

Men, you've got 2 days. Don't screw it up. What started as a day to honor an early Christian martyr has been co-opted by our culture as a day to celebrate love. The day of the heart. But for many, Valentine's Day, not an expression of love, but a burden, an obligation - something is expected; something is required; something you have to do in order to stay in the good graces of your beloved. Not a day of love, but of law.

Which is also how the readings of the Word of God we heard today sounded - full -not of love, but of Law. From the lips of Moses: **Obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today. Walk in them, keep them.** And then from Jesus: **You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery.** And many, when they hear those words, regard them in the same way as Valentine's Day - that these are things we have to do in order to stay in the good graces of God. Things you must do so that God loves you, earn His love; so He will show His love in blessings.

But if you listen to these words a little more closely, you discover that they're not first and foremost about what you have to do or not do - they're actually about your heart. Moses is warning the people about their hearts turning away from God; Jesus is teaching that sin is, in truth, not just what you do or not do, but heart disease. anger, hatred, insults, lust are problems of the heart - What you hold here(motion).

The way to hear the Law is not to find ways that it doesn't apply to you, but to recognize how it all applies to you. Jesus preaches of murder, adultery. And you're thinking, "Well, I'm okay. I haven't killed anyone. I'm faithful in my marriage. **But I say to you. everyone who is angry (angry? Yes, angry!) or insults them will be liable to judgment** or belittles them **-fool! will be liable to the hell of fire.** For how I feel in my heart! If that's not enough, **Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.** That's right, even a look, live or online. Doesn't matter. One stray look will nail you. Your heart is completely corrupt, diseased. Repent.

Consider, if your child comes crying to you, bloody scratches on their face, your first reaction, hold them, check for wounds, comfort them until they calm down enough to explain what happened. The child needs your acceptance, sympathy, love. And when they finally tell you,

they were pulling the tail of the neighbor's cat, the child needs something else. Needs you to remind them that actions have consequences. Cats have claws, aren't afraid of using them. That doesn't mean you send them away, tell them they should've known better. It simply means that I don't allow my sympathy-giving to mute my truth-telling. They need love, AND they need the truth of the law. They're not a victim; they're a tail-puller.

People come to the church, with bloody scratches on their face, have been pulling one tail or another. Their heart, their thoughts soiled with sin. It doesn't matter. The Church is here to welcome, without exception. Whoever you are, whatever you've done, here is acceptance, sympathy, love. Also need to hear cats have claws. God has laws that we've broken, continue to break, and suffer the consequences. We are not victims of the Ten Commandments. We are not victims of our cheating, lying, lusting, coveting, and more foolish actions than we can count.

Why was Jesus crucified? He is crucified not for victims or people with pretty good hearts, but for your sins, to save sinners.

Too often we think we are the victim, it wasn't my fault, I am good people, others screw things up, and whatever befalls me, even things I do, someone else or 'nature' is to blame and we transform the cross into a pacifier; and you can find plenty of church's that sound like victim therapy where God offers merely affirmation, support, and compassion. Instead of preaching Christ as the sacrifice for your heart, your evil deeds. And you can't earn His love or good graces.

Realizes the cat and its tail are not your problem. Our hand is. Our heart. The Law always condemns you and a burden upon you; In Christ, you can't screw up, for it is the gift He brings. From His cross flows the only love this world has ever known. It is yours. The Law is fulfilled. there is no one to condemn you, freed from the burden. Every last penny has been paid. And the gift of love from the Altar is freely bestowed upon you, as a dear brother or sister of Christ, for He has answered the judge, and restored, reconciled you to the Father now and for eternity. You will not perish but possess the land promised to your fathers. Because of Jesus, those words of law are love, gifts in Christ, His perfect love in keeping them for you, perfect love forgiving

you. This is not moral rehab for your heart, His perfect love creates, out of nothing, a new heart in you.