

After the Angel of the Lord passed over the Israelites in Egypt and they were freed from slavery, they wandered through the desert for fifty days until they arrived at Mount Sinai. There, the Spirit of the Lord descended upon the mountain, wreathing it in fierce wind and fire. The Israelites were so terrified that they told Moses to not let God speak to them, lest they die. And so God spoke to Moses, inscribing His commandments into stone. The Israelites never failed to recall and commemorate these events that God had done in their midst, being freed from the yoke of slavery and the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai fifty days later, with the Feasts of Passover and Pentecost.

As great as these moments might have been, the prophets told the Israelites that God had even greater things planned for them. Through the Prophet Ezekiel, God proclaimed, “I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you, and make you keep my laws.” Through the Prophet Jeremiah, God proclaimed, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write on their hearts. I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

These words came to fulfillment when God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, among us so that we might be forgiven from our sins. When celebrating the Passover with His disciples, Jesus revealed that He was the true Lamb of God whose blood would set them free from their sins. Then, He breathed on them, telling them to receive the Holy Spirit and go forth to forgive sins. Then, fifty days later while these same disciples were gathered back together in that Upper Room, the Spirit of the Lord descended upon them wreathed in fierce wind and fire. Only this time, the finger of God did not write the Law into stone but into their very hearts, bringing to fulfillment the full promise of Pentecost made so long ago.

Whereas before the presence of God on Mount Sinai brought about fear and trembling, the presence of God within them brought about courage and love. They boldly went forth from that Upper Room filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaiming the glories of God in every language such that all who heard them could understand. Whereas the old law of sin and death brought about division, the new law which ended sin and death brought with it unity for the New Law was the Law of Love. Whereas the Old Law proclaimed an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, the New Law proclaimed to set down your stone and turn the other cheek, judging not, lest you yourself be judged. Filled with the power of that Spirit, mankind would finally be able to break the cycle of sin and death with the power of love and forgiveness.

This transformation of Law into Love gives us a unique lens to look at some of the difficulties facing our society today. There is no doubt that deplorable incidents like that involving George Floyd are contrary to the Law of Love and the dignity possessed of every human being. These types of violations must always be condemned and ended wherever they might be found. And yet, they must be fought with the power of the Spirit which has been put within us. We must not fight against hatred and intolerance with stones and violence, but instead with forgiveness and love. As Christ taught us, violence only begets violence whereas the language of love speaks to every heart so that unity might be restored in Christ.

As we celebrate the end of our fifty days through the desert of Easter, we too must cry out for the Spirit to pour forth upon our world yet again so that God's law might be placed within our hearts, replacing our hearts of stone with hearts of love. For only in this way can we truly be set free from sin and death, from the cycle of violence and discord, and be brought to a true freedom which will be found when we are all united in love as one under God our Father.