

Boundless Love

- ✦ **Look in the mirror.** (vv.1-2)
- ✦ **Taste the Promise.** (v.2)
- ✦ **Follow the Leader.** (vv.17-18)

In Jesus' Name, God's **Boundless Love** in the flesh, dearly beloved, "*You are the light of the world.*"

One of the things pet owners enjoy is the unconditional love of their animals. Not cats, of course. Cats don't have masters; they just have staff. But dogs will love you no matter what. Your day may have gone from bad to worse, but Fluffy will welcome you like there's no tomorrow. Recently, though, a mom was watching a movie with her kids. Was it a "mom fail" or wisdom for real life? In the movie the dog died; her kids cried. So did mine, in real life! Traumatic memories of "Daddy duties": caring for sick, dying or dead animals. Is there a longer lasting kind of **Boundless Love**? To find it you first have to...

✦ **Look in the mirror.** (vv.1-2)

By this I don't mean like a famous movie star who had a mirror on the ceiling above his bed. He claimed he wanted to wake up every morning and see the only person in this world he could trust.

The **mirror** we need to see did not look like a **mirror** at first. It was a mountain in the desert filled with fire, thunder and smoke. Horeb or Sinai it was called. It's where God had Moses lead His people of Israel after He delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Right after Exodus in your Bible comes Leviticus, a book you could summarize: **Living in the LORD's Presence**. Think of Leviticus in three parts: I. Climbing the Mountain - sinners entering the Presence of the LORD (1-12) – sacrifices, servants, dangerous holiness. II. On the Mountain – forgiven sinners dwelling in the Presence of the LORD (11-16) – clean / unclean, cleansing from uncleanness, climax: cleansing from sin, the great Day of Atonement picturing the coming Messiah in burnt offerings and scapegoat. III. Down the Mountain – sanctified sinners living in the Presence of the LORD (17-27). Here we find our text in the first section, A. Avoiding Sin (17-19) - against the lifeblood (17), against the body (18), against one's neighbor (19).

*The LORD told Moses...*¹ This special Name for the LORD, pronounced *Yahweh* by some in Hebrew, God begins to use in Genesis 2 in the special creation of Adam and Eve. As the Scriptures unfold, we find He is the God of free and faithful grace. He writes all the rules and punishes everyone who breaks them. *The LORD told Moses*, as the main prophet of His holy law, *to speak to the whole community of the Israelites and tell them these things*. And the main thing they were to never forget: *You shall be holy, because I, the LORD your God, am holy.* (EHV) "*Without holiness no one will see the Lord.*" (Hebrews 12:14) God can no more tolerate sin than you could listen if a sick cow were running loose in the sanctuary. To show them what He means by *holy* God gave them Ten Commandments to treasure and obey – a roadmap to life, the owner's manual on earth, demanding perfection of all who want heaven.

So how fast can you fall? You may remember that the golden calf was built by Aaron the first high priest while Moses was still up on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments. The LORD was so angry that he was ready to destroy the Israelites. Moses pleaded for the sake of the LORD's name, and the LORD promised, "*My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*" (Exodus 33:14 NIV84) Otherwise, how would anyone know they were His holy people bound for the Promised Land?

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✦ Taste the Promise. (v.2)

Knowing how fast they could fall, the faithful in Israel looked to the LORD. Here in Leviticus 19, ***“You shall be holy, because I, the LORD your God, am holy.”*** (EHV) And in the next chapter: ***“I am the LORD who makes you holy.”*** (20:8 NIV84) **Holy** means *set apart for God*. His holy law was like a fence around the Israelites to make them different from the surrounding nations. God wanted them to come and learn from His people about the God of all creation and the Savior of the world.

Think of the land of **the Promise** like a beautiful green golf course. Coming out of the winter, springtime will make it verdant and inviting. But there will always be a fence around that place so boys with their 4x4 toys won't spin divot's in the grass that can't be fixed. And the owner may invest in a fluffy, bounding sheep dog, you know, the **Boundless Love** kind that love to play with geese. Maybe the geese won't agree to play, but that just means they'll be going...going...gone from the green. Likewise, dirty, sin-spattered souls that wanted to play their way instead of God's, would be gone from His people – as long as they lived according to His law and trusting in **the Promise**.

Knowing how miserably they failed to keep God's law, the faithful in Israel always wanted to **Taste the Promise** of the Savior-Messiah to come. The Good News was embedded in all their sacrifices which shone brightly to light their way like powerful headlights piercing the night. In the distance they could see their Savior coming as the Christ of God. They knew what God meant when He said, ***“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”*** (Isaiah 1:18 NIV84)

✦ Follow the Leader. (vv.17-18)

One of the most beautiful sermons on God's **Boundless Love** is written in a book called the B-I-B-L-E – which someone referred to as *Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth*. There toward the end we find two letters from the Lord's Apostle Peter. In the first is this loving encouragement to **Follow the Leader**: ***“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”*** (1 Peter 2:21 NIV84) ***“For you”*** more literally in the context of Scripture would be *“in your place.”* This was pictured at the summit of Mount Sinai's instruction, the climax in Leviticus 16 on the great Day of Atonement. Remember? One goat was sacrificed for the sins of the people. The other was the scapegoat on which the priest placed all their sins so they could watch it walk away with them to die in the desert. **Follow the Leader**, our Jesus, our Scapegoat. As Peter continues, ***“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”*** (2:22 NIV84)

Like Jesus, love your neighbor. ***“You shall not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. You must openly rebuke your fellow citizen so that you do not become responsible for his sin.”*** (EHV) The Lord's Apostle Paul echoes this: ***“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”*** (Galatians 6:1 NIV84) That nasty bear trap of sin can snap shut on you too. Rescue your brother or sister, but be careful not get trapped in sin yourself.

“You must not take revenge. You must not bear a grudge against the members of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.” (EHV) The deeper the relationship, the stronger the **grudge** that scabs over the hurt. Then red hot **revenge** isn't far behind. But **Follow the Leader** and live like Jesus. ***“Love your neighbor as yourself.”*** God's vengeance He carried out on His enemies, not us as we are by nature, but the sin that separated us, the death and hell we deserved.

Otherwise, bitter roots can grow too deep to pull as in one marriage, forty years of misery, no mutual repentance. Positively, following Jesus makes kids the Church of today. Neighbors wonder why you're so respectful, fun to have around. They may come to church to find out. Let your light shine so they hear Jesus, ***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...for your souls.”*** (Matthew 11:28f NIV84) Read 1 Peter; enjoy living in God's Presence, His **Boundless Love**. Amen.

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