

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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Celebrate Jubilee

Read Leviticus 25:8-12, 25, 35-36, 39-40, 47-48, 55

Key verse: “You shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you” (Leviticus 25:10).

I love the story of the woman who walked into a coffee shop and sat down at a table. She took care not to disturb the man sitting on the other side of the table from her.

For a few minutes, the woman was engrossed in reading a magazine. She barely looked up from it as she reached for a cookie in a bag on the table. Immediately, the man also took a cookie out of the bag and began to eat it. The woman was not happy that this stranger would just help himself to her cookies like that, and she glared at him. The man smiled and continued to eat his cookie.

In a few moments it happened again. The woman took a cookie and the man did the same. She was really getting irritated now, and gave the man another dirty look.

A few minutes later, the woman decided to leave. She left the rest of the cookies in the bag on the table, and—still fuming—she headed for the elevator. That’s when it happened. Opening her purse to put her magazine inside, she discovered there her still unopened bag of cookies. Only then did she realize what she had done. All along, she thought the man had been eating her cookies—but she had been eating his cookies the whole time!

So often, we do the same thing with God. We eat God’s “cookies” without even thanking Him, much less acknowledging that they all belong to Him. We act as if what we have is ours to do with as we please. So often, we forget the Biblical truth that *everything belongs to God*. God just lets us take care of some of it, and asks us to be good stewards of all that He entrusts to us.

This is one of the main lessons of “Jubilee,” as described here in Leviticus 25. Every fiftieth year, several practices were to be observed:

In the year of Jubilee, all land reverted back to the original family owners, free from any debt obligation (Lev. 25:10-13, 28). In this way, Israel would be less likely to concentrate wealth and ownership in the hands of a privileged

few, leaving the majority of people in poverty. Clearly, God wanted His people to take care of the poor among them and to curb the inclination toward economic exploitation.

In the year of Jubilee, God would bless the people by providing for them even though they did not plant or reap crops (Lev. 25:11-12, 18-21). God said that He would provide for His people during the year of Jubilee, even though they did not cultivate or work the land. Normally, work was required, but this was to be an exception.

In the year of Jubilee, any Israelites who had become slaves because of their financial difficulties would be given their freedom (Lev. 25:39-40).

We sometimes view this Book of Leviticus as a boring catalog of commandments and laws that have little relevance for us today. The truth is, Leviticus reveals some timeless principles that are of great significance for us in our time. We see several of those principles in this “Jubilee” passage from Leviticus 25:

1. God is our provider. Not a job. Not a paycheck. Not the government. God is our provider!

2. God wants us to use what we have in ways that consider the needs of others. (See, for example, verses 35-36, 39-40, 47-48.) God made sure that, in ancient Israel, wealth was not hoarded by a few at the expense of many. He also instructed those who owned land to use part of what it produced to help feed the poor. (See, for example, Leviticus 19:9-10.) Whatever our views are about private ownership, taxation, etc., one thing is sure: God still wants His people to share what we have with those who have need. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said, “Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.”

3. Everything we make and everything we have is on loan from God. God owns it all. He just lets us take care of His “stuff.” This is perhaps the greatest timeless truth of Jubilee. God established the year of Jubilee to remind Israel that the land really belonged to God, who loaned it to His people for them to steward. Still today, we should always remember, those are God’s cookies we’ve been eating, all along!

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