

# THE BIBLICAL WILD

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WEEK VII: Leviticus 13-Numbers 3 /  
Psalms 35-40

From Psalm 35: Then my soul shall rejoice in the lord in his deliverance. All my bones shall say who is like you? You deliver the weak from those too strong for them; the weak and needy from those who despoil them. Amen.

I'm Todd Ousley, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan and this is The Biblical Wild: Pioneers in the Christian Wilderness. When we look at this second section of the book of Leviticus, we look at a movement from God's holiness to the holiness of all the people of God, the promised land of the people of Israel.

Of particular interest are the chapters 18 through 20 of Leviticus - Chapters 18 and 20, excluding 19, are concerned primarily with matters of purity and particularly matters of sexual purity. It's easy to get bogged down in the details of that but, just like our interest in sacrifice, we're not interested in all of the minutia. We are to look at 18 and 20 as setting some boundaries and expectations that are on the periphery of what is happening in Leviticus.

Squeezed between 18 and 20 is chapter 19 where we begin to see that if one is to be in an obedient relationship in this covenantal relationship with Yahweh, we as a people are also called into a place of faithfulness and obedience to God, to Yahweh, but also to our community, to our neighbors.

"You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin you shall reprove your neighbor or you shall incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people but you will love your neighbor as yourself."

It is a key understanding of what it means to live out the Christian faith. For us to be in relationship with a God who is both absent and present, who is faithful to us and calls us into a life of obedience and faithfulness, lived out with righteousness and justice summarized in loving your neighbor.

"When you reap the harvest of your lands you shall not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest you shall not strip you vineyards bare or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard you shall leave them for the poor and the alien. You shall not render an unjust judgment you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great. With justice you will judge your neighbor."

Justice. Mercy. Lack of judgment. Provision for the poor. Loving your neighbor. It is all central to the understanding to what the law really means - of what the Torah is all

about. And what we as Christians appropriate from the Torah as central to our understanding of how we are to live our lives as ones who sing praises to and worship to the God who is holy.

Leviticus, a book that is used to do much damage and hurt to one another, has at its heart scripture that invites us into right relationship respect and love for one another in living out a life in community with, yes, clear boundaries but above all and superseding all, love of neighbor and love of God.

I have a couple of questions for you this week: In what ways are you holy? Do you have points of disconnect between what you proclaim in worship and how you behave outside of worship? How might you find a better connect between the two?

May God's richest blessings be upon you and I look forward to being with you next week on the Biblical Wild.