



Living with LEVITICUS

March 17 • Traditional Worship

Our Pastors:
•Lead Pastor Andy Payton leadpastor@methodisttemple.church
•Associate Pastor JillAnn Knonenborg associatepastor@methodisttemple.church

Sunday Morning Volunteers:
•Ushers (3/17): Eric Eades, captain; Seby Durgy, Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
•Ushers (3/24): Eric Eades, captain; Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, John Oberhelman, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
•Greeters (3/17): Warren & Rosemary Heinsohn, Carla Bolin
•Greeters (3/24): Tom Harvey, Margo & Skip Borre

*An usher remains in the Narthex during worship. Please reach out to them with any questions or special needs you may have. They are happy to assist!

Additional Information
•Prayer Concerns: Lynda Quinn, Becky Atkinson; Sandy Williams in the passing of her husband, Kenny.
•Today's Sanctuary flowers given by the Flower Committee to the glory of God.
•Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Don Travis. Organist: Barbara Waite. Additional Music provided by Temple Brass.

Order of Worship

***Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices.**
***The cross (+) designates when the congregation will please stand.**
***Worshippers who find standing difficult are invited to remain seated.**

WELCOME "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" by E Diemer

PRELUDE
Leader: Our God is a father to the fatherless,
People: A companion to the lonely, a defender for the weak.
Leader: Through Christ, we have joined God's family; sons and daughters of the Most High.
People: Praise be to God, Father and Mother of us all.

CALL TO WORSHIP "Come, We That Love the Lord" by Watts/Williams

***CHORAL INTROIT**
"Morning Has Broken"

***CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT**
"Libera Me" by Faure/Hanna

***FIRST HYMN UMH #145**
"Pie Jesu" by Faure/Wilson

***PASSING OF THE PEACE**
Leader: I see Christ in you.
All: And also in you.
Leader: Please turn to those around you and celebrate the presence of Christ.

SPECIAL MUSIC "Pie Jesu" by Faure/Wilson

CALL TO PRAYER
Leader: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.
Leader: Let us pray as one.

PASTORAL PRAYER/ LORD'S PRAYER
All: Blessed Savior, we pray to be more like you. May your Spirit, like a dove, rest upon each of us. Transform us in mind, body, and soul, through the power of your grace. You know all our weaknesses; you know all our burdens. So now, O God, hear us as we pray in our own hearts and our own ways...

GIVING OFFERING #94 in Hymnal

***DOXOLOGY** *the congregation stands as the Ushers return the offering to the Altar.* "Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow" by Lloyd Larson

ANTHEM "Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow" by Lloyd Larson

KIDZ MOMENT

***SCRIPTURE READING** Leviticus 20:7-9
Leader: Praise God for the hearing of these sacred words.
All: Thanks be to God.

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE "The Family Prayer Song" by Morris Chapman

MESSAGE by Pastor Andy Payton Parenting

Well that verse is a real zinger. I'm looking forward to this series with Leviticus. Before I get into it though, Happy St. Patrick's Day everyone. Yeah. I hope you remembered to wear your green. I don't really have any green. First Service I wore my greens stole. First service I was good. This service is not so good in terms of wearing green. Happy St. Patrick's Day everyone. And I hope you have a good day with St. Patrick and all that. When I think about St. Patrick one of the things that always comes to my mind though is a song that's in the little book. I call it the hippie book but it's a little book. Someone called it the hippie book years ago and that stuck with me and so I continue to call the hippie book. But 2166, I'm not going to sing it cause I want you to enjoy it, so what I'd like to just look at the words because these words come from Saint Patrick's breastplate. These are kind of like the prayer of St. Patrick in this sense 2166. Yeah I really like it.

It says Christ beside me. Christ before me. Christ behind me king of my heart. Christ within me. Christ below me. Christ above me never to part. Christ on my right hand. Christ on my left hand. Christ all around me shield in the strife. Christ in my sleeping. Christ in my sitting. Christ in my rising light of my life.

I like Saint Patrick's theology. It is good. It reminds me what it means to be a Christian more than anything else. A Christian in my opinion is not someone who has just joined some sort of religion or religious group. A Christian is someone whose who's chosen to see Christ. A Christian is someone who chooses to see Christ in everyone and everything and they live their lives accordingly. And I hear that being echoed in St Patrick's words which go all the way back to the 400s. If you talk about being conservative and traditional, you don't getting more conservative and traditional than year 400 as far as I'm concerned. St. Patrick is inviting us to see Christ in everyone and everything and I hope that we could all have the courage to do that as well.

As we get started, let's begin with a moment of prayer. Would you pray with me? Help us to see you today, oh God. Help us to be present to you for indeed you are both present within and with each of us. And I pray in these next moments you would take the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts and that you would work in such a way that they would be made acceptable in your sight. For indeed you are our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

So like I said, that verse from Leviticus is a real zinger. It starts out to be wholly, Sanctify yourselves. Be obedient to God. Then it says if anyone curses mother or father they should be put to death because their blood is on their hands which is some harsh language. Let's just say it that way. The Hebrew for curse is if someone insults mom and dad, then they shall be put to death. So it's rough stuff if you ask me.

Leviticus itself gets its name from the tribe of Levi. The Levi's are the priestly tribe in the Old Testament in the Hebrew tradition. And so within the book of Leviticus what we find is the instructions that the priests are really supposed to live by. And in Leviticus you find all kinds of different things about how a person should eat and what they should eat. And you find instruction on how we should treat an outsider. They call them aliens or maybe a foreigner or a stranger. They call it aliens and the text. So how did how do we treat outsiders? In another place it talks about how the economy should be organized. We're going to talk about these different things throughout the next weeks. Today we find the treatment of kids. If a child curses mom and dad, they can be put to death. That's rough stuff. Every time I read Leviticus and I come across a verse like this, not that I read Leviticus that often to be quite honest with you, but every time I read these verses I always find myself thinking boy I am sure glad that my mom and dad aren't literalist when it comes to the Bible because I probably would have made it past the age of 13 or 14 years old if they read this passage.

The story that comes to my mind happened when I was about 13 or 14 living in the parsonage in Loogootee. My parents, I don't know why they did this, decided to leave my brother and I home alone. And if you know my brother and I very well, at 13 and 14 years old especially home alone and Andrew and Daniel Payton just don't mix well together. And so the story goes I was watching football and my brother kept running in front of the TV and he'd run in front of the TV and I'd get up to try to stop him and he'd get away. He kept doing that over and over again. I finally said Daniel- it's my brother's name- if you do that again I'm gonna make you remember that I told you not to. He just kind of laughed and I heard him he was running down the hallway. I knew he was going to do it again. Only this time I gotten behind the door that leads into the TV room and when he was walking or running through the door, I kicked the door just the right time. It swung around smacked him right in the head and it temporarily knocked him out. I'm like uh oh! What just happened right? And so he wakes up he starts crying. It's like October. He's got but he's got shorts on even though it's like October. He wakes up he starts crying. He gets up and he runs outside. I don't know why he does this. He runs outside. I'm like you idiot. I'm just going to lock the door behind you. Now you're standing outside in your shorts with a big knot on your head. And he starts yelling at me says Andy if you don't open that door, I'm gonna kick it down. I'm like, No you're not. And about that time he police kicked the door down. And I'm like uh oh! This is mushrooming much larger than I anticipated it would. And so from that moment on Daniel and I went from enemies to brothers and were like, How are we going to get out of this situation together? And so we pieced the door back together and we lock it. And we were sitting on the edge of our seats and we're thinking whatever parents are going to do. Mom and dad come back and they don't use the front door. They come through the garage and we're like we got out of this one for now. All right. The whole night I mean they walked by it back and forth. They don't see it. They don't notice it. Nothing nothing nothing. And the next morning though I can still remember sitting in bed knowing that my dad's gonna go out and get the newspaper. I just know it's gonna happen. And so I'm sitting there listening and looking at the ceiling and I hear him open the door. You just hear it is like just the front door just sounds like it disintegrates says he opens it. And I think Oh no. And I hear my dad saying boys. I can still remember walking downstairs and I'm talking to my brother. I'm like I won't tell if you own tell. We get downstairs and we look at my dad we're like well what do you do? And I was like holy cow. What did the paper boy do? He was thrown that paper hard. So so yeah, if my mom and dad read Leviticus and took it seriously, I don't think I would have made it past the age 13 or 14 years old.

But here's the thing as I thought about that story with my brother, as I thought about this passage of Scripture. No we don't execute our children if they disobey us even though sometimes I think we might feel that way. But we do have a tendency, as I thought about this text, we do have a tendency to want to slam the door on people within our hearts that we cannot control and we don't agree with. We might not literally do it. We might not kick the door like I did. But the truth of the matter is we have a tendency to slam the door on people that don't agree with us, that don't see it the same way we do. And I believe Right comes to speak against all that. I mean the reason why we do slam the door on people is because we're afraid of them or they made us mad. Jesus? I mean that's the reason we do that. But Jesus comes to stand against that. First thing he teaches us is first is don't be afraid. Right. I mean don't be afraid. That's like the basic gospel message. I have a New Testament scholar friend who once said to me if he could explain the entire gospel in just a few words it would be 'do not be afraid.' That's the gospel. Don't be afraid. So much with us and Jesus comes to tell us don't you be afraid. It's gonna be OK. This one called Abba is with us and the love that God has for us is so good more than we'll ever comprehend and imagine and understand. It's just that much bigger than anything that can happen to us and so don't be afraid.

The way that Jesus invites us to get over our fears, at least within his life, is he ran an open table policy where anyone could come to his table and be with him. He would step through his fears by allowing anyone to come eat at his table. It didn't matter if you're religious or non-religious, sinner or not a sinner. Didn't matter. Whoever you were, a prostitute or tax collector, you were invited to Jesus's table. He even went to the extent where he challenged us to love our enemies, to eat with the people- in other words- that make us afraid. As I looked at this passage from Leviticus, kind of meandering now, but as I look at this passage of Leviticus, I guess the first thing it reminded me was don't do that right. Don't shove people out of your life that you don't agree with. Don't shut the door on them. Instead Jesus invites us to keep the door open.

The other thing that the Leviticus passage reminded me of was of course with parenting right. No we don't execute our children if they disobey. No we don't do that. But we still ask the same question, and the question is: how do we best parent our kids? One author said it really well in that they noted the role of the parent- the role really of each generation- is to live our lives in such a way that the next generation has hope. And so when we talk about parenting, we're talking about how we live our lives in such a way that the next generation has hope. And I threw out a Facebook post this week and I asked folks "what's your best parenting advice?" I got a lot of feedback. I got like 50 comments on that. Holy cow! But here's like five of them. One person wrote make kids independent from you. They went on to say, but at the same time they noted that one of the best compliments that they they ever got from their kid was that they said that when everyone else wants to run away, Mom, you're there for me. There's this balance. You want to make your kids independent of you, but you want to be there for your kids at the same time. Another person said breathe and laugh. That was their parenting advice. Good stuff. Here's another one. This person didn't post on my comments and Facebook, but they messaged me. If they're here today, they'll probably kill me for reading this but I thought it was kind of funny so I'll share it with you anyway. It says don't do it. Don't have kids. 'They are monsters' is what they said. This one comes from a pastor friend of mine. I met this pastor up north and went to seminary with him. His father told him that there are a million strategies and different ways to parent. You shouldn't be afraid to try a few of them. You know you've been successful though when at the end of the day your kids know you love them. Solid. Another person wrote, don't be afraid to admit it when you're wrong. Probably the hardest one of all to do, especially if you're a parent. You don't like to admit it when when you're wrong. It's hard to be humble.

My journey as a parent began when I was 20 years old. And I became a father at 21 years old. And it wasn't the best of circumstances. It was my girlfriend. And then it was my ex girlfriend. Then she called back and she said, 'FYI, I'm pregnant.' And that's my story. In those early years as a parent, they were challenging. I mean we went through all that stuff, of course you know custodial and non-custodial parent, child support, and then then we actually did the pickup and drop off thing. That was so stressful. That was so hard. And so, we never got married or anything. We just did the best we could. That was that was the way it was early on in my life. I got married ten years ago and five years ago, we had our first kid, Paige. I took all that stuff from early on and I put it on page and I said I'm going to make this the best I can possibly make it right. I'm just gonna do all those things I wish I could have done that I couldn't do. And I was like a helicopter parent probably at those early stages because I just when I was like hovering over the crib all the time. I remember I was so proud. Paige was colicky. You probably don't know that, but when she was little she was colicky, and so I was the only one in the house that could do the football hold where I could bounce on my forearm there and she would sleep. I remember saying 'What's up, Leslie? I can do it. Check that out.' And she's like You idiot. You're the one that's up all night doing so. So I just wanted that to be the best though. I wanted to give everything I could. And then we found out we're pregnant with our second together, Ella. And I remember thinking to myself how do I ever love another child like that? And the thing I found out was when I saw Ella, my love just kind of grew. If you've ever been a parent, every kid that you have, it's a miraculous thing that happens just in an instant your heart just grows and it encompasses that child. It is a beautiful, beautiful thing. And so that's my parenting story.

You know those are the table of contents and here's some of the things I've learned through the years. Here are some of the things I've learned through the years as a parent. First some games when it comes to parenting or life in general, in some games the only way to win is don't play. I learned that early on. The turning point for my relationship with my first daughter, the turning point for us at least in my heart was when I said to myself I am done fighting. I am not going to play that game anymore. Instead there is only one game I'm willing to play. How do I see my daughter? That's it. I'm not going to argue about where we pick up and drop off. I'm not going to do it. Not going to argue about this bill or that bill. Not going to do. All I want to do is see my daughter. That's actually what brought me down here in the south. My daughter lives in Jasper, so I asked the bishop if I could move somewhere close to Jasper. They said, well you can go to Tell City and then you can go to Evansville. That was the bishop's answer. So that's you. That's the thing is, you have to realize what your finish line really is going to be. You have to prioritize what's most important. And once you prioritize what's most important whether it be with parenting or just all of life, when you prioritize what you're truest value is and you've got your finish line in scope, then you can decide what games you're going to play and what games you're not going to play. That's one of the first things I learned as a parent.

The second thing I learned as a parent- let me look at my notes here -is that you have to, this is what I learned with Paige, as a parent we have to let our kids become strangers to us to an extent. By that I mean we don't lose connection with our kids, but to an extent we have to let our kids be themselves. With Paige, I just hovered over her early on. I had my vision and what perfection should be for her and that's what we were gonna do. And as I came out of that, I realized hey this happens a lot where we as parents have our vision about what should happen for our kids. We have our our playbook about what the life should look like and we force them into that playbook. And if we're not careful we steal their voice from them. We steal their own little unique spark. I think a role of a good parent is to cultivate a kid's voice and to allow them to be themselves and allow them to live into who they are and not necessarily who mom and dad want them to be. That's gonna be hard. I don't know. I tell myself that right now.

Here's the last one I learned. The love that a parent has for a kid, I think can teach us a lot about our love for God too in that it should always be growing. The love that a parent has for a kid is a lot like our love for God. It should always be growing. That's what Ella taught me. My heart kind of grew. It just grew. But we as humans are designed in such a way where we need love though. We need something to love. It might not be that we're a parent. It could be we decide to love something else. It could be like we love it a career. Sometimes see you see folks like fall in love the sports team. There are all of these different ways that we love. We need to love and what we really need to love because at the end of the day we just need something that's worth getting out of bed for. And what we decide to love is and that gives us our meaning and purpose in life. And I think what the gospel can teach us and what the leap of faith can teach us is whatever it is we loved, we didn't just love that but in loving we also love the God that God gave us that too. Let me say it again. Whatever we choose to love, we're not just loving that but we're choosing also to love the God that gave us that. It could be that person, the career, whatever because at the end of the day God's the one that made that possible. And God seems content with us not even realizing that it was God that did it. That's the weird thing about God. God's pretty humble. God doesn't even care if we name it or not. God just loves us so much that God enjoys us being alive. When we can see that all those ways that we love in the end we're still loving God and doing so, this is a love that just keeps growing more and more and more because each new day there's a new opportunity to fall in love with this life that God is giving us. Anyway that's kind of where I'm at with parenting.

One more thing. Just one more thing about faith. If I could pass on one idea of faith to my kids it would be this that they need a vision of God that's at least as big as the universe. I would tell my kids that God is at least as big as the universe and is a little bit bigger than that. And here's the reason why I say that. Within Christianity we've taken this vision of a big God which says a crisis in everything and we have a tendency to just kind of dilute it down to our little tribe. That's dangerous. As far as I can tell until we can begin to see God in people who are different than us, we're not going to get over our division as a society and as a people. There is a theologian named Hans Kong, who said there will never be peace in this world until there's peace among the religions. There will never be peace among the religions until we are able to see past our religious differences and see the presence of the sacred in one another. And so if I could teach my kids one thing it would be that God is at least as big as the universe and is a little bit bigger than that. And it's certainly bigger than our little tribe. It is certainly bigger than that.

One more story and then I'll quit rambling. Eighteen years ago, basically I knew I was gonna be a father. I remember the day that I told my dad that that my girlfriend was pregnant. I remember it vividly. I was driving or rather I was riding with my dad. We were on Highway 231 south south going towards Jasper. I was riding with my dad because I had a misunderstanding with the Indiana State Police and they thought that they should take my license away as a result of what happens. So I was riding with my dad. Girlfriend to say things weren't going so well for us as a family at that point. And I'm like well Dad I got some news for you. Yeah you remember my girlfriend. Yeah she's pregnant. And there was like a silence. It was probably like 10 seconds. It felt like four hours but it was like ten seconds and I'll never ever ever forget when my dad told me. It was like the exact right thing at that moment. He said Andy as long as there's life, there's hope. As long as there's life, there's hope. And for me what that meant was yeah this wasn't the plan at least as I understand it from my life, but I can be going good out of it and I can change and I can grow because of it. And it's because of all those things that happened way back then that I'm even a pastor today to be quite honest with you. I wouldn't have gone to church if it weren't for all that stuff happened. That's just the way it is.

And so if I was going to tell you one thing today, it would be this. Friends, as I look out at you today I see such hope because there is life you. That life that's in you, that's Christ in you. There's unlimited possibilities about what can happen what can be but just know that God is just pleased that you decide to fall in love with this life that you've been given. And so it is today let us sing to that God as the praise team comes. Let us sing to this Christ that lives within each of us that gives us hope and gives us life. Let us be a people like St. Patrick who is able to say Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me. Let us stand and let us say.

***LAST HYMN UMH #188** "The Care the Eagle Gives Her Young"

***CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE "O Lord, We Praise You" by B. Culli