

FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

FAITH UPDATE MARCH 14

PRAYER

- Pray for Terry Cecil as he recovers from his heart attack and having the stints put in.
- Pray for Caleb Rastetter. This is his request: "Pray that my mind would clear - the old man is dying but is not dead yet."
- Pray for our Sacraments class and Jim Kobb as he prepares for it.
- Pray for Deb Kobb as she is improving a little each day.
- Pray for Rol Richards in the unexpected loss of his younger sister this week.
- Pray for the new marriages of Alicia Blasiman and Abi Sevcik and the engagement of Bibby and Matt.



EVENTS

Sunday, Mar 17: S. S. 9:30 a.m. Worship at 10:45 a.m. & 2:00 p.m.
Congregational Meal between services. **Clean-up: N-Sch.**



Wednesday, Mar 20: Alliance Shepherding Group (Kadleceks), 7:00 p.m.

Friday, Mar 22: North/East Shepherding Group, 7:00 p.m.



SERMON PREVIEW

A.M. Do You Really Want the Liberating Power of God? (Mark 5:1-20)
P.M. The One, Eternal Kingdom of God (Ezekiel 37:15-28)



MEDITATION

OUR LORD'S EXPOSITION OF THE LAW

by J.I. Packer

What was the essential content of this law, as our Lord understood it? Very briefly, as we close, we will try to sketch out the answer to this question.

The heart of the law, in Christ's estimation, was the two great commandments. When the lawyer asked Him which was 'the great commandment in the law?' (a perennial topic of rabbinic debate), Christ replied by giving, not merely one, but a pair: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Mt. xxii. 37 ff.). What it meant to love God with all one's powers Christ showed throughout His ministry by a mass of teaching on self-denial, the single eye, loyalty to God, prayer, trust, joy, and Christian contentment. What it meant to love one's neighbour as oneself He explained parabolically on the occasion when, in answer to the question: 'Who is my neighbour?', He told the story of the Good Samaritan. That there was a necessary link between loving God and loving one's neighbour He showed on two occasions by quoting against the Pharisees God's word in Hos. vi. 6: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice' (Mt. ix. 13, xii. 17). Active compassion for one's needy fellow-men, Christ means, is more acceptable in God's sight than any number of pious acts without compassion can ever be.

On the two great commandments, said our Lord, 'hang all the law and the prophets' (Mt. xxii. 40) - in other words, the rest of the Old Testament moral teaching merely expounds and applies what these two commandments say. It is here, therefore, that the Decalogue comes in, as the central core of this exposition. Our Lord Himself discussed the meaning of some of the commandments, and it is notable how in each case He penetrate to the positive requirement which underlies their negative, prohibitory form. Thus, in dealing with the fourth commandment, to keep holy the sabbath day, Christ treated the Pharisaic approach, based as it was simply upon a casuistry of abstinence, as altogether wrong, and argued, on biblical grounds, that the Sabbath was made for man's good, and that not only works of personal necessity, but also acts of love and kindness to others, might be performed on the Sabbath with the greatest propriety (cf. Mt. xii. 1 ff., Jn. vii. 23 f., Lk. xiii. 10 ff.). Again, in commenting on the sixth commandment, as we have seen, Christ's concern was to prohibit the spirit of hate, which rules out love; indeed, at the end of Matthew v He shows that what He really wanted to do was to bring His disciples to a frame of mind in which the spirit of love, even to their enemies, would rule them in everything, so that there would be no room in their hearts for hatred at all. Again, in dealing with the seventh commandment, He finds underlying the prohibition of adultery and lustful thoughts a positive demand for purity and singleness of heart towards God, which it is worth any amount of effort and self-denial to enter into, because of the vastness of the issues that hang on it. 'If your right eye leads you astray, tear it out and fling it away; it is better for you to lose one part of your body than for the whole of it to be thrown into hell...' (Mt. v. 29, N.E.B.). At all costs, the disciple must become a whole-hearted, single-eyed, utterly devoted lover of God and of men.

Such are the lines on which our Lord's exposition of God's law proceeds. It is, as we have said already, an ethic for the redeemed, those who love God because He has forgiven and adopted them, and they have known His saving grace. It is, as Christ Himself implies, an ethic for the regenerate: the good fruit of a life according to this pattern can only grow on a good tree, a tree that has been made good by the new birth. And it is, above all, an ethic for disciples; for the ideal which it sets forth was incarnate in the Master Himself, and if we want to know what obedience to the two great commandments really means the most effective way to find out is to turn our eyes upon Him and watch how He walked. He Himself, in life and conduct, in the love and humility with which He served God by dying for men, was the clearest exposition of His own understanding of God's law, and it is most of all by observing Him that we shall learn of Him to walk in the way of righteousness.