

### July 23rd Readings

LEVITICUS 13:1-59

MARK 6:1-29

PSALM 39:1-13

PROVERBS 10:10

Our reading today in Leviticus 13 deals with laws concerning leprosy. Leprosy is a term used to describe various skin diseases. These laws were given by God to identify the disease, to isolate the disease, and to keep the disease from spreading to the rest of the community. When a person had leprosy that could not be cured, they were declared unclean and separated from the community of God's people. Because God is so holy, those that are not holy (unclean) could not live close to God. Drastic steps had to be taken where there was leprosy.

It is easy to see the similarity between leprosy and sin. Like leprosy, sin cannot be hidden from God. Sin makes us unclean before God. Sin separates us from God and from the community of God's people. Drastic steps must be taken where there is sin.

In the eyes of God, we all have leprosy. We are all unclean and separated from God. We are all doomed to live outside the camp, crying out, "Unclean, unclean."

But have you heard the "Good News"? Jesus came with the cure! He offers it freely to all. Now we have hope! Thank you, God, for loving us so much!

### July 24th Readings

LEVITICUS 14:1-57

MARK 6:30-56

PSALM 40:1-10

PROVERBS 10:11-12

Let's focus on verses 51-52 in today's reading in Mark 6. After walking across the sea, Jesus got into the boat with His disciples and the wind ceased. The bible says that the disciples were "utterly astounded" and "their hearts were hardened."

Jesus' own disciples have hardened hearts? This description was written about Pharaoh, Zedekiah, the people of Bethel, and others who refused to yield to God—the enemies of God. It's surprising to me that it's also said of Jesus' disciples. Why do they have hardened hearts?

The explanation is tied to their lack of understanding about the loaves. They had just seen Jesus feed to satisfaction over 5,000 people with food left over with only five loaves and two fish. The disciples saw Jesus create matter! Only God can do this!

Just a little while later, they were astounded when Jesus walked on the water and calmed the sea. They refused to understand what Jesus was trying to teach them—that He is God's own son!

Am I guilty of the same thing? Do I refuse to understand the word of God because my heart is hard? Heavenly Father, please help me to keep my heart soft for you!

### July 25th Readings

LEVITICUS 15:1-16:28

MARK 7:1-23

PSALM 40:11-17

PROVERBS 10:13-14

After reading today's scripture in Leviticus, it might be easy for New Testament Christians to think that some of the bible is simply not relevant to us. After all, God's people in the Old Testament were under a different covenant than we are. We approach God in a different way today.

Here are some lessons the people under the Old Testament covenant might have learned from our reading today (and from the whole book of Leviticus):

- God is holy. God takes His holiness seriously; so must God's people.
- God loves us and wants to be close to us. In fact, He loves us so much that He made a way for us to be close to Him, even though we are not holy.
- We can never be holy on our own—only through God comes holiness.
- God wants His people to be holy in every aspect of their lives—from the most private moments to the most public times.
- From His people, God expects, even demands, obedience to His word.
- Disobedience has serious consequences.

As a New Testament Christian, are any of these lessons relevant to you? See 2nd Timothy 3:16.

### July 26th Readings

LEVITICUS 16:29-18:30

MARK 7:24-8:10

PSALM 41:1-13

PROVERBS 10:15-16

Don't you just love the book of Proverbs? It's full of short, pithy statements that are easily memorized. We teach them to our children. We tell them to our friends. Knowing them makes us seem wise—like Solomon.

But like Solomon, sometimes we have a harder time putting them into practice in our lives. Take today's reading from Proverbs 10:15-16.

Here both the rich and the poor are focused on their circumstances of life. The rich man puts his trust in only his wealth; all that is significant to him is his money and all that it brings. The poor man is so burdened down by his poverty that he can't enjoy anything; he is consumed by his stark life.

There is another matter that should seriously concern them both—one of far greater importance. In fact, it's a matter of life and death. Their focus (and ours) should be about how best to serve the Master. What is the focus of your life?

### July 27th Readings

LEVITICUS 19:1-20:21

MARK 8:11-38

PSALM 42:1-11

PROVERBS 10:17

Proverbs 10:17 (ESV)

17Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life,  
but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.

Our reading today from the book of Proverbs is only one sentence; but what a sentence! It just kind of grabs you, and brings you up short.

I picture a horse running along at full gallop. It starts heading down a dangerous road, so the rider pulls the reins hard to bring the animal to a stop or at least turn it in the right direction.

Like that horse, we don't like our reins to be pulled. Like the pulling on the horses bit, the correction might cause discomfort. It may hurt our pride some to submit to another's wisdom, especially when we think we've been right but now it seems we were not.

If we fail to heed instruction, not only could we keep going down the dangerous path, but others could wrongly follow us. That's a sobering thought.

God loves us. He wants us to stay on the right path. He's given us His word and our church family to help us. Thank you, Father.

#### July 28th Readings

LEVITICUS 20:22-22:16

MARK 9:1-29

PSALM 43:1-5

PROVERBS 10:18

In today's reading in Mark 9, Jesus casts out a demon from a man's son. The disciples of Jesus had not been able to cast out this particular demon. In verse 29, Jesus says, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Let's look at this statement for a minute. However, the focus today is not demons, but prayer. What does this statement really mean?

There are some things that we just can't fix—some situations that we just can't get ahead of. There are some things that are so big, so overwhelming that they can swallow us up. The death of a loved one, a terrible illness, serious financial difficulties—these are just a few we could name, but this list goes on and on. Life is very hard sometimes.

So what do we do with those situations? The only thing we can do—give it over to God. That's what Jesus meant when He said "by anything but prayer." There are some things that only God can handle. Have you prayed today?

#### July 29th Readings

LEVITICUS 22:17-23:44

MARK 9:30-10:12

PSALM 44:1-8

PROVERBS 10:19

Proverbs 10:19 Have you ever noticed how many warnings about our speech are in the bible? Let's face it—our words get us into trouble. We babble about trivia, but don't say what needs to be said; we boast about ourselves, but disparage our fellow man; we praise our Lord, but spew hurtful words to our family. The book of James says the tongue is "the very world of iniquity."

Our loving Heavenly Father knows that we have a hard time controlling our speech. Thank you, Father, for your holy words which remind us so often to control our words.