

Peace Lutheran Bible Study Lesson (Individual)

Theme

Holy Love: Rooted in Christ, Fulfilled in Neighbor

Scripture Focus

- Leviticus 19:1–2, 15–18
- Psalm 1
- 1 Thessalonians 2:1–8
- Matthew 22:34–46

Opening Prayer

Lord God, you are holy and merciful. Open your Word to me today. Use your Law to expose my sin and your Gospel to comfort me with the righteousness of Christ. Root me in your Word and lead me to love my neighbor. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Summary

These readings draw us into the life of holiness and love that God commands and gives. Leviticus grounds holiness in God's own character: "Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy," and it applies that holiness to honest judgment, truthful speech, and love of neighbor. Psalm 1 contrasts the person rooted in God's Word—like a tree by water—with the wicked, who are like chaff. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul models gospel ministry that is gentle, truthful, and self-giving, like a nursing mother caring for her children. In Matthew, Jesus names the greatest commandments—love God and love neighbor—and then reveals himself as both David's Lord and David's son. From a Lutheran perspective, the Law shows us our failure to love God and neighbor, drives us to Christ, and the Gospel gives us Christ's righteousness and the Spirit's power to live in love.

Key Points

1. Holiness begins with God, not with us. Leviticus 19:1–2 says holiness is grounded in who God is. In Christ, God makes us holy by grace, then calls us to live holy lives.
2. Love of neighbor includes justice and truth. Leviticus 19:15–18 forbids partiality, slander, hatred, and vengeance. Love is not merely a feeling; it seeks the neighbor's good.

3. The blessed life is rooted in God's Word. Psalm 1 calls blessed the one who delights in the Lord's teaching. Lutherans read this as a gift: God's Word plants us by streams of water. Jesus is the true Blessed One, and we are joined to him by baptism and faith.

4. Gospel ministry is gentle and self-giving. Paul insists he did not use flattery, greed, or manipulation. He shared not only the gospel but his own life—like a nursing mother. This is a model for Christian witness and vocation.

5. Love fulfills the Law because it flows from Christ. In Matthew 22, Jesus sums up the Law: love God and love neighbor. Then he asks about the Messiah, showing that right love is tied to knowing him as Lord and Son of David.

6. Law and Gospel together. The commandments accuse us: we have not loved perfectly. The Gospel forgives us for Christ's sake and empowers us to love. We are simultaneously justified and still being renewed.

Questions for Reflection

1. Leviticus 19:1–2: What does it mean that God's holiness is the foundation for his people's holiness? How does this guard us from treating holiness as self-improvement?

2. Leviticus 19:15–18: Where are you tempted to show partiality, repeat a harmful report, or hold a grudge? Who is the "neighbor" you find hardest to love?

3. Psalm 1: What does it mean to "delight" in God's Word? How is Jesus the truly blessed man, rooted and fruitful for us? What "chaff" voices or habits make you feel uprooted?

4. 1 Thessalonians 2:1–8: Where do you see religious manipulation or flattery today? How can you speak the gospel gently and truthfully? Who has been a "nursing mother" to you in the faith?

5. Matthew 22:34–46: Why does Jesus connect the greatest commandment with the question about David's son? How does knowing Jesus as Lord change the way you love God and neighbor?

6. Law and Gospel: Where do these readings make you feel accused? Where do they point you to Christ's forgiveness and freedom?

Application

- Daily rooting: Read Psalm 1 or a short psalm each day this week. Write down one phrase that helps you delight in God's Word.

- One neighbor: Name one person near you who needs justice, mercy, or truth. Take one concrete action of love—listen, speak honestly, apologize, help, or pray.

- Examine your speech: Notice one place where you are tempted to slander, flatter, or manipulate. Ask the Spirit to make your speech truthful and gentle.
- Gentle witness: Think of one person with whom you can share the gospel without pressure or manipulation. Pray for a chance to share both the message and your life.
- Law/Gospel journal: For each reading, write one sentence: "The Law shows me..." and "The Gospel gives me..." End by thanking God for Christ's righteousness.

Closing Prayer

Holy Lord, your Law exposes my failure to love you and my neighbor, and your Gospel gives me Christ's righteousness. Root me in your Word, forgive my sin, and make me gentle, truthful, and self-giving in love. Let my life show your holiness and point others to Jesus, David's Lord and David's son. Amen.