

SERMON FOR JULY 10, 2022

TEXT: LEVITICUS 19:9-18

THEME: YOUR NEW IDENTITY

**9** “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. **10** And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God. **11** “You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. **12** You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. **13** “You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. **14** You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. **15** “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. **16** You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord. **17** “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. **18** You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

In the name of Jesus:

Identity is a word with a lot of baggage today, a lot of meaning. There are all sorts of meanings and usage of the term identity. There is identity politics, cultural identity, gender identity, and ethnic or national identity. People gravitate to these various identities because these terms specify how a person views himself or herself. One’s identity defines the qualities, the

beliefs, the personal traits, the appearance and expressions that characterize an individual. In the book of Leviticus, God speaks to us and shares with us not only our old identity, but OUR NEW IDENTITY as well.

The Lord speaks to His people in the Book of Leviticus, the Hebrews, and tells them that they have a new, unique identity. Before God gave them this new identity, they were characterized as nomads and wanderers. The Lord called them to be His people, and gave them a new identity when He delivered them out of the hands of Pharaoh in Egypt. By the hand of the Lord, this people became a great nation, a nation freed from slavery to serve the Lord God in all that they would do.

To put it in perspective, Moses, in his final word to the people of Israel as they were entering the Promised Land said: “, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. **6** And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. **7** Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. **8** And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders. **9** And he brought us into this place and gave us this land.” The Lord had created this people, saved this people to be His

own, and now in our text gives them instruction on how they are to live. They were to be different from all the other nations. The Lord is telling His people, “I saved you, now you belong to Me, so this is how you are to live as My children in this world.”

The Lord God has saved you! As the Apostle Peter says: “Once you were no people, but now you are God’s people, once you had no mercy, now you have received mercy.” In love God our Father saw you in your sinful state, a sinner, one whose heart was turned away from Him, a person who by nature is inclined to love yourself and the world more than Him. You were destined on the road to Hell.

But the Lord has had mercy on you and has saved you, by a sheer act of His love. For by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not of works or of your own doing.” You have been saved by the Son of the Father, Jesus, who came down from heaven to live His life and shed His blood for you. The blood of Christ cleanses you from all sin. You are now His child, purchased and won from the powers of sin, Satan, and Hell, not with earthly gold or money, but with His holy, precious suffering and death, all so that you might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom, serving Him in all you do.

Just as the Lord said to the people of Israel, “I am the Lord your God, who saved you, now be holy as I am holy,” so He says to us today: “Be holy as I the Lord your God is holy.” Your salvation is a gift, and holiness is a gift, given by the Holy Spirit, or we can say, given by the Holying Spirit. That is the job of the Holy Spirit, to make you holy, to wash your sins away in the waters of your Baptism, to forgive your sins and give you a clear and clean conscience, so that you can live your life to the glory of God. Even as the Lord said to the people of Israel, “You now belong to the Lord, so here is how you are to live.”

Peter puts this way: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Now how is this exactly done? It is done by love, through love, showing love in all you do.

The lawyer asks Jesus, which is the greatest commandment? Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. This is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” In other words, what God wants His people to do, both in the Old and New Testament times, including today, is to love Him first and foremost, and then show love to those around you.

So here the Lord is teaching you that you are not only His people and a people that belong to Him, but also that this is how He wants you to live, and this is how He shows you to live: in love. This is what your life is to look like and this is how you can reflect the love of Christ, in very practical ways. Such as, in the words of our text: “ You shall provide for the poor, **11** “You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. **12** You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God **13** “You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. **14** You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: **15** “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. **16** You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: **17** “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. **18** You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” And after all of these commands, the Lord reminds that He is the Lord. He is the One who saves, He is the One who redeems, He is the One who has shown love to you, so you, in turn, now are to show love to others.

This type of life is radically different from what we see in the world today, where people try to live in a dog eat dog world by looking out for number one. The Lord reminds each of us that we have been saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, not to boast of ourselves, but to boast of and to show the love of Christ to others. This is OUR NEW IDENTITY. To the glory of God and in Jesus' name.

Amen