

PENTECOST: A TIME TO BE FILLED WITH GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 25

October 26, 2008

Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18

Psalm 1

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Matthew 22:34-36

Are You Genuine or Counterfeit?

From where do you draw your understanding? We all live 'out of' something. We all draw our actions, like water in a bucket, from a well of experience. We all have been given the ability to choose, and in every situation we must choose between two things: whether we will be genuine or whether we will act falsely.

What does it mean to be genuine? Does it give us a free pass to trample on those around us while saying, "I'm just being who I am"? Suppose someone offered you a hundred dollar bill—in one hand they held a genuine bill and in the other, an impressive-looking counterfeit. Which bill would you accept? When we act outside of God's will, no matter how 'genuine' we look or feel, we are acting 'out of' a place of falsity.

As believers, God sets a standard for us to follow. In Leviticus 19:2, the words of God are clear, "You shall be holy for I the LORD your God am holy" (*RSV*). Then God goes on to tell us how we are to relate to him and to one another, not just on the surface, but even with the very thoughts of our heart. Similarly, in Mark's Gospel, Jesus tells us how our lifestyle should mirror the two greatest commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ... And you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31, *RSV*). Basically, we are to live genuinely with God, ourselves, and others.

Why be open and truthful? Why be genuine? Psalm 1 tells us that a genuine lifestyle is rewarded by God, while a life that is built on pretense will lead to destruction. To live genuinely, is to exchange our thoughts and actions for God's thoughts and desires for us. One of the major ways for us to know the mind and will of God is to 'meditate on his law day and night.'

Those who work daily with money in the U.S. Treasury know the difference between genuine and counterfeit currency because they spend time studying all the elements of the genuine article. Their familiarity with the real currency enables them to discern the distinction between the two. How much time do we spend in the Bible so that we will

know God intimately and be able to discern fraudulence and navigate through times of deception, persecution, and tragedy?

In 1 Thessalonians 2, the apostle Paul shows us, by example, how important it is to live life genuinely before God rather than seeking the fleeting praises of those around us. By doing so, God is able to mature us, all the while empowering us to impact the lives of others.

This week's Reflection was prepared by Allen Weaver, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Mission Specialist for Global Scripture Ministries.

+ + +

This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Costa Rica – With thanks to God for the dedication of the BriBri New Testament, and with prayers for programs that have been especially developed to help children and young people overcome the problems associated with violence and drugs in their schools and colleges; **Nicaragua** – With thanks to God that Scriptures have been distributed to more than 122,000 children and that these Scriptures are encouraging them to continue studying, and with prayers for the launch of the Revised Miskito Bible with Deuterocanon and for projects such as *Child Beggars* and HIV/AIDS work; **Panama** – With thanks to God for the country's approval and enacting of the law that establishes the month of September as Month of the Holy Scriptures, and with prayers for the Bible Society in Panama as it seeks a new model for Scripture distribution that will embrace the entire country, and with prayers for the translation of the Bible into the Kuna language.

Activity Corner: “Love” Lists

Supplies needed: Bible; writing paper; pens or pencils.

The Old Testament lesson is from a section in Leviticus known as the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17 – 26). In Leviticus 19:2, the people of Israel are reminded to be holy because God is holy. Verses 3-18 give examples of what it means to live a life that is “holy” as God intends. Holiness involves being in a right relationship with God and with one's neighbor. On one side of a sheet of paper, write LOVE GOD; on the other side, write LOVE ONE ANOTHER. Read through Leviticus 19:1-18 and list those things that describe how one shows love to God and how one shows love to others. Now compare Leviticus 19:1-18 with Exodus 20:1-17. What similarities do you find?