

Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

Monday (March 27) – Leviticus 26

Leviticus 26 has two sections: 1) Blessings for Obedience and 2) Punishment for Disobedience. Because nearly three quarters of this chapter is devoted to the punishment section, one might conclude that God is a God of punishment and wrath. A closer examination of the way each of these sections concludes, however, reveals that this could not be further from the truth. Blessing and grace is God's proper work. Punishment and wrath is God's alien work. God leads Israel out of slavery in Egypt so that He might bless them (v. 13). Conversely, God punishes Israel when they rebel against Him so that they will repent and look to Him for freedom from slavery to sin (vv. 44–45). In this life God never punishes us out of malicious anger. His punishment is always meant to lead us to deeper and fuller grace in Jesus Christ so that we learn to utterly despair of ourselves and receive the grace He offers.

Tuesday (March 28) – Leviticus 27

Leviticus 27 deals with the valuation of voluntary contributions that the Israelites make to God for the maintenance and upkeep of the sanctuary. These contributions are completely voluntary—there is no compulsion placed upon a man which obligates him to offer these gifts. However, these voluntary contributions are necessary for the ongoing ministry and work inside the sanctuary. Without these gifts the sanctuary could not function. God's grace continues to be offered without our help, but the Lord in His infinite wisdom allows us to contribute to and partner in His gracious work of bringing the Gospel to men. The New Testament Church, too, operates on the generosity and voluntary contributions of its members. Without the generous tithes and offerings, congregations could not function. Your contributions in the offering plate help facilitate Christ's Gospel ministry in your community.

Wednesday (March 29) – Numbers 1

In the original Hebrew, the book of Numbers begins with the word “and.” Such also is the case for the books of Exodus and Leviticus. Many English translations leave the “and” untranslated because of English grammar rules. However, the fact that each of these books begins with “and” demonstrates that they are to be viewed as one continuous story—from creation to the Lord's choice of Abraham to the exodus from Egypt to the Israelites arriving at Mt. Sinai. As Numbers begins Israel has been camped at Mt. Sinai for over a year. Here, the Lord gives a series of final instructions before Israel finally departs Mt. Sinai (ch. 10).

Numbers 1 contains a lengthy census of the Israelites which is mirrored by a second census in chapter 26. From a twenty-first century perspective, these chapters can be a challenge to read due to the funny sounding names and the exhaustive obsession with family lineage. Rather than getting frustrated and skipping ahead, we should recognize an important truth in these lists: Names matter to God. The Bible is a book about people because God cares about people. Jesus did not die and rise again to save humanity in the abstract, He died for people like you and like every one of the men, women, and children represented in this census.

Thursday (March 30) – Numbers 2

In Numbers 2 the Lord goes to great lengths to detail how Israel ought to camp. A helpful exercise when reading through this chapter is to take a sheet of paper and attempt to map out what the Israelite camp would have looked like. If you do so, you will discover two significant insights about Israel's camp. First, Israel's camp is arranged in the shape of a cross (with three tribes camped on each of the four extremities), foreshadowing the Savior of Israel who would redeem them from a cross. Second, God's presence in the Tabernacle is at the center of Israel's camp, both literally and figuratively. In the same way, we also ought to orient our lives around God's presence with us in Word and Sacrament, making Him the center.

Friday (March 31) – Numbers 3

In Numbers 3 the camp of the Levites and Priests is detailed. This camp is a mirror of the larger Israelite camp, with the Tabernacle at the center and the Priests and Levites orderly arranged in a cross-shape around it. What is of note with this chapter is the level of detail provided for the camp of this one tribe. As those responsible for the holy things of God, the Lord cares greatly that they properly perform their duties. "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Therefore, it is right that our churches also take great care to maintain peaceful order in what we say and do.

Saturday (April 1) – Numbers 4

Numbers 4 gives further instructions regarding the duties of the Levites. These instructions focus on proper handling of the holy things of God. While the specifics of these instructions have no binding authority on the Church now that Christ has come, the principle of care and reverence when handling the holy things of God is still applicable. In our churches pastors, servers, and altar guilds do the same. This great care and reverence is used not because of some law which requires it. It is used because of a deep understanding and appreciation for the holy gifts of God which these vessels deliver to us.

Sunday (April 2) – Numbers 5, 6

Numbers 5 contains a strange ritual concerning unfaithful wives. The Lutheran Study Bible offers helpful notes for interpreting the details of this passage, demonstrating how this ritual is centered around the Lord. Through all the seemingly strange details of this ritual, we should not miss the fact that the Lord takes adultery seriously. Adultery and all forms of sexual perversion are damaging in more ways than we realize. We must flee from all such wicked thoughts, words, and deeds, lest we fall prey to this temptation.

In Numbers 6 the law of the Nazirite is explained, which will become important later in the biblical story with the judge Samson. The chapter ends with the Aaronic Benediction. Just as Aaron before them, so now do our pastors place the name and blessing of God upon us at the conclusion of the Divine Service. God's baptismal promise to us, where He first placed His name upon us, will never be forgotten.