



2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: March 2nd - 8th

Sermon: March 1st



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community ◦ equipping believers ◦ serving Jesus

March 2

Psalm 25:4-5

Yesterday, Nathan Daniels read these verses during our worship service. This Psalm is a confident plea for God to answer David's urgent request. And what is David's request? His desire is that God would reveal Himself to David. However, David doesn't ask God to give him a good feeling, a specific sign or something else that is way out of the ordinary. David is urgently wanting God to make Himself known by teaching him His law.

Many times, when I come to passages like this in the Psalms, I stop to think about what Scriptures the psalmists would have available. At this point in redemptive history, David did not have as much of the Scriptures that we have available to us on a daily basis. It is safe to say David had the books of the law, the first five books of the Old Testament (commonly referred to as the Pentateuch). After all, David mentions the law of God quite frequently in his writings. Another reason I believe David had the law is because Deuteronomy 17:18-20 required the king to write his own copy of the law so that he would abide by it. Unlike us today, David did not have the New Testament or much of the Old Testament. None of the events that the prophets write about had transpired, so this means Isaiah through Malachi had not yet been written.

What is my point in going down this rabbit trail? Besides the book of Genesis, or reading through the Bible in a year, when was the last time you spent meaningful time in Exodus-Deuteronomy? I must admit that I am mostly in other parts of the Bible. David was not. David was steeped in the law and was eager for God to teach him from this part of the Bible. I sometimes ask myself, if I only had the law, would I treasure it the way King David did? Stop for a moment and think about that question for yourself. While it is true that we will have more work to do to understand the law than some of the other portions of Scripture, it is still worth our time to see what God has revealed there. Remember that 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness", this includes the law. It may not be as easily apparent or applied like the Gospels or the letters of the New Testament, but it is still part of God's Word given to us so we would know Him.

As we continue our journey through the book of Exodus, come along this journey with prayer. That's what I am doing. I am learning together with you. If this portion of the Bible seems like a struggle, make Psalm 25:4-5 a regular part of your prayers to God, and as you do this, wait patiently for Him to teach you.

March 3

Psalm 119:16 & 97

Yesterday we looked at one of the requests David had for God to teach him from the law. Today we see a declaration of praise that David has to God for that same law. I think it is right to see a sense of excitement in our verses for today. A few thoughts come to my mind as to why David would view the law this way.

First, the very fact that God has revealed Himself in His word is something that we should cherish. The only reason we can know anything about God is if He chooses to make it known to us. We, born as sinful human beings, have no right to demand anything of God. It is crucial that we keep an important idea present in our minds when we come to the Bible. The idea is this, any act of revelation on God's part is always an act of grace. God, of His own will, and love for us decided to make Himself known through the Bible. He wasn't forced to do this, but it pleased Him to provide His people with His instructions. Do you view Scripture this way?

Second, God is holy and this is seen throughout the law. This means that God is different, set apart, unique, and transcendent. He is not like us. We have already seen a picture of this put on display in Exodus 19:9-25. That the perfect, pure, holy God would stoop down to sinful human beings and let us know who He is, by giving us His word, is an idea we should never get over. This overwhelming thought is part of what fuels the passion David brings forth throughout Psalm 119.

Third, God spoke to His people in a way they could understand. While this at times includes customs and rituals that are perplexing to us, they related to the culture of Israel. This also includes the fact that God gave His law in their language, Hebrew. When I stop to consider this, it shows me how often I take for granted that I have a Bible in my language that I can read and understand. Please don't miss this point, we have so many English translations available to us today. Many of these different translations are available at our fingertips because of the internet and Bible apps.

With these ideas in mind, I encourage you to not take for granted the access we have to God's word. I pray that we continue to learn to value the Scriptures in the same manner that we see David doing. I also pray that we will encourage and build one another up to do this together. When we open our Bibles, whether it is for devotional reading, to memorize Scripture, for working through difficult passages, seeking guidance for pressing circumstances, or just longing to be in the presence of God, let it be a worshipful experience. Come before our great God with reverence knowing that He will speak to you through His revelation.

March 4

Matthew 7:12

When God set Israel free from the Egyptians, one of the reasons He did this was to set them apart from the other pagan nations that surrounded them. He entered into a covenant with Israel. He gave them instructions that would make them look and live differently.

The tyrannical treatment of the Egyptian taskmasters was still fresh in their minds. However, God would now begin to instruct His people on how to relate to one another in a completely different manner than they had experienced. While there would still be a hierarchy of people, order, and structure, no one would be above the law. An ordered society with just laws would be a blessing and welcomed relief to Israel. God is not cruel and does not treat His people with cruelty. His expectation is that His people would not be cruel to one another either.

One of the ways Israel would experience just treatments was by having laws to protect one another. As we will see in the next few days, God values human life above everything else He created. The Israelites will be taught to live in a way that shows they value each other. Again, this is a major contrast to how horrible they were treated in Egypt. Just as God displayed His mighty power over Egypt, and their false gods, when He brought the plagues against them; now God is showing Israel that because He is different their relationship to one another must be different too. Pharaoh ruled with a heavy, oppressive hand. God, the sovereign Lord, rules His people with mercy and compassion.

It was not enough for these truths about God's character to be good ideas only. His goodness, to a degree, would now be seen between neighbors. That is just one of the ways we see compassion in His law. In order for Israel to thrive they would have to have concern for one another. This included keeping their property safe. It also included having control over their animals. Safety, protection, and showing your neighbor you valued his or her life was a key aspect of these laws. The children of Israel could view it this way, as I follow God's instructions, I am showing concern and compassion for my neighbors. I have a role to play in keeping them safe as it relates to how I govern what is mine.

Unlike Cain's sarcastic reply to God concerning his brother Able, "Am I my brother's keeper?", Israel was to watch out for each other's wellbeing by following the societal safeguards God put into place when He gave His law. God is addressing many specific circumstances in this portion of Exodus. As we strive to understand each of these regulations, Jesus' words from Matthew 7:12 are good lens to view them through. God did not want chaos or corruption for Israel. His instructions were given for order, protection, and the flourishing of His people.

March 5

Genesis 9:5-6

I focused this week in my sermon from Exodus 21 on the dignity of human life. My presupposition was that God created humanity in His very own image and in so doing gave them value, sanctity or dignity, and preeminence among all of creation (Gen. 1:26-27). We of course know this is a presupposition that is anchored in the truth of God's infallible Word and so is absolutely, 100% true.

The entire 21st chapter of Exodus focused on the manner in which people should relate to one another. In every case given, we clearly see that we are to treat one another with the dignity that has been endowed to each other. Whether it is a master to slave relationship, a husband to wife, or neighbor to neighbor relationship, in each case we are to be kind, considerate, thoughtful, mindful, and even sacrificial as we consider the well-being of the other person.

This flows church family from the fact that each person on the planet was created by God. This does not mean that we wink at sin, that crime goes unpunished, or that we don't hold one another to standards of civility, decency, and holiness (for the people of God). Jesus summed it up nicely when he said that we should love our neighbors as ourselves in both the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 19:18 and Matt. 22:39). In so doing, we are loving the Lord in our obedience to His will through our horizontal relationships here on earth.

I want to be sure that I balance this point to ponder properly. Thus far, I have been writing about being kind and considerate and the like towards others. The overarching point of my message was that we treat the apex of God's creation, humanity, with dignity. Dignity is also demonstrated when we rightly punish those who do harm to other human beings. Moses records many laws, with consequences, in Exodus through Deuteronomy. This is not the first time that punishment was detailed in the Scriptures for God's people. Again, the punishment was based on the very dignity that we are discussing.

After the flood described in Genesis 7, God enters into a covenant with Noah that is very much like His covenant with Adam. Noah was told to be fruitful and multiply and to fill the earth. It should be understood that this "filling of the earth" was God's means of assuring His glory would cover the earth like the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9). God also understood that threats would exist on the earth to His people. In order to combat that, God tells Noah that all who shed an innocent man's blood should pay with their own blood (Gen. 9:5-6). Notice at the end of verse 6 it says, "...for God made man in His own image." The reason a man who commits murder forfeits his right to live is because of the dignity and value of human life.

The various and sundry laws that we began to see in Exodus 20 and beyond are given for the purpose of protecting mankind as well as providing a clear picture to the world of how His kingdom people live in hopes that the rest of the world would be drawn to the beauty of the family of God. Human life is precious to God; treat it as such!

March 6

Exodus 21:22-24; Proverbs 24:11, 31:8-9

The late Christian apologist Francis Schaeffer once said, “Of all the subjects relating to the erosion of the sanctity of human life, abortion is the keystone. It is the first and crucial issue that has been overwhelming in changing attitudes toward the value of life in general.” Surely there is no sane person in our nation who cannot see that the value of human life has been diminished terribly since Roe Vs. Wade was passed by the Supreme Court in January of 1973. Undoubtedly, many factors play a role in the devaluing of human life, but I believe Schaeffer is right in that abortion has led the charge and stands as the main reason. (Folks, this is going to impact the care the elderly receive in the future).

As I consider Exodus 21 today, I can’t help but think of verses 22-24. Clearly God is considering the unborn child as a human being with the same value, dignity, and image bearing characteristics as any born person. Remember that God told Noah in Genesis 9 that if a man kills another man who was innocent, that murderer forfeits his right to live. In Exodus 21, we are told that if a pregnant woman is struck because men are physically fighting and her unborn child is killed in the altercation, then the one who caused the death is to be killed. Going back to Genesis 9:6 we can surmise that it is because God considers the unborn child a real, innocent human being who deserves protection as an image bearer. This should convince us that the unborn is truly a human being, a BABY in the womb just as much as she is once birth occurs (Prov. 24:11, 31:8-9).

Friends, for all who have had a hand in abortion, please know that God is merciful and forgiving and it is not my desire that you live with guilt for the rest of your life for a sin you committed in the past. Take the time to confess to the Lord, repent of your sin, and receive His forgiveness. We are all sinners and stand together in need of His mercy and grace. God can take those sins and cast them away forever and you can rest knowing that the little one is with the Lord and perfectly fine.

Think with me again about Exodus 21. We are given many rules as to how we are to relate to others. A major problem in our society in losing our understanding and conviction about the dignity of human life is that it spills over into many other areas of life. When you consider abortions that are performed merely for convenience or as a horrible form of birth control, consider the people making the decision to put their comfort and convenience above that of another – in this case the unborn child. Do you see how this attitude of selfishness permeates our society? This lack of consideration for the well-being or desires of others shows itself everywhere in our culture.

Have you ever considered that the crazy way people drive on the highway is connected to the failure to consider another person’s life valuable, and elevates the crazy driver’s convenience and wishes above everyone else’s on the road? Their thoughts are like this, “I’m going to drive right on your rear end because you are in my way. I don’t care about putting you in danger.” These selfish and ungodly attitudes flow from our cultures failure to see the dignity of human life. People are generally doing a terrible job of living out Exodus 21.

March 7

Matthew 10:31

The “big idea” of the sermon Sunday was that the law itself demonstrates the value of human life. God gave His rules and regulations to His people so that all parties would be protected from any undue harm. While we might get bogged down in the minutiae of attempting to understand why one law was given or how we could possibly extract principles from the law to apply to our modern society, we should not allow those honest and justifiable questions to diminish the larger truth that the law is good for protecting people who are valuable.

Today’s text may not seem to be related but I hope to draw a conclusion that is both helpful and apparent once we do a little work. The point of Jesus’ larger address in this portion of Matthew can be summarized as “don’t worry”. One of the tools that Christ utilizes to persuade His audience to trust the Lord is an argument from the lesser to the greater. In this case, He asserts that God is even aware of sparrows who “fall to the ground” and yet those sparrows are worth very little.

Our English translations render verse 29 to say that two sparrows were sold in the market for a penny! Nevertheless, our Lord was aware of them and cared for them. What does this have to do with the law? Passages like this remind us that God cares for all things but that He especially cares for man who is created in His image. How does He show His care? In part, by giving us a more developed and robust law!

There is no book of Exodus for the bird community precisely because there are not nearly as many rules and this fact is another indicator that God is concerned far more with us than He is with the birds. How do I make that leap? Because rules and laws are put in place to protect and steward what we care for the most. Think about this... we have far more rules in our homes for interactions between siblings than we do for how we treat our crayons! While we don’t want crayons to be utilized to concoct Dinwiddie graffiti on the walls, we are more concerned with our children than the crayon. Why? Because we can replace a crayon easily and inexpensively, but our kids are precious to us.

They may long for less rules and they may consider our regulations to be a bit burdensome at times, but they will grow up to create the same circumstance in their own homes in the future. We are always more apt to provide guidelines and rules in areas of concern. What this means is that God’s law is a reflection of His love (amongst other things). He loves and values His people so much that He puts things in place for us so that we will be protected and flourished. What an indicator of the sanctity of human life in the eyes of our Creator!

March 8

Psalm 119:165

Ultimately, the law is an expression of God's grace. Why is this the case? Because the law leads us in the path of blessing precisely because the law teaches us how we are to act underneath the Lordship and according to the design of creation. If you're like me, you don't always love instruction manuals! There are times in which I receive a product, and it appears to me that it can be used in many ways that the designer discourages. What I typically find is that there are potholes and obstacles to leveraging a tool in the way that the designer did not intend! Usually, the tool gets ruined and I get either harmed or frustrated (or sometimes both)!

In the same way, the law of God was given for the purpose of demonstrating to us the way that the world of God was designed to function. Those who ignore the law inevitably wander into ruin because they are attempting to steward God's gifts and resources in a way that opposes God's plan. Conversely, those who heed the Word and live in accordance with it are set up to discover real joy and fulfillment in life as they honor the Lord in obedience.

This is what the Psalmist means by "great peace have those who love your law..." God's goal in giving us the law wasn't our ruin; it was our good! His law reflects His character, and His character undergirds and informs the design of all that we enjoy and encounter in this world. Folks, you simply cannot live in God's world without God's guidance. This means that God's guidance is an indicator of His faithfulness to us rather than a sign that He despises us. It would be quite hateful for the Lord to design this place, task us with exercising dominion over it (in His name of course) and then leave us without any indication of how to go about reflecting His good and glorious rule. Ignorance would be far worse than guidance!

Do you love the law? Perhaps you don't because you wrongly see it as needlessly oppressive. The law is not intended to simply beat us down (although it has that function BEFORE we are led to grace in Christ), instead the law is intended to demonstrate to us the very path that will lead to our joy. When we see the love of God in the law and when we understand the value of mankind in His eyes, which is the motivation for keeping the law, then we can come to love the law and when we love the law and walk in accordance with its teaching, we are on a path to joy and peace just as the Psalmist promises his reader in Psalm 119.