

Reflections on Faith and Life, Pentecost (May 23, 2021)

Prayer: *Gracious Jesus, . . . I come to you just as I am. I am sorry for my many rejections of your overtures of love. Please forgive all my offenses against your law. I repent of my callous and insensitive ways. Break my stony heart with the things that break your heart. . . . In remembrance of your sorrow, help me to weep over my sin. . . and my sins. For your sake and in your name I pray. Amen* (Richard Foster, Quaker).

Last week I invited you to write down “the first sins that came to your mind,” and to aim for ten. When I did that exercise, this is what I came up with:

1. Abuse of any kind (bullying, taunting, using power to frighten)
2. Arrogance
3. Self-centeredness
4. Judgmentalism/prejudice
5. Unwillingness to learn about prejudice
6. Not speaking the truth to offenders or abusers
7. Refusing to act to protect/defend those who are “sinned against”
8. Failing to honor God and God’s commands

Here are some of my favorite parts of the Jewish “Holiness Code” in Leviticus. Which do you think sound the most “sinful”?

- 19:1-2 The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.’”
- 19:3 Respect your mother and father, and observe my Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God.
- 19:9-10 Do not reap to the very edges of your field; leave the gleanings for the poor and the foreigner. I am the Lord your God.
- 19:11a Do not lie.
- 19:19c Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed.
- 19:19d Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.
- 19:27 Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.
- 19:28 Do not put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord.
- 19:30 Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord.
- 19:32 Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.
- 19:33-34 When foreigners reside among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigners residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”