

Readings

Jer 31:31-34

Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15.

Heb 5:7-9

Jn 12:20-33

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Have you ever met someone who, despite being well-intentioned, kind, friendly, funny and outgoing, thinks that the rules don't apply to him or her? These people really exist...perhaps you know one or two! No matter what the rule is, some people believe that rules are simply made for others and not for them. Examples can be found regarding the rules of the road while driving, forming lines, non-smoking areas, taxes, etc... No matter what the rule is, there seems to be a way, if you are intelligent enough, to get around the rule.

We are reminded in all of the readings this weekend that God has formed an alliance, a covenant with us, just as God has done through all generations. That covenant requires us to abide by rules that have been established. From the time of Moses we are reminded about the covenant that God established with the people of Israel. The prophet Jeremiah had to remind the people to stay faithful to the covenant and not to stray from following what the covenant requires.

Many times in the Gospels, Jesus wants to be clear that he did not come to abolish any of the laws given by God and prescribed by Moses. He says to the people: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill." He goes on to

say that “Whoever therefore will transgress one of the least of these precepts and will teach others to do the same, will be considered minimal in kingdom of heaven. But whoever observes them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven.”

I guess Jeremiah and the prophets needed to remind the people of Israel and Jesus needed to teach with these words, because over the centuries there have always been people who have had the same attitude towards the law that some have today. The years and centuries may change, but the attitude may still exist. The reality is that for centuries there has been a tendency for some to think this way. This invites me reflect on my life and how I need to ask for the grace to follow the law, not in my way of interpreting it, but in the way it was given to us by Christ. This is especially true for what Jesus calls the greatest commandment: love God and neighbor. At times, we must become like the grain of wheat that dies to self so that something good may bear fruit.

This is the law for which many times we can find excuses as to why it does not apply to my particular situation or relationship. Jesus leaves no room for “Yes, but...” Not even the smallest letter of the law of love can be abolished. Yet, if we look at the world around us, there seem to be more and more situations where there are exceptions to the law. One can begin to think that the law of love is an ideal, but that in the real world the exceptions take precedence. This trend is a dangerous path to follow, and it can lead to exceptions being made in many other areas.

Let us pray today that in this Lenten season we may be inspired by the Holy Spirit to follow the laws we have been taught, especially the greatest of commandments to love God and our neighbor. In doing so, we help to make the ideal a reality.