

**THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**SAT. AUG. 29, 5 PM & SUN. AUG. 30 , 2009, 9 AM**

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**MESSAGE**

**The Heart of the Matter, the heart of sin and the heart of God's grace!**

**“Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes** = that is the 1<sup>st</sup> Table of God's Law which apply to our relationship with God, **and the just decrees** = that's the 2<sup>nd</sup> Table of God's Law which apply to our relationship with others, **that I am teaching you and do them, that you may live” (Deut. 4:1)** Hmm! Do them! It doesn't say try your best, it doesn't say give it your best shot, it doesn't say be as good as you can be. But, God's Word, God's Law, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Table, says

**“DO THEM, THAT YOU MAY LIVE!”**

We just sang 'The Law of God Is Good and Wise'. And indeed it is. The first, of the three uses of God's Law, curbs or orders our days. God's natural law of gravity for example, gravity works because it is the natural law of God, not because we control it. We can try to resist this natural law of God JUMP but God's Law will always win, bringing you back down to reality. The third use of God's Law guides our deeds, our words, our actions. For example break the speed limit and there are consequences, rob a bank there are consequences, tell a fib it will catch up to you there are consequences. God's Law will always win, bring us back to reality. And the second use of God's Law, the most important use of God's Law, even more important than the law of gravity which curbs us or law and order which guides us, is the Law of God which mirrors us, shows us our true human nature, our heart, **Romans 3:**

**‘No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by observing the Law, rather through the Law we become conscious of sin’.**

And that is what I want to talk to you about a little bit this weekend. Based upon the hi lighted verses of our lessons, as we get to the **HEART OF THE MATTER**, the heart of our sin and the heart of God's grace!

I. Moses words are pretty straightforward aren't they? Do God's Law and you will live. He also tells God's people **‘Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who when they hear these statutes, will say ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’.** WOW! Doing God's Law gives you life! Doing God's Law gives you wisdom! Doing God's Law

gives you understanding! Doing God's Law gives you a reputation! So let's go to it people! Let's do God's Law. Let's dig deep into God's Law. Let's learn those 10 Commandments well. Let's learn those statutes. Let's abide by those rules. Let's understand those judgements. Let's heed those testimonies'. **"Make them known to your children and your children's children"** as Moses says and you will have wisdom, you will have understanding, you will have reputation and you will live!

But learn them, know them and try, try, try, try, try and try some more to do them as much as you can and then listen to **James 2**. **'Whoever keeps the whole Law but fails in one point has become guilty of it all'**. Oh, Oh!

Unless you've deceived yourself and the truth is not in you, as we just heard with our confession of sins, when you look into that mirror of God's good and perfect Law, it becomes all too evident that all of us have failed at that 'one point'. So you are guilty and bear its consequences!

Keep the Law and you will live! Fail and you will die. And how many of us are going to die? Do the Law and you will have wisdom and understanding! Fail and you will be left confused and foolish. Keep the Law and you will have a reputation. Fail and you will be the laughing stock of all the demons of hell. Call it a statute, call it a decree, call it a rule, call it a testimony, call it a commandment = it is all still God's Law. And a law is a law, is a law, is a law, is a law and a law of any other name stings just as sharply with its consequences = guilt and condemnation and death and hell.

II. So, my people 'what shall we do, that we may live?'. We haven't nor can we keep God's Law, our hearts are inclined only to evil. We have stumbled and fallen time and time again, our wisdom, our understanding, our reputation are all ruined. "What shall we do, that we may live?" Our lesson **Deut. 4** tells us, as Jesus invites us **'Hear Me, all of you and understand'** (Mark 7), **'What a great nation = what a great people is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon Him'**. There it is! **'call upon the Lord, who is as near as the Lord our God'** Confronted with God's Law and its consequences = confess your sins, don't try to hide them, don't try to deny them, don't try to ignore them, don't try to blame somebody else, **'call upon the Lord'**.

And He is right here: Immanuel = God with us in Word and Sacraments, His means of grace to us for us to 'do and live'. The Lord is not evasive or deceptive. The Lord is not hiding though He is masked in His Word and Sacraments. **'Call upon Him'** in your sinfulness. There truly can be no more blessed and no more greater people than the people of Immanuel Lutheran, Plainview knowing that our God is near = God is with us!

Because when God is with us, He brings us His forgiveness, He gives us His grace, He shows us His mercy. When God is with us, who **'call upon Him'** all of God's and our enemies, sin, death, hell are devastated, destroyed, defeated and can not harm us. What great people we are, that's our reputation in heaven, because we are God's people, His New Israel, His Holy Christian Church here on earth.

God was with His people at the time of Moses at the Red Sea, in the pillars of cloud and fire in their Exodus. God would be with His people to conquer enemy armies, to shut lion's mouths, to open a fiery furnace, to guide a shepherd boys sling shot to bring down a giant. And finally and most importantly God is with us = Immanuel in the flesh and in the blood of Jesus Christ our God incarnate, conceived in the womb of a Virgin, born in a barn to a step father carpenter, as an itinerant teacher, who stepped into our place to be our substitute and submit Himself to the same Law of God which condemns us. And Jesus Christ did for us what we fail time and time and time again to do. Jesus keeps God's Law perfectly, vicariously and then He innocently dies on the cross for all of us who have failed to keep God's Law. So it's because of what Jesus has done for us not what we have done, that we live! We live full and forgiven and forgiving lives now 'calling upon the Lord = Immanuel, God with us' and we live full and forgiven lives forever 'calling upon the Lord = Immanuel, God with us', 'with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven'.

III. In our Gospel lesson for today. Jesus takes that Law of God, to which so much had been added and so much taken away, so it was hardly recognizable any more as God's 10 Commandments, just as people are doing today. Those who wanted to justify themselves added to God's Law so they could declare themselves clean by all they kept = their traditions. Making doctrine an adiaphora and making adiaphora doctrine like we heard last weekend. And those who wanted to eat, drink and be merry subtracted from God's Law with excuse after excuse so they could justify themselves in their sinfulness. Just like those today who want to redefine marriage and Pastoral ordination by church votes and not on the Word of God. But, regardless what has been added to God's Law or has been taken away from God's Law, Jesus sets it straight, Jesus says it straight **'it is not what goes into a person that defiles him or her but it is what comes out that defiles us'**, our thoughts, our words, our deeds are sin full. Jesus has come near to you today in the message of God's Law and Gospel clearly divided by your Pastor. Jesus has come near to you today to give you His forgiveness of all your 'evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness' and you and I are guilty of everyone of those sins and more. But, just as Jesus declared all foods to be clean, most importantly Jesus, God with us, Immanuel in Word and Sacrament has declared you to be clean and holy and righteous and forgiven in the sight of God. And through faith in Jesus 'we put on that whole armor of God – the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit = the Word of God, His Law and Gospel and we **'make**

**them known to our children and our children's children'**, for we do not battle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places' And that is the true

**HEART OF THE MATTER, THE HEART OF SIN AND THE HEART OF GOD'S GRACE. Amen**