

Interactive lesson National Hispanic Heritage month



picture screencaptured from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rIGnLw24To>

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/mes-de-la-herencia-hispana-a-celebrar>

Have any of you been observing Hispanic Heritage Month?

It is a month long celebration beginning September 15. Does anyone know why it starts then?

September 15 happens to be the day that Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua all celebrate their independence from Spain.

Additionally, between September 15 and October 15, Mexico, Chile, and Belize celebrate their independence as well. The idea was that Hispanic Heritage Month would be a period of time of great significance to many of the immigrated Latinos who live in the U.S. and to their descendants.

What do you know of the history of Christianity coming to those countries?

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expected the natives of Central and South America to be well treated and told about Christianity; in return, they expected the natives to pay tribute. However, against the pleas of missionaries who were trying to teach the natives about the love of Jesus, the

conquistadors were rough, violent, attacked and slaughtered the natives, treated them as slaves, and brought diseases to them. What do you think the natives thought of their conquerors?

From the beginning, the missionary priests in Spanish America showed concern for the welfare of the natives, striving on their behalf before governmental powers. What do you think the natives thought of Jesus?

For a long time, many Latin Americans were obedient to the Spanish Crown because their clergy were. But when the Crown broke with the clergy in the early 1800's, the priests began to preach independence. What do you think happened?

The people followed their local clergy's lead; Mexico and the rest of Spanish America subsequently became independent. How do you think the **global** church responded?

Initially, the [foreign-centered churches] grew tight with the upper class leadership of the new countries and exploitive industries while the struggling lower classes were victimized. What do you think local clergy did?

Eventually, local clergy in Latin America successfully pushed for the church to support the marginalized masses more. The movement was called "Liberation Theology," a movement with the message that God has always been on the side of the poor, the

oppressed, the forgotten. Do you know how it has manifested in the US?

Liberation theology has been reapplied to support a variety of repressed populations such as blacks, women, Native Americans, LGBTQ+, and even ecojustice.

Whether or not you support those groups, I think we can be grateful for the Hispanic contribution of Liberation Theology as a wake up call for all Christians - to look more closely at how we live our faith and whether we are being true to God's commands in how we live our lives.

Gospel lesson

We pick up this week right from where we left off last week, with Jesus telling parables to the chief priests and the Pharisees who had confronted Him while He was teaching in the temple during Holy Week.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-vineyard-tenants/>

Matthew 21:33-46

NRSV

³³ "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country.

³⁴ When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce.

³⁵ But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.

³⁶ Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.

³⁷ Finally he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.'

³⁹ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

⁴⁰ Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?"

⁴¹ They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'?"

⁴³ Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.

⁴⁴ The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them.

⁴⁶ They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn “Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness”

TFWS #2120>

Message: Fruit of the Kingdom



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/for-the-long-haul/nineteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/nineteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Omniscient Lord who knows what is best for us, as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may hear You more clearly and plentifully bear the fruit of Your kingdom in this world. Amen.

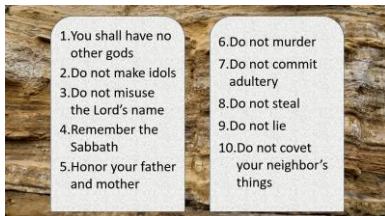
As we continue on “For the Long Haul,” we consider how well we use the “Fruit of the Kingdom.”

“How do we view the commandments? We honor them; we treasure them; we wish there was more obedience to them in the world out there.

But do we see them as descriptive of our lives? Rather than seeing them as normative to everyone, what if we decided to see them as something we chose to be the guide for our lives?”

We have been following the Israelites this month, seeing how God has been training them to put off the Egyptian ways and worship of Pharaoh, and to start living as a freed community who worships only the one God who created all things.

But there was infighting among the people, arguments that came up and no Egyptian soldiers to keep them in line. Moses appointed leaders to help him sift through and resolve the conflicts, but a common understanding of right and wrong was needed.



picture from MMMS collection

So Moses spoke with God, and God provided what is known now as the *Law of Moses*, featuring the ten commandments by which they were to live. The first four focus on worship of God, the fifth on honoring parents, and the rest all focus on living in healthy community.

The psalmist lauds how wonderful those laws are, how keeping them makes life so much better. How well does our society do at following these laws today? How

well do we as individuals?

If you read the Old Testament closely, you find that the *Law of Moses* was applied by the Israelites to one another, but foreigners were treated more harshly. The Chosen People were set apart by it.

Jesus challenged the Hebrews to rethink how they applied the laws. He demonstrated that not just Israelites, but all people around their communities were to be treated as God had instructed them.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-authority/>

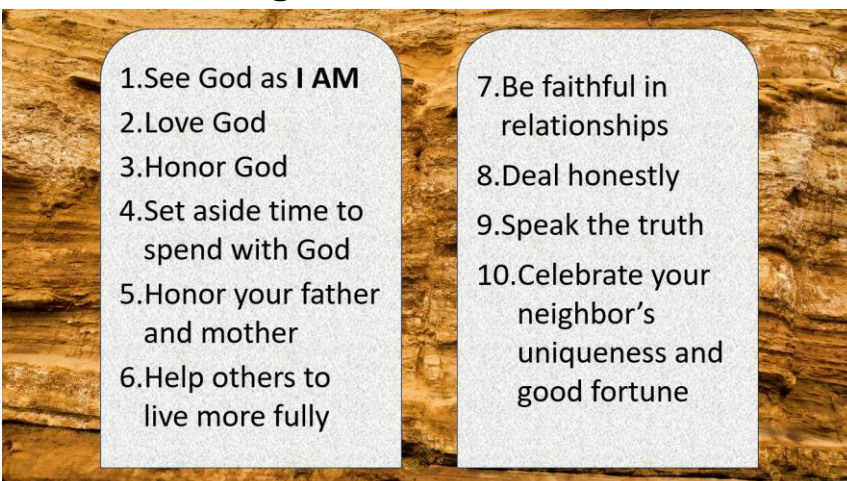
He was especially harsh on those who were leaders of God's Chosen People and supposed to be teaching them to live as God intended for them to live. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus points out to them that their [prideful power-seeking over] and [self-serving gains from] the people they are supposed to be helping is flat-out wrong.

This was not the first nor the last time that those who thought they were faithful to God got it wrong. Every religion in this world has had leaders in it that were more self-interested than God-centered. And sadly, if you look at the Christian church through the ages, a lot of things were done as badly if not worse than those Pharisees did.

Yet for the most part, the church has done better than those who do not look to the One who is greater than all of creation. Where people truly seek God, direction is given; thus we have gotten reformers both in the church and in the secular world.

Paul talks about how he followed the law scrupulously, but in comparison to seeking God, getting the letter of the law right is garbage. Instead, Paul presses “on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Jesus taught us to love God and to love one another as He loved us. When we do that, following the ten commandments is no longer a struggle, but an automatic way of life. And in fact, rather than “Do nots,” we begin to realize the “Do’s:”



picture from MMMS collection

And from these, we see possibilities open up. Our neighbors in the global world are not just rabble of whom we can take advantage, nor howling dogs on the

doorstep of our country begging for scraps, but our brothers and sisters in God's kingdom.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/Lumo-vineyard-tenants/>

Is it not time for us to consider how we can work better with all of our neighbors, to produce the fruit of the kingdom that God calls us to produce, that Jesus taught us to do, and that the Holy Spirit guides us toward?

I assume that by our being here, we all recognize our need to follow God and to be redeemed by Jesus. Do not make it a side thing you sometimes do; like Paul did, pursue the kingdom with all that you are.

Teach God's law to those you encounter in both word and deed. Live as children of God, inviting others to better, richer, fuller life in Christian society.

How will you share God's love in new ways this week?