

Lessons for the Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

February 19, 2017

Psalm 119:33-40 ~ *This prayer for instruction in God's laws longs for the promise of righteousness.*

Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18 ~ *The holiness of God is reflected in the kindness and generosity of His people.*

1 Corinthians 3:10-23 ~ *We are all temples of God's Spirit, building a witness to Christ in word and deed.*

Matthew 5:38-48 ~ *Just as their Father in heaven, His children go the extra mile to return good for evil.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Holy God; Holy People

It's a tall order, but St. Paul says it is God's work in us through Christ Jesus, by the power of the Spirit that has claimed us and made each of us God's holy temple. By our lives we reflect the steadfast love of our holy God in the way we treat others. As we allow the poor to glean from the generosity of our lives, as in kindness we return good for evil to those who mistreat us, so we witness to the love of God who, in Christ, "does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities."

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Loving Lord, You have given me so many ways to show my love to You in the way I treat those around me. Empower me by Your Spirit to tell them of Your love and to demonstrate it in my life. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: All the material blessings in our lives and all the gifts of God's grace are at our disposal to demonstrate the steadfast love of our heavenly Father in kind and generous dealings with those we come into contact with each day.

OFFERING PRAYER: Holy God through holy people, dealing with the world's sad poor,
Use our lives and bless our offerings, opening up Your Kingdom's door. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: The Epiphany readings have revealed Jesus' identity in word and deed. Today they point to God's people as an epiphany of His grace, but if God's glory is seen in the building of a great temple, then our lives are too often a mean hovel. The descriptions of kind and generous actions in our lives that should reflect God's holiness are clear and specific: do not deal falsely; do not lie; do not bear a grudge; turn the other cheek; go the extra mile; be true children of our heavenly Father! With a record like ours, we may well be disinherited, but God has put His Spirit in us and made us His holy temple, built on the foundation of His grace in Christ Jesus! Our lives are transformed to demonstrate His steadfast love.