

Peace Lutheran Small-Group Bible Study

“Holy Love: Rooted in Christ, Serving the Neighbor”

Theme: God’s holiness is revealed in love—love for God and neighbor—but that love is not self-produced. Rooted in God’s Word and gathered around Christ, we are freed and shaped to live holy, humble, neighbor-loving lives.

Lutheran Lens: The Law shows us God’s holy will, exposes our failure, and guides the redeemed. The Gospel gives us Christ, who fulfills the Law for us and produces the fruit of love through faith. We do not love in order to be saved; we love because we are saved by grace through faith in Christ.

Scripture Focus

- Leviticus 19:1–2, 15–18 — “Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy”; impartial justice, no slander, no vengeance, love your neighbor.
- Psalm 1 — The blessed person delights in the LORD’s instruction and is like a tree planted by streams of water.
- 1 Thessalonians 2:1–8 — Paul’s gospel ministry: courageous, truthful, not people-pleasing, gentle as a nursing mother, sharing not only the gospel but his own life.
- Matthew 22:34–46 — The greatest commandments: love God and love neighbor; Jesus is David’s son and David’s Lord.

Optional Hymns: “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”; “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart”; “Christ, the Life of All the Living.”

Summary

In Leviticus, God calls His people to holiness that is concrete: honest courts, no gossip, no revenge, and love for the neighbor. Psalm 1 contrasts the fruitful life rooted in God’s Word with the chaff-like life of the wicked. Paul describes gospel ministry as truthful, courageous, gentle, and self-giving—like a mother caring for children. In Matthew, Jesus sums up the Law as love for God and neighbor, then reveals Himself as both David’s son and David’s Lord.

For Lutherans, these texts must be read through the Law–Gospel distinction. The command to love exposes our selfishness and failure. The Gospel announces that Christ is the true righteous One, the true Son of David, and the Lord who serves us. In Him we are forgiven, declared holy, and made fruitful. Holiness is not a self-improvement project; it is life rooted in Christ and His Word, bearing the fruit of love.

Key Points

1. Holiness is relational and concrete.

Leviticus 19 does not define holiness as a mood or a slogan. It is lived out in courts, speech, business, and relationships. “I am the LORD” is the foundation: because God is holy, His people reflect His character in justice and love.

2. Love fulfills the Law—but love is not vague sentiment.

Leviticus connects love of neighbor with truth-telling, impartial judgment, and refusing revenge. Biblical love does not excuse sin or avoid hard truth; it seeks the neighbor’s good.

3. Psalm 1 shows that blessing comes from rooting, not striving.

The blessed person delights in God’s instruction. In Lutheran terms, the Law cannot make us righteous by our own effort; it drives us to Christ, the true blessed Man, and then shapes our meditation and life. Fruit is the result of being rooted, not the root itself.

4. Gospel ministry is humble, truthful, and self-giving.

Paul refuses deception and people-pleasing. He is gentle like a nursing mother and shares his own life. This is a model for pastors, leaders, and every Christian: the Gospel is God’s Word, not our marketing; service is not self-promotion.

5. Jesus is the Lord who fulfills the Law.

The greatest commandments hang on love of God and neighbor, but Jesus then asks, “Whose son is the Christ?” He is David’s son and David’s Lord. We love because the Lord of the Law has first loved and served us.

6. Law and Gospel together.

The Law accuses us: we have not loved God wholeheartedly or neighbors impartially. The Gospel absolves us: Christ has kept the Law, died for our failure, and risen as Lord. The Spirit now produces love in us—not to justify us, but as fruit of justification.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Leviticus 19:1–2, 15–18. Why does God ground His commands in “I am the LORD your God”? How does holiness become practical in daily life?
2. Leviticus names gossip, partiality, revenge, and love of neighbor. Which of these especially challenges our congregation or community today?
3. Read Psalm 1. What does it mean to “delight” in God’s Word rather than simply obey it out of duty? How can delight grow in our group?
4. In a Lutheran reading, how is Jesus the true “blessed man” of Psalm 1? How does our Baptism into Christ make us fruitful?
5. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1–8. Paul says he did not seek people’s approval and was gentle like a nursing mother. How do these two qualities—courage and gentleness—work together in Christian leadership?
6. Where are we tempted to shape the Gospel to please people? How can we speak truth with gentleness?
7. Read Matthew 22:34–46. Why does Jesus connect the greatest commandments with His question about David’s son and Lord? What difference does it make that Jesus is both true man and true God?
8. Where do you hear the Law accusing you in these texts? Where do you hear the Gospel comforting you in Christ?
9. What does “love your neighbor as yourself” look like in concrete acts of justice, mercy, and truth-telling in your neighborhood?
10. How can this group encourage one another to meditate on God’s Word, serve humbly, and resist gossip and revenge?

Application

Personal:

- Choose one concrete “neighbor” this week and ask, “What is for their good?”
- Practice daily meditation on Scripture—not as a duty to earn God’s favor, but as a tree drinking from the stream.
- Examine speech: avoid gossip, slander, and revenge; speak truth in love.

- Pray for those in leadership that they would be courageous and gentle like Paul.

Small Group:

- Commit to speaking no gossip about absent persons during group time.
- Identify one act of service the group can do together for a neighbor or congregation member.
- Use confession and absolution in your meeting: name where you have failed to love, receive Christ's forgiveness, and ask the Spirit for fruit.

Congregation:

- Encourage impartial welcome and fair treatment in church life.
- Support pastors and leaders who preach the Gospel truthfully and serve gently.
- Remember that good works are the fruit of grace, not the price of grace.

Closing Prayer

Holy and merciful God, You are holy, and we are not. Forgive us for failing to love You with our whole heart and for neglecting our neighbor. Thank You for Jesus Christ, David's son and David's Lord, who fulfilled the Law for us and gave Himself for us. Root us in Your Word, strengthen us by Your Spirit, and make our lives fruitful in humble love and truthful service; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.