

Reflections on Faith and Life for Easter 7, May 16, 2021

Invocation (asking God to be present): *Dear Lord, before your trials of suffering you prayed that all your disciples might be one in Spirit. Grant that we may be bound together in love for one another and in obedience to you, so that the world may see and believe. In Jesus name we pray, Amen* (Reuben Job, *A Guide to Prayer for All Ministers*, p. 181).

The post-Easter readings from John's gospel are wordy and heavy. We (even pastors!) can't just skim them and say, "Yeah, I get it." It takes mental and spiritual energy to engage with John, the Beloved Disciple. I encourage you to spend some time with today's sermon.

Over the next few weeks I'll be writing about *sin*. What is it? Where does it come from? Which sin is the worst? How do we know which things are sinful? How do we get rid of our sins(s)?

Before you read further, I invite you to take a few moments to write down the first sins that come to your mind—aim for 10 sins. Are you familiar with *brainstorming*? Write down whatever comes to mind, without judging or censoring. You can always cross things out later. It's your list, no one else will see it unless you share it with someone.

According to biblical writers, sin is anything that's in opposition to God's good purposes for his creation. The first sin in the Hebrew scriptures (what we call the O.T.) is Adam and Eve's desire to be like God (by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). The first commandment addresses this: "I AM the Lord your God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Sin is everywhere. (Maybe we could say it's *pandemic*?) Remember what we heard from I John a couple of weeks ago: **"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."** In the book of Leviticus (the 3rd book of the "Pentateuch," the "Law of Moses") chapters 18-26 lay out what's called the "Holiness Code." It makes for interesting reading! 18:6-18 tells of all the family members and inlaws whose "nakedness" you shall not uncover. Those are the first "sins" listed. Then in verse 21 we read, **"You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God."** [From my perspective, nakedness is not nearly as offensive as sacrificing a child to the false god Molech!]

Chapter 19 begins, **The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. . . . You shall each revere you mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.** Chapter 19 lists a bunch of different sins, and there are 13 repetitions of "I am the Lord" or "I am the Lord your God."

Next week I'll list some of the offenses I find most interesting in the Holiness Code.