

Sermon Guides for Leviticus – Judges

Series Title: Road Rules

Tag Line: Old Rules for New Life

Dates (2020): February 2, 9, 16, 23

Key Verse:

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13)

Series Overview

It is easy to feel lost in a world of conflicting messages and values. But God has given us a clear road map for how to live, as long as we observe and obey the road signs that God gives us along the way.

Once the Israelites were liberated from slavery under Pharaoh, they soon discovered that their newfound freedom carried a new burden of responsibility. They required new rules to guide their interpersonal relationships and their relationship to God. And they had to learn it on the go, amid a vast wilderness and daily threats to their survival. The books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy outline these new “rules for the road” for these wandering Israelites. They would not only ensure their survival, but would frame their identity as God's people forever.

We are a lot like those wandering Israelites. We may be freed from the slavery to sin, but we are not yet experiencing the full joy of the Promised Land. In the meantime, we are wandering and wondering how to move forward in life, in a way that fully loves God and others.

Today, the laws in Leviticus – Deuteronomy might seem antiquated and even far-fetched, but they are the same essential foundation for the Judeo-Christian ethic that God calls us to live out today:

Yield: Surrender to God with complete obedience.

Caution: Be aware and attentive to that which would threaten our obedience.

One Way: Be single-minded and focused on the way and will of God.

Go: Proceed with courage, knowing that God is with us.

Each of these “road signs” serve as a vivid reminder of how to live life as God intends it.

Colors, Images, Mood, Vibe

Red, green, and yellow (traffic signal colors).

Images of stop signs, green lights, yield, one-way, and caution signs.

Feelings of alertness, focus, determination, discovery, openness, obedience.

Sermon 1

Title: Road Rules: Yield

Scripture: Leviticus 16:1-5, 20-22

Key Word: Sacrifice

Theme: Offering God our Best; Source for Atonement

Main Idea: God gives us a way to confess our sins, repent, and make things right with God and others.

Sermon Description:

Leviticus 16 is the institution of the Day of Atonement, part of the sacrificial atonement system in which an unblemished animal is killed and its blood offered to God as a repayment for sins. The imagery of blood and violence seems antiquated and even repugnant to our modern ears, but it underscores an enduring theological point: God gives us a way to make things right. We are not bound to the perpetual effect of sin, but by God's grace we can be saved. Our only requirement is to yield to the grace and forgiveness of God.

Just like yielding on the road, we cannot live life asserting our own dominance and our own "right-of-way." When we do, we crash. But if we abide by God's ways, we can enter into the free-flowing traffic of God's forgiveness and a full relationship with others.

Sermon 2

Title: Caution

Scripture: Numbers 13:1-3, 17-20

Key Word: Faith

Theme: Report of the Twelve Spies from Canaan

Main Idea: Our fears may tell us to stop, and our pride may tell us to go. But sometimes, God calls us to watch, be alert, and proceed with caution. Especially when there is the danger of temptation ahead.

Sermon Description:

Before the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, Moses sent an advanced scout team of twelve spies, one from each tribe of Israel, to do reconnaissance work on the Canaanites. They came back with conflicting reports. Ten said that it was too dangerous, and they needed to turn around. Joshua and Caleb saw the opportunity for God's power to be revealed, and they suggested they move forward.

Caution in the Christian life can be a good thing. Rather than barrel through life with our own bull-headed determinism, God calls us to keep our eyes open, alert to the opportunities God avails us to grow in our faith, take a risk, and build the kingdom. But too much caution can render us frozen by fear of the unknown. Ultimately, we are called to go when God says go, stop when God says stop, and be alert enough with caution to be able to discern which message God is sending.

Sermon 3

Title: One Way

Scripture: Deuteronomy 10:12-22

Key Word: Commitment

Theme: Purity in Life and Worship, Moses' last sermons

Main Idea: God gives us a clear road map for how to live. There can be no deviations, no improvising, no going backwards. There is one way to live the kind of life God intends for us.

Sermon Description:

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 offers a synopsis of the book: “So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.”

Many scholars believe that Deuteronomy was written during or after the exile of the Israelites, at a time when they needed to be reminded of who God is and why faithfulness to God mattered. More traditionalist scholars believe that Moses wrote Deuteronomy as a second reminder (Deuteronomy means “second law”) to the surviving Israelites were preparing to enter Canaan, and who may not have been around when the law was first given to them.

Either way, Deuteronomy is a needed refresher for each of us, reminding us that following God's commandments is a key to life. It reminds us to give wholehearted devotion to God, and in this passage, to care for the immigrant and the poor, and to be “circumcised in the heart,” which means to follow God not only in behavior, but in mindset and motivation.

Sermon 4

Title: Go!

Scripture: Joshua 1:1-9

Key Word: Courage

Theme: Joshua and the Crossing of the Jordan River

Main Idea: Despite the fears that may plague us, God calls us to move with courage, knowing that God is with us.

Sermon Description:

After years of wandering, the Israelites were now on the brink of glorious conquest. But General Joshua, now leading them in the wake of Moses' death, sensed the fear and ambivalence that the people were feeling. We can identify with those anxieties. When the world seems too saturated by injustice and evil for us to feel like our actions can do any good, we need this encouraging word from Joshua, which is to move forward with the confidence and courage that "the Lord our God is with us wherever we go."