

Soli Deo Gloria

Lv 19:1-2,17-18

I Am the Lord
Be Holy!
Love your neighbor!

Intro: The name Lord appears in our text a number of times. Did you notice that it is written in a special way? It's written in what is known as small capitals. This indicates that it is a special name for our God. It tells us that our God is a loving, gracious, compassionate God. Our entire text revolves around that name Lord. That name effects our spiritual condition and affects our spiritual life. I Am the Lord our God tells us. And then he tells us 1) Be holy! and 2) Love your neighbor!

- I. Be holy! (1,2)
 - A. God's expectation
 1. be like God
 - a. all of us have certain expectations of our children
 - b. we expect them to be faithful to their Jesus, to be polite, to do their best, to attend church, and the like
 - c. similarly, God has certain expectations of his children
 - d. the foremost being that they be like him – holy
 - e. yes, that's right, God expects his children to be holy
 - f. and, in case you've forgotten or don't know what holy means
 - g. holy means 'sinless' or 'faultless'
 - h. Jesus further defines God's injunction in our gospel lesson today
 - i. he tells his disciples, (Mt 5:48, "Be perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect.")
 2. this is what God expects!
 - a. God expects, indeed, he demands that his children be holy
 - b. he expects absolute perfection from me, from you, and from all his children
 - c. God has very high expectations
 - d. and he is absolutely serious
 - e. he expects perfection and nothing less
 - f. and he lets us know that those who are not holy will never see him
 - g. through the inspired words of the author of Hebrews who writes, (He 12:14, "...without holiness no one will see the Lord.")
 - B. We don't meet God's expectations
 1. we are not and cannot be holy
 - a. our lives are a sad and constant reminder that we do not live up to God's expectation of perfection
 - b. this is so because we are unable to meet that expectation
 - c. we are inherently sinful people
 - d. we are conceived and born in sin
 - e. (Ps 51:5, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.")
 - f. every fiber of our being is sinful
 - g. (Ge 6:5, "The Lord saw...that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.")
 - h. all of our thoughts, words, and attitudes are tainted by sin

- i. (Mt 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.")
 - j. and even our best and holiest deeds are marred by sin
 - k. (Is 64:6, "...all our righteous acts are like filthy rages...")
 1. it is totally beyond our ability to be holy
 - m. and for that we do not deserve to be in communion with God
 - n. either in this life or in the one to come
 2. yet we are holy
 - a. yet, in spite of our inability to be holy
 - b. God still expects, demands that we be holy
 - c. fortunately for us, what God demands of his children he also gives
 - d. God demands that his children be holy
 - e. and he gives them the holiness he demands
 - f. our gracious and compassionate Lord God gives us holiness
 - g. through the life and death of his Son Jesus
 - h. and the work of his Spirit
 - i. God sent Jesus into this world and while he lived here
 - j. he lived a holy life, keeping God's commandments perfectly
 - k. being holy in our stead
 - l. (Mt 6:17, "I have not come to abolish [the Law or the Prophets] but to fulfill them.")
 - m. furthermore, Jesus died a real death on his cross
 - n. to pay the price for our sin and cleanse us from its stain and its guilt
 - o. (1Jn 1:7, "...and the blood of Jesus...purifies us from all sin.")
 - p. in time, then, the Holy Spirit brought us to faith in Jesus through the gospel
 - q. and with that faith came the removal of our sin
 - r. and the imputation of Jesus' holiness to us
 - s. (Ga 3:27, "...all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.")
 - t. now, because of Jesus and his Spirit, we are holy in God's eyes
 - u. which entitles us to be in communion with God now and forever in the holiness of heaven
- Trans: It is because of the Lord, our gracious and compassionate God, that we are holy. And it is because our Lord has been gracious to us and made us holy that we follow the Lord's injunction to...
- II. Love your neighbor (17,18)
 - A. Be holy toward our neighbor
 1. gratitude
 - a. even though we can never attain this perfection that God demands of us
 - b. we will always strive to meet God's expectation of holiness in this life
 - c. we will constantly strive to be holy in our relationship with our neighbor
 - d. this will be our way of showing gratitude to our Lord God
 - e. to whom we owe our salvation from sin, death, and the devil
 2. follow his injunction
 - a. to show our gratitude to the Lord God
 - b. we will follow his injunction
 - c. "Do not hate your brother in your heart."
 - d. we will not allow feelings of animosity and hatred brood and breed in our heart when our neighbor sins against us
 - e. rather, we will speak openly with him or her about it to avoid sinning in our heart
 - f. we will follow the Lord's injunction

g. “Do not seek revenge...”

- h. if a spouse says something mean or a brother gives a slug
- i. we will not retaliate
- j. but, rather, turn the other cheek as Jesus encourages in the gospel lesson
- k. we will follow the Lord’s injunction

l. “Do not...bear a grudge...”

- m. we will not stay angry at or harbor ill-will against those who wrong us
- n. instead we will forgive as we have been forgiven and then forget
- o. we will strive to be holy in our attitudes and actions toward our fellowman
- p. by doing as the Lord commands, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”**

B. We need help

- 1. we are not holy in this regard
 - a. but we are certainly not holy in this regard
 - b. are you holding a grudge against someone right now for something that happened yesterday, last week, or last year?
 - c. we’ve had feelings of animosity and hatred toward others haven’t we?!
 - d. we’ve probably retaliated against someone and gotten revenge
 - e. with a sniping comment or a slug in the arm or the gut
 - f. isn’t it a blessing that, on account of the gracious Lord God, we have forgiveness and Christ’s holiness
 - g. to spare us from the eternal damnation we deserve?!
- 2. we need help to show gratitude
 - a. all the more do we want to show our gratitude toward our gracious Lord God
 - b. by striving to live holy lives in our relationship with our neighbor
 - c. but we weak sinners need help, lots and lots of help, to do so
 - d. and we have that help – God provides it
 - e. we have the power of the indwelling Jesus and his Spirit to help us in our weakness
 - f. we can approach God in prayer for the assistance we need to live holy lives
 - g. and we can get the power we need to lead holy lives from the gospel
 - h. found in the written Word
 - i. and in the Sacrament in which we receive Jesus’ true body and blood
 - j. for the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins
 - k. and the power to lead holy lives
 - l. as we use these means God provides
 - m. we will lead increasingly holier lives in our relationships with others
 - n. and show our gratitude to our gracious and compassionate Lord God
 - o. who gives us holiness on earth and forever in heaven

Concl: Friends, as your Lord God expects of you and empowers you – be holy and love your neighbor!