

**Prayer of Preparation:** *Speak Lord. Speak as you spoke to your disciples sitting on the mountaintop. Speak Lord, your disciples are listening. Amen.*

I had a really good conversation yesterday. We were talking about how the rental laws in WA County were put in place to protect both the landlords and the tenants. Yesterday's conversation was about how a landlord raised his tenants rent more than allowed and how this happened two years in a row. Well, that's not legal but he got away with it. The purpose of raising the rent is to get the tenants to pay "market" rent, which was much more than what the tenants were paying. So the tenants were getting a really good deal and now the deal was over. The landlord had just purchased the building and wanted to get the maximum for what the property was worth...that's not necessarily bad but the way he went about it was wrong. And the intent behind the increase was to get the current tenants out and new tenants who would pay much more in. That's not necessarily bad; it's just the way he went about it was wrong...in fact it was illegal.

Here is the conclusion of our discussion: you can't make legalize morality. There are no laws which you can institute, there are no traditions you can formalize which will legalize morality. Morality is God's domain and Jesus is on the mountaintop teaching all of us about God's domain.

**You have heard it said**, that's the law...**But I say to you**...that's morality. **But I say to you** asks us to look at the law through God's lens of love. **But I say to you** asks us to love ourselves. **But I say to you** asks us to love our neighbors. This is how we live together in community.

Have you noticed that when people want to, they follow the law? It's not difficult to drive the speed limit, to not kill someone, to live next to someone with whom you disagree. **But I say to you** asks us to do something different. **But I say to you** requires us to look at our neighbors' and love them the way God loves them. Not the, live and let live, kind of love but the live and help our neighbor live kind of love. That's a difficult love.

It's a love which asks us to live in the kin-dom...It's a love which asks us to look at scripture and see that in the beginning everything was created out of love and because of love. It's a love which asks us to be the people who believe we can make a difference in a world which falls short of the image of God.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to look at the Sermon on the Mount again. I'm thankful that what I see today is so very different than what I saw so many years ago. I'm glad to hear "Blessed be," "salt and light," and laws and prophets, anger and wives, and now "you have heard it said." Each journey through Jesus's teachings brings us closer and closer to who God wants us to be and how God wants us to live. Today, we live as people who are being transformed. Today, we live as people who love God, our neighbor, and ourselves just a little bit more. Today, we embrace the gospel as God speaks to us through Jesus on a mountaintop. Today, we share a meal from the table to honor who we are and who we strive to become.

**Response to the Word:** *Gracious God, thank you for mountaintops. Spirit of God us from your table today ready to be people transformed by love and ready to show the world your kin-dom. Amen.*