

Third Sunday in Lent  
Sermon text: Exodus 20:1-17  
Related text: Psalm 19:1, 7-14  
1 Corinthians 1:18-31  
Date preached: March 11, 2012

Grace to you and peace from God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

The title of an old television show came to mind as I read the lessons in preparation for this morning. “Father knows Best.” In the case of the entire Bible, yet particularly evident in the appointed lectionary passages is the claim that God, our Heavenly Father, does indeed know best.

God starts by establishing what he has done on behalf of his people, namely the Israelites. He has saved them from slavery. He has delivered them from oppression. He alone is worthy of worship. Not only that, this is the same God who has a history with His people. This is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

This God has a relationship with them and also with us. The words of the Decalogue, The Ten Commandments, are meant for our well being.

To that end, look at how God’s law is described in the Psalm. The law of the Lord is perfect. It revives the soul.

The testimony of the Lord is true. It gives wisdom to all who hear. They are just, and give us clarity on how we live in relationship with God and each other.

Living in relationship with each other is not easy. We live in a highly sensitive age. The outcome for many in this age is to advocate for tolerance. The false message of tolerance is based on the perspective that if we tolerate everything, the world will be a better place.

One problem is that Biblical teaching is often labeled as intolerant. This week, actor Kirk Cameron, known for his roles on “Growing Pains” as well as the movie, “Left Behind” stated his belief that homosexuality is unnatural.

The response by many to Cameron is to say that he is out of step. Since it is God who established marriage as between one man and one woman, since it is God who was wise enough to give us the good command “Thou shall not commit adultery” and since in Romans 1:26-27 same-sex behavior is described as unnatural, then those outraged by Cameron might believe God to be out of step.

In fact, one of the claims against Cameron is that he is intolerant. Some described his comments as “hate speech.

Of course, this is only one example of the continual decline of the parameters that God has established for us. God’s law is based on His love for us. As society that fails to honor the authority of mothers and fathers, a society that cannot find time to rest and to devote oneself to hear the good news of Christ, is one that leads us to a disastrous path.

This week we saw on in the Pittsburgh area the tragic lack of respect for life. This is on the heels of a school shootings that took place in Ohio a couple weeks ago.

But before we get smug and self righteous, keep in mind that we are part of this society. In each commandment as we look at what it means, we are left to plead guilty. We are guilty for thinking that in some things we might know better than God’s good intention for us.

Our hope is not in purifying society. We cannot. As sinful human beings we always confuse our will, our wisdom, or our version of justice, for what God has given.

Our hope is in Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Our hope is in the one who has gone the way of the cross. For us, the cross is the power of God. It is the power of God to restore us in right relationship with Him and with each other.

The wisdom of God is on full display through the cross. There Christ love is poured out for us. We see in the cross, the mercy, grace and love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is nothing left. Christ bears it all; He bears his life for the world while bearing our sins upon his shoulders.

The wisdom of God is to clothe us in the holiness of his only begotten Son. Imparted to us is the righteousness of Christ. His death sets us free from the sentence of death we deserve for our sins.

We preach Christ, crucified and risen from the dead. We preach Christ Jesus, who was sent into the world, not to condemn the world but that the world would be saved through him, as stated in John 3:17.

We preach Christ crucified and risen from the dead because we are incapable of keeping God's good law. What we are called to do, is to declare that we have

redemption through Christ. In declaring the redemption we have through Christ we show that love of God and our neighbors.

As we praise God for his goodness, we rightly use his holy name. In worship we give thanks and praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In keeping the Sabbath day, we practice good stewardship of our time and our selves. Rest is a gift from God.

We give thanks for the life that we have through Christ. For not only do we have the promise of life to come, but the life we have now frees us to cherish this gift in each other.

God's intent is for us to live life well. As husbands and wives keep their marriage vows we bear witness to the relationship of Christ to the church.

We bear witness to a loving God by speaking lovingly to each other. Yes, that means at times admonishment, but it also means proclaiming forgiveness of sins, and the grace of God.

Our Heavenly Father truly knows what is best for us. It may be foolishness in the eyes of the world, but for us, God's foolishness surpasses our wisdom. AMEN.