

March 1

Numbers & Exodus

Welcome to the Project 4:4 Accelerator for today, March 1st. My name is Elvin Torres and I am the Campus Pastor for Christ Community Church – Sarpy, and I will be leading you over the next few days in our study of God's word.

Today we continue in a section of our Chronological Bible which we began way back on February 18th – The Laws of Moses. God gave his laws, through Moses, to His people. So, even though we are calling them "the Laws of Moses", we should keep in mind that these are the requirements that *God* placed on his people and have real application to us today.

Today we read from four different books of the Old Testament, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. And while the Laws of Moses cover a wide range of topics, from how the judicial system is to run, to how certain structures are to be built, today's readings are primarily what we would call "civil laws". In other words, these laws all deal with interpersonal relationships. And the context in which God gives these laws to his people is during a time when the Israelites are continuing to develop into a functioning nation. Now, these laws are not merely meant to regulate human behavior so we don't have anarchy and chaos. They communicate something about the God the Israelites worshipped. All of the Laws communicate something of who God is and what he is like. Additionally, all Laws communicate something of what God requires of us. And in today's reading we see that God places a high value on how people treat each other.

In Luke chapter 10 Jesus has a conversation with an expert in the Law in which the expert lawyer asked him what it took to gain eternal life. Jesus' response was to ask him what the Law said. The lawyer gave a twofold response: a) Love God with everything you've got, and b) Love your neighbor. Today's text we immediately see that God wants us to take seriously the command to love our neighbor. The very first verse of today's reading says:

The LORD said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites: 'When a man or a woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD, that person is guilty and must confess the sin he has committed. Numbers 5:5

Notice how God equates our sin against one another as unfaithfulness toward *him* (cf. 1 John 4:20-21). God takes it very, very seriously.

As you continue reading you observe more about God is like, and what he requires of his people. This is what the Law does, reveal God and reveal ourselves (Rom 7:12).

First, we see that God not merely concerned with the nation of Israel corporately, providing ways for them to function as a civilized society, but he cares of the *people* of Israel, individually, and provides laws that protect the poor and those who are more vulnerable in society (take a look at the bottom of page 268, Ex 22:16.17 were we see a provision put in place to protect young girls from being taken advantage of by men by making essentially financial suicide for the men who would take such a risk.)

In each of these laws we find that there is always someone who has the opportunity to take advantage of another for their own gain. For example, in Ex 22 (page 269)we read

that if you have an animal (and this animal is your financial resource engine, the means by which you make a living) that is prone to aggressive behavior, but fail to take the appropriate measures to ensure no one is hurt by it, you are responsible. It is NOT ok for you to risk others for the sake of self-preservation.

Not only do we see that those who find themselves in a position of power or authority or influence, or -even in a favorable situation -should not use this position to risk others for their own gain. We also see that those who find themselves in a position of influence, power, and authority should use this power to protect the vulnerable, and lift up the poor and give aide to those would otherwise be without recourse in that particular cultural context.

You see this in the readings when laws address how slaves ought to be treated in Deuteronomy 23 (page 270) or even how debts are to forgiven after the seventh year in (page 271) in order to avoid the dragging down of debt that can have generational impact. Again, we see this play out in the common sense law that protects a lender from taking a man's livelihood away a means of receiving payment, see Deut. 24:6.

Women were particularly vulnerable during this time. And God's law even shows how the father or husband, the one with the cultural capital expend is to use his influence to protect his daughters and wife from those that would take advantage of the family through her.

Even the Levirate marriage laws, which we find in Deuteronomy 25 and again in Numbers 27:1-4 demonstrate God's desire that we take steps to demonstrate care and concern for those around us; much like he has taken steps to demonstrate his care for us. While a little strange and alien to the modern, western ear, these laws were in place so those with influence in the family would be reminded and required to protect those in the family that were vulnerable.

Why these laws? Why not simply encourage us to be kind and generous to one another? Why mandate it? Romans 7:7-25 accomplishes two things: 1) we see how Holy, good and perfect God is 2) and we see how we fall very, very short of that. Earlier, in Romans 3:23 Paul actually says it this way: All have sinned and fall short of God's glory. But he goes on to say that though we fall do short, we are justified, not by how well we do, but by God's Grace in Jesus' perfect life, death, and resurrection. And this is a gift from God. And that is great news.

So, what do we do from here: Here is some applications for today:

- 1) Where are you in a position of power, authority, influence or advantage:
 - a. At home
 - b. At work
 - c. In business
 - d. In your community
- 2) Where have you used that position of influence, etc. to take advantage for the sake of:
 - a. Self preservation
 - b. Or self service.

- 3) Take a moment and confess your sin to God right now. Then thank him for washing you and cleansing you from all unrighteousness through the perfect life, death, and resurrection of his Son, Jesus. 1 John 1:9.
- 4) How can you use your position of influence, etc. to both protect and lift up those who are more vulnerable around you?
 - a. Take a moment and write some of those down and carry it with you today. Pray over your list and ask God for opportunities and the grace to follow through.

Most of us are in a position of influence, authority, or power in some area of our lives: at home, school, work, or business. Today, remember that God cares about you and wants to use you to demonstrate his love and care for others.

That's all for now.