

**Observe and Obey:**  
**March 19, 2023**

About 40 years ago...  
The child seat laws...  
Came into being.  
And at first... like any change...  
People had trouble... Adjusting...

Mostly because...  
Our generation... **[1 Back Window]**  
Would lay in the back window...  
Of the car... on road trips...

No car seats.  
No seat belts.  
No common sense.

Anyway. Back in 1982...  
Most of the country adopted the new laws...  
And of course... a letter was written to the editor...  
Which before social media...  
Was the way people publicly complained...

It read:  
Dear Editor, I would like to tell your readers  
How mad I was when I was forced to go out  
And pay \$45 for an infant seat,

And to top it off we couldn't fit everybody  
In my pickup truck  
With that big bulky thing.

On April 2, my wife was forced to go off highway M-120  
Into a ditch to avoid a collision  
That's 55 MPH to a dead stop.

The back of the child car seat was facing the windshield  
(as I was told the law required for four-month old infants).

That seat broke off the ash tray,  
Cracked the dashboard  
And chipped the windshield.

Our baby didn't have a scratch on her.  
I would like to thank God  
And whoever else is responsible  
For passing that stupid law.

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Now... I can't tell...  
Was this person happy...  
Or not... about the new law.

It seems like whether or not...  
They understood the reason for the law...  
They had trouble embracing and incorporating...  
The law into their lives...  
They verbally resisted...

But in the end... they used a car seat...  
And it saved their baby's life.

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As you know...  
In the Old Testament...  
The Law of Moses was a really big deal. **[2 Law]**

You all remember the story...  
How Moses received the Law...  
On top of Mt. Sinai...  
The burning bush...  
The voice of God...  
Remove your shoes...  
This is holy ground.

And how the Law was given to Moses...  
Directly from God.

This is the Law.  
These are things that are important to God.  
These are the things...  
That will make a right relationship...  
Between you and God...  
And you and other people.

These are the rules....  
Do these things... and live.

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Well... I did a little research...  
Actually a lot of research...  
Of the first five book of bible...  
The Pentateuch.

Because I read somewhere...  
That many times... in the book of Deuteronomy...  
When the Law of God is mentioned...  
The scripture tells the people to do two things...

First... observe the Law.  
And secondly... do it.

It wasn't enough to know the Law...  
Or to appreciate the words...  
Or to understand what God was asking...

If you understood... then... the next step...  
Was to do the Law.

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So... just so you can get an idea... **[3 Deuteronomy]**  
Of how important this twofold command was...  
To the life of the people of Israel...

These are places... that I found...  
JUST in the book of Deuteronomy...  
That mention... something like this:  
You must observe and do the statutes of God...  
Because this will show your wisdom and discernment.

So... it's a two step process.  
You OBSERVE God's Law...  
And inwardly digest what it means.

Then you OBEY... do God's Law...  
And outwardly show what it means.

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Jesus incorporated that kind of thinking...  
Into his teaching too.

For example... **[4 Rock]**  
You know that story he told...  
About the wise man...  
Who built his house upon a rock...  
And the rain came down...  
And the floods came up...  
And the storms raged...  
But the house stood firm.

And the foolish man...  
Who built his house on the sand...  
And the rain came down...  
And the floods came up...  
And the storms raged...  
And that house fell to the ground... and great was that fall.

Well... as an introduction to that story...  
Jesus said... everyone who hears...  
These words of mine...  
AND puts them into practice.  
Is like that man who built his house on the ROCK.

So... for Jesus... it wasn't quite enough just to hear the story...  
You had to do something with the story.  
It was supposed to change your life...  
The way you understood God.  
The way you lived.  
The way you interacted with others...

He wasn't teaching...  
Just so we would be impressed...  
Ha ha... well done Jesus. Good story.

No. He wants more from us...  
He wants it to mean something to us...  
He wants us...  
To incorporate...  
His teachings...  
Into our hearts and minds...

And then... live it out.

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I would imagine by now...  
Most of you know the cultural mantra...  
That was first introduced to us...  
Through the wisdom of Marvel comics...  
And the words attributed to...  
The Amazing Spiderman... **[5 Spiderman]**

With great power comes...  
Great responsibility.

Today's lesson is a variation...  
Of that same saying...  
But not about power...

And yes... I know... we get great power... on the Day of Pentecost...  
With the arrival of the Holy Spirit...  
But that's not our power...  
That's God's power...  
Working in and through us.

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What I'm saying is...  
We are not superheroes.  
We do not have that kind of power...

We have not been bitten by a radioactive spider...  
And gained the ability to shoot webs out of our web glands...  
And swing from building to building.  
Even though... that would be awesome.

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But no. We are normal people...  
Living normal lives.

So we need something other than... physical powers...  
To guide us...  
To teach us... as we live our lives.

Well... God has given us information...  
Knowledge...  
Wisdom...  
Which is a different kind of power.

It's called the Law.  
And I'm telling you...  
The Law... is a gift.

I know that's hard for us... Lutherans...  
To fully embrace sometimes...

Because we know...  
We are absolutely convinced...  
It is embedded deep within our souls...  
That we are saved by the Grace of God...  
And not by the Works of the Law.

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But... that doesn't mean...  
The Law is bad.  
That doesn't mean...  
We should throw the baby out...  
With the bathwater.

The Law is... and always has been... **[6 Gift]**  
A gift to us.  
It is good.  
It teaches us...  
How to live...  
In relationship...  
With God...  
And with each other.

It's kind of a "how to" manual...

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So... God says...  
If you want to have good relationships...  
And live out your faith...  
Within the context of a community...  
And do what God has asked you to do...

Then... don't have other gods.  
Don't worship idols created by people.  
Don't kill each other.  
Don't steal from each other.  
Don't covet what other people have.  
Don't commit adultery.  
Be nice... to your mom and dad.

And all these basic laws...  
Gives us the power... to build good lives...

But of course...  
When we choose otherwise...

Well... it tears away... and breaks down...  
Our relationships with God and with each other.  
Then things fall apart...  
Then we become unhappy...

Then God says...  
Well... I told you how to live.

I'm sorry for all the sucking swirling pain...  
That have been caused by your choices.

But you knew what was right and holy and good...  
And you didn't follow the Law.

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What I'm trying to say is...  
We have been given an incredible gift from God.

It's the Law... yes...  
But it's also knowledge. It's wisdom.  
It's understanding...

Of how things should be.  
Of how we can conduct ourselves.  
Of how we can work...  
To make life better.  
For everybody.

So... I would change the Spiderman catch phrase to... **[7 Revised Spiderman]**  
With great wisdom...  
With great understanding...  
With great knowledge...  
Comes great responsibility.

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That is what Jesus is getting at in today's lesson.  
For me... the key to this whole long extended narrative...  
Is at the very end... the last verse...

But before that... please notice...everyone in this story...  
Is trying to understand... how God works...

The disciples are TRYING to understand... **[8 God Works]**  
How God works... in regard to sin...  
Did this man sin...  
Or was it his parent's...

In other words... they thought...  
There has to be a reason...  
That God has made this bad thing happen...  
That this man was born blind...  
Someone had to have sinned...

Because bad things...  
Don't just happen...  
Out of the blue.

And Jesus says...  
It's not their fault...  
As a matter of fact...  
In opposition to that kind of thinking...  
Today I am going to reveal... to you...  
The Work of God.

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And the Pharisees...  
They are the kind of people...  
Who claim that they know...  
Exactly HOW GOD WORKS...

They said about Jesus...  
This man isn't from God...  
He's not doing God's will...  
He doesn't even observe the sabbath...

And they're all about...  
Proving that Jesus doesn't know God...  
That Jesus is a fraud...  
That the man wasn't really blind...  
In the first place...  
That it's all just a hoax.

So. They confront the man.  
Then they confront his parents...  
Then they confront the man again...

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And this conflict... culminates...  
In the man who was formerly blind...  
Confessing...

NEVER SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN...  
HAS IT BEEN HEARD THAT ANYONE...  
OPENED THE EYES...  
OF A PERSON BORN BLIND...

IF THIS MAN WERE NOT FROM GOD...  
HE COULD DO NOTHING!

In other words... he tells them...  
You want to know... you want to understand...  
Look at me... look at me...  
I was blind... now I see...  
THIS IS HOW GOD WORKS!

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Then...the man who was formerly blind...  
Was run out of town..  
By those religious leaders...

Jesus found him and said...  
Do you believe in the Son of Man?

Maybe. Tell me who he is...  
So that I can believe in him.

Jesus said... **[9 Man Born Blind]**  
You have SEEN him.  
He is the one speaking with you.

Listen to how beautiful that is...  
YOU have SEEN him...  
Get it?  
He was blind.  
Until Jesus set him free.

The man said...  
Lord... I believe.  
And he worshiped Jesus. Right there.

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Then Jesus said...  
I came into this world for judgment...  
So that those who do not see may see...  
And those who do see may become blind.

And the Pharisees who overheard this conversation.  
Said... you're not talking about us... are you?  
Surely we aren't blind.

Then Jesus said the main point...  
Of this whole long epic thing...  
He said to them.

If you were blind.... You would not have sin...  
But now that you say "we see"... your sin remains.

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Exactly right.  
If you are blind...  
To God's will... and God's ways...

If you don't know...  
If you don't understand...  
Then you can't possibly...  
Be held accountable for not living it out.

But... on the other hand...  
If you say that you know...  
Then you should know...

If you say...  
That you have a relationship with God...

If you say...  
That you understand...  
How God is working and moving in the world...

If you make all these claims...  
That you know and see God...

Then you have a greater responsibility...  
To try your best...  
To live that relationship...  
Out... into the world.



You have a greater responsibility...  
To see God at work...  
In your life...  
In this world...  
And to say...  
Look everybody...  
There is God.

You have a greater responsibility...  
To not only talk about how good God is...  
And tell those satires...

But also a responsibility...  
To live that GODLY GOODNESS out...  
Into the lives of other people.

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Listen...  
We won't always get it right...  
We fall short of the Glory of God.  
Obviously... we are just people...

But it doesn't mean...  
We shouldn't try...

YES... we have been saved...  
By the grace and goodness of God.

AND ALSO we have been called...  
To live as disciples...  
Who believe the Law is good.  
Who believe that God is at work.  
Who believe that Jesus is the Messiah... the Son of Man...  
Who has come into the world.

And all those internalized beliefs...  
Have the power... to change us...

All that knowledge... and wisdom...  
Of God's will for the world...

Can change how we see things...  
Can change what we say and do...  
Can change... how we choose to live...

If only... we observe...  
And do our best...  
To obey.

Thanks be to God!  
Amen!