WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT JANUARY 17, 2022

January 17

Happy Monday, DGCC Family.

Today we begin a brief look at the third book of the Bible, the book of Leviticus. The root of the word Leviticus is “Levi,” who was the third son of the Jewish patriarch Jacob and his wife Leah. From Levi came the tribe of Levites (one of the twelve tribes of Israel). It is this tribe that God designated to be the priests to the Jewish people. Hence, the book of Leviticus deals with priestly matters such as sacrifice and ritual, but also contains instructions to the Jewish people on how God expects them to live.

Let me say at the outset that Leviticus is a difficult book to read, especially to the modern ear. But that being said, there are some important themes in it that are most relevant today. The first, and perhaps most important, of those themes is **holiness**.

Consider these verses:

- “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy’” (19:1-2);

- “Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy” (20:7).

- “Regard them [the priests] as holy, because they offer up the food of your God. Consider them holy, because I the Lord am holy—I who make you holy” (21:8).

The word “holy” means “sacred” or “set apart.” Jesus Himself bears the title “Holy One” as confessed by the disciple Peter: “We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:69). And, even the demon possessed man recognizes Jesus as such: “Just then a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ‘What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!’” (Mark 1:24).

Unfortunately, in modern times, the word “holy” has taken on a casual meaning in phrases such as “holy cow.” It has also taken on a derogative meaning in expressions like “What are you, some kind of holy roller?”

So, my prayer for us today is this: let’s work to restore the meaning of what it is to be holy. God has chosen us for His holy, sacred purpose. More importantly, as we do so, let’s seek to remind the world who it is that we follow: Jesus, the one who the Father “set apart,” the Holy One of God.
January 18

Grace and peace to you this day.

Continuing today with our brief look at the book of Leviticus, as a reminder, yesterday we saw that one of the main themes is **holiness** (“Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy” (19:1-2).)

Another main theme of Leviticus is **sacrifice**. This follows logically from the theme of holiness. Here’s why. God, in His perfect, holy state, cannot be in the presence of sin. If He allowed it, He wouldn’t be who He is. Because God so desires relationship and communion with us, sin must therefore be dealt with in some way. In His sovereignty, the way God has chosen to deal with this dilemma is through sacrifice, specifically, blood sacrifice through the taking of a life. This is foretold all the way back in Genesis, when God kills an animal and uses its skin to cover up Adam and Eve, who because of their sin, now were aware of their nakedness: “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them” (3:21). God sacrificed an animal in order to “cover” the sin of Adam and Eve.

Like many people, you may find the notion of blood sacrifice harsh. In fact, it is harsh. And that’s because God does not take sin lightly. However, as much as God deplores our sin, in His grace, He still gives us a way to bridge the gap between our sin and His holiness, harsh as it may seem. This is what God says about the matter:

“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life” (Leviticus 17:11).

Note the language here. In His mercy, God has “given” us this means by which we are made righteous and holy before Him.

Over a thousand years later, God would allow one last sacrifice: His one and only Son, Jesus the Messiah, the Holy One of God, who would make the perfect, complete, and final sacrifice for our sins, with His blood shed for you, and for me.

I pray today that you rest in the assurance of your salvation and that as you walk through this life, you do so “in view of God’s mercy [and] offer bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God…” (Romans 12:1).

IHS,

Pastor Lou
January 19

Happy Wednesday, everyone.

Following on the themes of holiness and sacrifice, a third theme to be found in the book of Leviticus is relationship, specifically, relationship with God. Consider this passage (make sure to read it slowly, word for word):

“These are the birds you are to regard as unclean and not eat because they are unclean: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat (Leviticus 11:13-19).

You’re probably thinking, “Ok, that’s pretty weird. Who eats bats anyway?” Here’s the point: God is a God of detail. He desires to be part of every aspect of your life: what you eat, what you wear, what you say, and what you do. No detail of your life is too small or too trivial that God doesn’t desire to be part of it. That’s because you are so highly valued by Him. Remember that you are His “treasured possession” (Deuteronomy 26:18).

In fact, recall what Jesus said to His disciples: “Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Luke 12:7). Let’s just say that for some of us, the Lord has an easier time with this one than with others. I’m just sayin’.

In any case, what we learn from Leviticus today is this: God is not just God on Sundays. He doesn’t just show up for the opening scene or the grand finale. He desires to be Lord over every aspect of your life. That is the kind of relationship He desires. So, my prayer for you today is this: know that the same God who “determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name” (Psalm 147:4) also calls you by name, and desires a relationship with you that is personal, intimate, and holy.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
Greetings to you this day, DGCC Family.

The final theme from the book of Leviticus that I would like to explore is the theme of Sabbath. This is what the Lord teaches us:

“There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a sabbath to the Lord” (Leviticus 23:3); and

“Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord” (26:2).

The Sabbath commandment actually originates with the Lord Himself at the culmination of His work of Creation: “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Genesis 2:2-3).

So, what do we learn from this? First, it is clear that God desires that we take a day every week to rest and refresh ourselves. He Himself sets the example. Modern people like to be consumed with “busy-ness.” How many times have you asked someone how they are, and their response is “I’ve been so busy?”

Second, God desires that this day of rest be a day that we gather in a “sacred assembly.” The Hebrew word used here for “assembly” is miqra (pronounced meek-raw). It means a gathering, a coming together. Later on, the New Testament writers would use the Greek word ekklesia, which is where we ultimately get our word “church.” So, in other words, God desires that we come together on the Sabbath as His sacred gathering, as His church.

Third, we are to do so with “reverence” and in His sanctuary,” that is, His sacred place. Unfortunately, the Sabbath has fallen out of favor in modern times. The importance of church has diminished, even among “church people.” How sad.

So, my prayer for you today is this: as we seek holiness, as we understand sacrifice, as we walk in relationship with the Lord, let’s remember the importance of Sabbath, and let’s gather once again as His sacred assembly.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
January 21

Happy Friday, everyone. Here’s your music devotional for today. Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vG5O5TSJaE4

IHS,
Pastor Lou