

Lenten Devotional 2020

Friday, March 20, 2020
Day 21, Exodus 21

His Eye Is On the Sparrow

These are the laws you are to set before them: (Exodus 21:1)

Whoa, these are hard to read! Slavery, the mistreatment of women, and the death penalty every time you turn around! It's not surprising that no one is putting these laws forward as the ideal way to run a society. We also need to be careful that we don't judge the past too harshly as future generations will be judging us, too. That being said, there are still some important things for us to see within these laws.

One thing we need to recognize is how revolutionary these laws would be within their cultural context. Slaves and women had no rights. But, when we read these laws carefully, we actually see these groups being given rights. Yes, diminished compared to free or male, but rights all the same. That is new and that is important. This tells us something about God, who is working within the cultural context of the day; he is concerned about the well being of everyone.

We should also recognize that violence is being limited not increased. When the Israelites are directed to take eye for eye and tooth for tooth, this was based on a one for one economy. Again, this changes the cultural script. In a more tribal world small wounds would lead to big retaliations, which led to bigger retaliations. Whole families could be killed for an eye injury. Not in Israel. Again, we learn something about God. He is not just setting down rules to be followed, he is creating order so that community can flourish.

We should also take a further step back and marvel at the fact that God is doing this at all. This is the same God who created heaven and earth and everything in them. He set the stars in the heavens and gave the Sun and the moon for light. That same God who created on such a great scale, now takes the time to order a human community so there will be justice which will contribute to a flourishing life. God involves himself with the everyday ordinary details of our lives. That's incredible.

I think a lot of the time we view God as aloof and unconcerned with our lives. He's too busy running the world. No, he's not. He has his eye on each one of us. Nothing transpires that he does not know and he cares about those things. He desires our lives to flourish as a community. He desires justice for us. He loves us. He is our God, we are his people. In our present crisis it is critical to remember that this is the same God who is watching over us.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for caring about the details of our lives. Thank you that you bring justice and order to our lives. We pray that by participating in those things ourselves our community life might flourish. Help us to know your presence today, as we move through this crisis. Amen.