

**February 14, 2016
A Day of Thanksgiving
Leviticus 23:15-22**

¹⁵ “From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks.

¹⁶ **Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD.**

¹⁷ From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of the finest flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD.

¹⁸ **Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings—a food offering, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.**

¹⁹ Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering.

²⁰ **The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest.**

²¹ On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

²² “**When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and for the foreigner residing among you. I am the LORD your God.’”**

Greetings to you my sisters and brothers in Christ!

On last Sunday we began a new unit in the Adult Sunday School. The title of the unit is "What We Commemorate with God. On 1st Sunday we looked at Exodus 12:1-14 which records the preparations for the Passover and the meaning of the Passover for the Children of Israel. I spent some time providing an overview of how the Children came to be in Egypt and how God used Moses to rescue them. After that I attempted to make a connection between the establishment of the first Passover and what it means to us as Christians, as Christ established the new covenant – the Lord's Supper – during the traditional Passover. I used the theme **THEN, NOW and LATER.**

Today I want to return to the concepts of that sermon and use it as groundwork for the next three sermons. The reason is that the sermon is the first of the 19 holidays – Holy Days that God provided for the Children of Israel. They are each referenced in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus.

Lev 23:5	Passover	1 day	Deliverance from Egypt
Lev 23:6-8	Feast of Unleavened Bread	7 days	Leaving Old – Entering New
Lev 23:9-14	First Fruits	1 day	God provides
Lev 23:15-22	Weeks (Pentecost)	1 day	Bountiful Harvest
Lev 23:23-25	Trumpets	1 day	Joy and Thanksgiving
Lev 23:26-32	Day of Atonement	1 day	Restore Fellowship to God
Lev 23:33-43	Tabernacles	7 days	Renew Committed to God

19 feast days plus 52 Sabbaths = 71 days * 24 hours = 1704 hours

24 hours * 366 days = 8784 hours

1704 / 8783 is a bit over 19%

Using simple math, which is the only kind I can do, it would suggest that God was asking the Children to give Him **20% of their time and with that time they were to remember, rejoice, restore and renew and recommit.**

Later on in the 27th chapter of Leviticus we can read about the establishment of the tithe as a part of the Law.

Well, if God is given 10% of our income that **leaves 90% for us**. And if God gets 20% of our time that **leaves 80% for us**. So assuming that all in the room are Christians and doing exactly what God has asked us to do I have a question for us.

WHY ARE THERE PROBLEMS WITHIN OUR HOMES, CHURCHES, AND COMMUNITIES?

SHALL WE PRAY?

Most loving and holy God we thank you for the opportunity to call on your name. We thank you that before we were, You were and You made a way for us to return to You. We thank you for the preservation of Your Word and the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us to understand it and apply it to our daily lives. Father, we need you to send that Holy Spirit to us this morning. Help us to hear, understand, and apply the message you have sent. Abba, please do not punish your people for my short comings, but give them what they need in spite of me. I ask that you use me in your service right here and right now. Amen and Amen.

WHY ARE THERE PROBLEMS WITHIN OUR HOMES, CHURCHES, AND COMMUNITIES?

Now there is a very short answer to the question I have raised, **we have problems because we have sin**. And we have sin because we were born with sin and must repent everyday of the sin because it is our first nature. That sounds simple enough, but in reality it is really quite difficult.

We have problems in our homes because we have sin, but exactly what kind of sin or sins causes the problems.

Failure to love ourselves so we can love others

so of us our caught up in some stuff about ourselves that it gets in the way of us loving others – jealousy, envy, lies we believe, debts we think are unpaid

Failure to put forth the effort to listen

we already know what you are going to say
refuse ask clarifying questions
we arrive at the meeting prepared for the fight

Failure to accept that almost every problem has multiple solutions

Failure to accept any idea that is not our own

Those same failures **follow us to church** and to them we add some more:

Failure to take the time to present our best self

our best clothes and shoes – but not our best selves

our hair and nails are cleaned and polished – but our hearts are dirty/dull

Failure to think before we speak

failure to move out of our velvet rut

failure to accept that someone else deserves a turn

Then we take **our home failures** and **our church failures** and bring them to the community.

WE cannot love the poor and foreigner because they are not like us

WE cannot volunteer to help because we are waiting for someone else to do it

WE cannot witness to the goodness of God because we are being politically correct

WE cannot engage in random acts of kindness because we are afraid

The Children of Israel then were just like us now. They had been slaves for so long, subject to the will and wishes of others that when they were freed God had to teach them how to be a community of believers, how to live in right relationship with each other, how to take care of the priests and church leaders, how to take care of the poor and the foreigner. God helped them with very strict rules and those very strict rules helped them to survive.

But today we live under a new covenant and we are challenged too because the rules are no longer strict. Indeed they are the original 10 with two added by Jesus.

Matthew 22:36-40 (NIV)

³⁶ “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Yet, with all this we are still afraid. We are still reluctant to try a bit harder. We don't understand that the God who saved the Children of Israel still wants to save us. All God asks is that we leave the corners of our fields for the poor and the foreign among us.

During the first full week of Lent how will you leave your corners?