

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Seeing and Willingness to Do First Week of Lent Monday, February 23, 2015
8:15 AM **Lv 9:1-2, 11-18; Mt 25:31-46** (“Love God with your whole heart, mind, and soul; love your neighbor as yourself” for Lent.)

Today we are reading from **the holiness code in the book of Leviticus**. And you know in chapter 19 of Exodus there is the presentation of the so-called Ten Commandments. A lot of people think that’s enough, ten commandments, but anybody who has reared children knows it’s not enough; you need more than just ten. So we have the holiness code here, which actually begins with the seventh commandment: “You shall not steal,” and then the eighth: “You shall not lie,” and goes on and then elaborates the meaning of all this. Eventually there are over six hundred of these **elaborations, all of them written down in the Torah**. The problem is that this process of constantly elaborating, elaborating more and more commandments can get out of hand, and unfortunately it doesn’t deal with the real problem. The real problem is this: **we are born in God’s image and likeness, but we often seem to be ignorant of what that means.**

Jesus himself believed in all the commandments in the Old Testament, not the oral teachings of the rabbis, but in the actual commandments of the Old Testament. **But he summarized all of them. “Love God with your whole heart, mind, and soul; love your neighbor as yourself.”** The problem is what does that mean? Many people are not aware of what it means to love God or their neighbors. All this does is elaborate what that means. So **we have the problem of ignorance**, the first problem. **The second problem: sometimes people do have an insight into what it means to love, but they are not unwilling to do it** because sometimes it costs too much. It requires too much of a commitment or a sacrifice, and they don’t want to do it.

Elaborating more and more commandments and explaining more and more things doesn't really help that at all. But even the first part, the ignorance, it doesn't help either because **people should learn how to see.** That's the problem. We have to learn how to see, not be told. There is a difference. Children have to be told, yes, but adults should be able to see. That's why Jeremiah said, **"I will write my law on their hearts,"** i.e. they will be able to see what is needed. They will be able to see what it means to love God. They will be able to see what it means to love their neighbor. They won't need someone to teach them. Explicitly that's what Jeremiah says. There will be no one to teach them. And this is of course reiterated in the First Letter of John: **"You need no teacher; you have the Spirit."**

The gospel reading today is an example of that. Here the unrighteous say, "But we didn't see you." Well, the question is: Why didn't you see? I was right there in front of you. "But I didn't see you." This is the problem. **We don't see, and sometimes we are not willing to do what we see even if we do see.**

So Lent is a time for improving both: our seeing and our willingness to do. Sacrifice is all about that, a willingness to do what is necessary to love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul, and our neighbor as ourselves. There is no other sacrifice or offering or mortification or penance or giving up of anything that is needed—just that. That's the whole shabang. That's what Lent is all about.