today Jesus keeps on hammering away making us wonder if being a Buddhist might be a lot easier.

Once again Jesus gives us the 'you've heard it said, but' scenario. You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, take what all they've got AND turn the other cheek for some more. "You have heard that it was said if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give them the shirt off your back too! You have heard that it was said if anyone forces you to go one mile, go two. In fact, give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

'You have heard the preacher drone on about , "You shall love your neighbor..." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

It makes you wish there was a little less Jesus in this Christianity thing doesn't it? It makes for an awful dilemma. Is a little revenge and retribution all that wrong? We can keep up the eye for an eye principle. A tooth for a tooth is reasonable. Isn't a life for a life how it's supposed to work? You hit me, I hit you. You take from me, I take from you. You insult me, I insult you. You question my principles, my morality, my worth – I question the same of you. Eye for Eye, tooth for tooth. The only problem is, as some wise person has said, "keep that up long enough and there will be a world full of blind toothless people."

And Jesus, dear Jesus, we're not you. How do you forgive those who do such things to you? How do you with your ears ringing and water in your eyes and a bloodied nose turn the other cheek without so much as a offering up a lump on the other noggin in return? / How do you stop someone who demands your coat by giving up your shirt too?/ If someone compels you at work to stay an extra hour just because they are in power over you, do you really stay two? And am I really supposed to roll down the window and give everyone of those street creatures with the 'please help' signs a buck just because they ask? Now does that really help them? And if your neighbor strolls over and says,

‘uh, hey, can I borrow that brand new lawn mower you haven’t even used yet?’
Do you say, ‘here let me fill it with gas.’/ And come on, can we, dare we,
should we, love the very people who bring violence against us, who would take
away our very lives, who are our enemies?/ Do we include the people who
persecute us for the way we believe in the same prayer we offer for our loved
ones who are in need?/ Come on.

That’s just crazy. You’d have to be perfect to do that. Only God could do
that. After all, we’re just human. Sure the sun rises on all of us and the rain
soaks the righteous and the unrighteous too, but isn’t that part of the problem?
Can’t God tell the difference? We sure can and it isn’t fair. We know who’s evil
and unjust and unrighteous. You’d think God would know too. But there’s that
God is love, God loves everybody thing. We’re all God’s children thing. How
can that possibly be? He says ‘look, it’s easy to love someone who loves you.’
And even that makes us cringe because, Lord help us, we ‘humans’ don’t even
do that very well.

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart – more loving – more holy –
more like Jesus, but precious Jesus!, sweet Jesus!, a person can only take so
much! How can I possibly be more like Jesus, who says things that make your
brain ache: “you have heard it said, but I say.... “ Who says these things that
just make us wonder ‘how do you do that? And then, he takes his words and
puts them into action. When the full force of human betrayal slaps him across

his face he turns the other cheek for us just in time to hear **us**, feel **us**, who follow him, strike the blow of denying him, not once but multiple times. Turned over by those who hate what he stands for to the cruelty of those who would otherwise be indifferent towards him, he suffers about as much abuse as anyone has ever suffered **for us**. Then a man who does not know or understand him orders him to be nailed to a cross just because he can. And from that cross, as he is loving us to death, as if to answer the question we haven't even asked, as they derided him and taunted him and spat on him and asked him 'if you are the son of God why don't you save yourself?', he says, 'father, forgive them?' And then God's only begotten son, who thought even God had abandoned him, died for us, and in spite of our despicable excuses, **'but we're just human,'** in that death, in that self sacrifice, he saved us. In complete and utter weakness and humility he saves us. He saved us without lifting a finger. Without returning a single slap to the face. Without a balled up fist. Without a sword. Without a gun. Without a bomb. Without an army. With the sin of the whole world on his bloodied back *with his stripes*, the human being, Jesus, he did us heal, make us whole, love all of us. (long pause)

You'd think Jesus would just give up on us. You'd think he'd weary of the piety of the pew on Sunday and the vitriol of the facebook page on Monday. You'd think the guy sitting on the side of the hill looking at us would be fed up with those who lead the way, those modern day Pharisees, who make rules

and proclamations and orders to shun the refugee, to build walls of exclusion, to deepen the distress of the poor – who some easily forget the law of God almighty. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God. You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; and you shall not lie to one another. And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the LORD. You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD. You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the LORD. You shall not hate in your heart anyoneYou shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD your God.

Turn the other cheek. Go the second mile. Love your enemies. Be perfect for heaven's sake. You'd think Jesus would just forget us. But he loves us. That's just crazy. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." I don't know about you. But I'm glad we go up another mountain next week.