



Lenten Reflection for Wednesday, March 23rd

Kallen Tsikalas

You can listen to the reading and reflection by clicking [here](#).

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5 - 9

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. See, just as the Lord my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today? But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children

Upon reading this passage, my first reaction was displeasure: Oh joy... statutes and ordinances. Who rejoices in the Lord because of rules and regulations?! Who is inspired to love the Lord for laws?!

For the most part, laws to me mean obedience. And obedience is not my strong suit. I innately regard it as squashing the spirit. For example, I've struggled with getting obedience training for our dog, Lulu. Last week, when a stranger in the park complimented me on her good behavior, saying she must be very well-trained, I immediately retorted (surprising even myself) that Lulu's good behavior was entirely due to her own disposition.

But we know that humans, left to our own dispositions, don't always do the right thing. We are often ruled by our fears and prejudices, by our wounds and weaknesses. Even worse, whether or not we are aware, we

follow rules dictated by our culture – social norms about success, relationships, and entitlements. Rarely do these unspoken cultural rules lead us to happiness, spiritual fulfillment, or even freedom.

So, if humans will follow thoughtless and harmful rules and impulses, why not choose God’s statutes and ordinances instead? What do we lose? Control? Freedom?

These days, I have been distressed about the fragility of our freedom: The war and killing in Ukraine, the diminished status of women in Afghanistan, the assault on various rights in the U.S. all show us how the tyranny of a few can so quickly destroy the freedoms and lives of many. On a more personal note, I can also see that my own fears (intensified by the pandemic) not only reduce my freedom to take risks and to hope but also to fully live.

In this unpredictable world, what do God’s rules offer us?

Surprisingly, after sitting with this scripture for many days, I found that God’s laws are indeed reason to rejoice. Our God is near! He is steadfast and righteous. He cares about how we treat each other and our world. And he loves us. Rather than serving to squash our spirits, these statutes and ordinances (that Moses warns us not to let slip from our minds) bring us greater peace and happiness. By keeping our lives centered in God, they also bring us greater freedom to hope, to act, and to live!



Kallen Tsikalas is a social science researcher, a writer and teacher. She loves being in nature and wandering in every imaginable way. She and her family (Scott, Halcy, and Lulu) have been attending Holy Apostles Church for several years and very much appreciate the many and varied opportunities it offers to be in community and grow with God.