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**Transcribed Message**

**February 8, 2026**

**Message: Life with God in a Fallen World**

**Leviticus 12**

Good morning. I was hoping that putting Leviticus 12 in the bulletin would lessen the amount of people here this morning. It didn't. Still a lot of you. If you don't know me, my name is Brian. I am a nobody here. I just normally sit out there with you guys. It's not totally true, I do lead a community group. We're the one with the oxymoron of a name. Sunday School is the name of our community group, mainly because we're a bunch of introverts that like teaching format. A little bit about myself. I don't want to talk about it a whole lot because I only have two modes when it comes to teaching and preaching, fire hydrant and tsunami. So, I have a lot. I have like eight pages of notes here because I have OCD. It's a real problem. I've even got tabs with all the numbers on there to try to keep me in line this morning.

So, we've lived in Yukon now for about seven years. Me and my wife moved back here from Louisville. We're originally from Oklahoma, although technically we grew up in Oklahoma. I was born in San Bernardino, California, don't judge me. We did move here early in my life, so I had some time to recover. We've been married now for about 15 years, this June. I remember first getting married and thinking, that's a crazy long time, and now I hear people say, been married 30, 40 years, I'm like, how do you do it? Like, that's, I mean, my wife makes it easy, I'm just afraid I'm going to blow it. We have two kids. My daughter Livvy is seven, my son Zane is three. I do have a master's degree from Southern Seminary. That's why we lived in Louisville for a short time, although, just to lower your expectations a little bit, I did fail preaching class. It sounds worse than it is. It was due to extenuating circumstances. My appendix tried to assassinate me several times in one semester, and I had ACL surgery, and I accidentally missed a deadline to drop the class, so. But I think I would have done good if I finished it, and if I didn't have all that going on.

Let me pray for us this morning. Before we get started, and, you know, I heard a pastor say one time, right before he went to go pray, he said, let's do this morning, the most important thing we're going to do this morning, which I think is important. That's what we want. We want the Spirit to reveal the truth of scripture to us, especially in a hard text. We need his help. We can't just do it on our own. So, if you would, please pray for me, and pray with us, pray with me.

Lord, we need your help. Lord, we agree with Paul when he says that how unfathomable are the ways that are yours. There is an eternal wellspring of knowledge, some of which we will never even experience in the life to come. There's not a point in our life, Lord, where we become omniscient like you. But this morning, would you please just speak to us, soften our hearts, ease the self-defense in our minds, give us just a glimpse of what eternity looks like. Lord, you know I've done everything I can in my preparation to remove triggers for such hard topics, but would you especially be with those this morning who may have felt some of the pain and sorrow of a broken creation that we talk about this morning? Lord, we are all needy people. Even those of us who are disciplined and strong, there's always the risk right around the corner of arrogance and pride destroying us. So, Lord, we ask this morning that even as I come to teach, that I would be both humble and not let my pride and arrogance and intellect run on a rampage, and that I'd also be confident that I wouldn't freeze in fear and worry, that I would, in my weakness, find strength from you. And I pray, Lord, that that would be true for all of us this morning. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

There are some parts of the Bible that are really familiar to us. Everybody likes a good story, right, Genesis, lots of good stories. There are hard parts, for sure, but there are a lot of good stories. There are wars, people battling, there's fire coming down from heaven, there's good guys and bad guys, light and darkness. Yeah, the same thing in the Gospels. Not the fire, necessarily. Well, I mean, I guess you do get Ananias as the fire gets struck down, that's the closest maybe you get to fire, raining down on people, but still, they're familiar to us. We don't go to a story and say, I don't know what to do with this. No, we pick it up.

We read it, we follow the storyline. We see the good people, the bad people, the tension, the climax, the end result, always a happy ending in the Bible, which that's good. We get to the epistles and Paul's really hard, right, but also he's really familiar because at least we know what he's doing. He's trying to teach us something.

But then there's some books that they're like being dropped off in a foreign land. You don't know the language, you don't know the customs, you don't know the cuisine. I think of Ecclesiastes, that's a dangerous book. If you don't read Ecclesiastes thinking in your mind and realizing this is most likely Solomon at the end of his life, looking back at a life that was lived under the sun. He's mourning a lot of the poor things he did and time he wasted. If you don't have that lens, you could walk away with some bad application. At one point he's talking about just following every whim and desire that he had, even the sinful ones. There's also some nuance because in Ecclesiastes, Solomon is at the end of his life. He's getting ready to face death, and because of that, some of the things he thought that were trivial early in his life, now are pretty meaningful. Weeping and mourning make sense when you're at death's door.

Job is another one. You've got to be careful with Job. You don't want to pick your life verse from the book of Job, and only to find out it was one of his bad friends. Talk about crushing morality, or morale; not morale, well morality too. But Leviticus is kind of in that stream of difficult books. It's just a really, really weird book. Here's a image from Babylon Bee, right? Man, people are going to love reading this one, says Moses while writing Leviticus. I've got to say it's probably his least popular book out of the ones that he wrote.

I went online, I do this pretty often, not because I'm trying to steal content, but I need sometimes to hear someone else share their thoughts and their reflections on their time with the Lord as they preach a sermon. So, I'll go on and I'll look for a familiar and reliable pastor. I tried to go look for someone that preached on Leviticus. There are almost no pastors that preach on the book of Leviticus. Like, it is just a famine. You've got Leviticus 16, the Day of Atonement. Then you have Leviticus 19, which talks about be holy as I am holy, and then also love your neighbor as yourself. And that's pretty much it. Most

pastors don't preach on anything else. I did find one not well known, just some average Joe on YouTube that preached a sermon on Leviticus 12. And I was encouraged because, I mean, he's preaching through the book of Leviticus. That takes guts and trust in the Lord. I didn't agree with everything he said, and it didn't really help a whole lot as far as understanding the text. But it was an encouragement to see that there's still people that they're not afraid to go towards the hard text because, I mean, that's one of the tensions with this, right?

We believe the Bible is inspired. All of it. And you get to a book like Leviticus, and you hear all scripture is God breathed and it's profitable. Where's the profit? What am I getting out of this? I even read Eugene Peterson's The Message Translation for Leviticus. He cheated. He did not do hardly any paraphrasing. He just copied and pasted some of this. You know, put a footnote that says refer to NIV. There wasn't a whole lot. It was just as difficult in The Message Translation as it is in any other translation.

If that's not enough, even the 80s Christian rock band named Leviticus, they never did a single song about a verse or chapter in the book of Leviticus. Never. You named yourself after it, and you didn't even do one song? For reference, if you want to go listen to them, Knights of Heaven, I did listen to some of that with my daughter, and when I went to stop it, she was like, Dad, put it back on. It's like, the child wants the sacred ballad put back on, so more Leviticus while I'm preparing for Leviticus.

So why preach a sermon on Leviticus? Well, it's not just because I'm a weird guy, although I am, if you know me. It's not just to make you uncomfortable, although in parts it might. It's because Leviticus has got this reputation of being the place where Bible reading plans go to die. And trust me, it has not escaped me the irony that it could very well be the place where my invitation to preach on a Sunday morning goes to die, too. So, here's my hope for this morning. I don't expect for us to figure out everything there is about the book of Leviticus, but I do want to try to look at one chapter and try to give you some tools and a framework so that if you're not already there and you will be later this month, when you get to the book of Leviticus, you don't feel like you don't have a translator coming with you or something getting dropped off in this foreign land. That not only that it's easier to

understand, but hopefully my hope is there's even parts of it that's kind of nourishing to you. I can honestly say that is not normally what most people think about when they think about the book of Leviticus.

So, let's read together. Leviticus 12. Leviticus 12 verse 1 says, "The Lord spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the people of Israel saying, if a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days as at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day, the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall continue for 33 days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purifying are completed. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks as in her menstruation, and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for 66 days. And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb, a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or turtle dove for a sin offering. And he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her. Then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtle doves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering, offering the other for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement for her and she shall be clean.'"

I think there's two dangers we run into when we approach a text like this. The first one is we can just flatten it. Assume that it means the same thing for us today as it did for them and follow the prescription literally. Stacey sent me a link to this YouTube influencer, Regaining Your Pink or something. It was Gherkin, I think, Lindsay Gherkin. I mean, obviously, they come up on my thread, but she was like, this doesn't sound like a bad idea. If you've got a lot of kids seven days away, it might be needed, but I don't think that's what it's saying. It's not like I'm going to say, OK, Carlon, this is what we need to do now. No more baby dedications. We've got to ramp this up.

The other risk, I think, is we could just throw it away. We could assume that it's irrelevant. We can dismiss it as primitive. We can assume that there's really not a whole lot for us. Maybe it was relevant at one point to God's people, but today, not so much for us.

The problem is Leviticus won't let us do either of those. Because verse one points out an undeniable reality. God speaks. Why is this significant? I think when we come to this passage, we're tempted to say this is just some silly rules created by an ancient people for an ancient time, that maybe this is just Leviticus trying to experiment with religion and find their way. Maybe it's the community projecting their fears onto God about what's going on when there's risks involved in childbirth. But that's not what the passage says. It's not the community. It's not Moses coming up with this idea. It says the Lord spoke to Moses.

This matters because it means that God doesn't just leave us in our confusion to try to figure out how to be around him and how to be holy. He doesn't just leave us to define those terms for ourselves. Instead, what he does is he gives us divine instruction. He doesn't leave it to human guesswork. And just to level the playing field here, if you think purity rules are archaic, every culture has purity rules. Every culture does. Think about ours. We have rules about what's acceptable and what's not acceptable. What's the kind of people we want to be around? What's the kind of people we don't want to be around? We have some rules that are wise, like wash your hands after you go to the bathroom. Regulate work-life balance. Vacuum your carpet before a guest comes over.

But then this is the danger because when we start to make the purity rules, there's things that get incorporated that just are not wise. They're not compassionate at all. They become purity rules of inconvenience to the point where people who are needy, anxious, pessimistic, socially awkward, become burdens instead of neighbors. I think what is striking about Leviticus is that God does not leave his people to improvise holiness. God defines holiness and then he provides a way back. Yes, he creates boundaries, but then he also creates a door within the boundary. That's significant. He says what's unclean, but then he also tells you how it is that you can be made clean. That's radically different from the rest of the world. Everybody thought things were unclean, but nobody was certain on how you get clean. That's why you have these crazy rituals where they're offering virgins and spilling blood to try to please the gods. They don't know what he wants. So, they're going to crazy extreme measures to try to figure it out.

I think when we get to the book of Leviticus, we have to realize there's a grace that shapes it even before we start to get into childbirth or the explanation. And that is God speaks. He tells us what is expected of us. It's not primarily a 12-step plan for baby proofing, nor is it a manual for birthing coaches or midwives. Leviticus is about a holy God dwelling among an imperfect people and the mercy of a God who provides a way for his people to remain near him.

Now, there's four real difficult challenges in this chapter. One, there's a challenge of what does it mean to be unclean? Two, why is it that childbirth is unclean specifically? That's a challenge. Three, why a long waiting period? Four, why is the time doubled for a baby girl instead of, as opposed to a baby boy's time like seven weeks and 33 days? It's twice that for a girl. Why is that? And then lastly, what does it mean to require a sin offering if you follow everything that comes before that as we move through the passage?

Let's look at the first one. Verse two says, speak to the people of Israel saying, if a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. I think this is the stumbling block here. What does it mean that you're unclean? Why are you unclean for having a baby? Isn't that part of the creation mandate? Be fruitful and multiply? Oh, but also, you're going to get dirty in the process. What's going on here with that? What does unclean mean? How can that be something that is bad if it even is the mandate before the fall?

Here's what I think it means. So unclean in Leviticus does not necessarily mean wicked. It's not a synonym for sinfulness in the sense of moral guilt. You could be unclean and you could do nothing wrong to be unclean. It could be something that just happens to you. Unclean is actually more of a category about fitness for sacred space. It's the relationship between muddy boots and a clean floor. I've got young children, right? During the spring and the summer, my wife will take the kids out on a rainy day and just let them play in the mud to their heart's content. I don't do that. I don't want to be there to clean it up. But she does and they just love it. There's nothing wrong with it. They can fill their boots full of muddy water and dump it out and they just have a heyday rolling in the mud. It's like for a few seconds, our kids just resorted to being hogs in a pigsty. When we're coming in

the back entrance towards the children's department on a rainy day, I turn it into lineman mode again, like from my high school years to keep these kids out of the puddles. It's like muddy puddles, muddy boots. Those are okay in some contexts, right? There's nothing morally wrong with muddy boots. But you bring them into certain contexts and all of a sudden, it's like, I don't know if this fits in this room. Muddy boots aren't morally bad, but you don't bring muddy boots into the king's throne room. It's not because the king hates mud or boots. It's because the sanctuary means something. If it means something, you have to approach it a little bit differently.

Now, that doesn't mean the unclean has no relation to sin at all. It does. It just means it relates differently to sin than moral guilt. I don't know that in our Western society where we're thinking legal terms and justification by faith, which is essential to the Christian faith, and I love it. I'm all about it. I'm firmly committed to it. There's not a lot of doctrines that I will straight up fight you over, but I will on that one. That's one where I don't sit in a room and let that one be attacked and I just sit by his side. But I think there's a danger being in a society that thinks just in legal terms like that.

Look at the three ways that sin can affect us. One is the one we're probably most familiar with, the guilt of sin. These are sins that we commit ourselves. To quote a professional wrestler from when I was growing up, we lie, we cheat, we steal. It's Eddie Guerrero, if you grew up watching wrestling. Some of y'all grew up in Christian homes, though, I'm seeing. You do these things and then because you've done them, you need forgiveness.

But then there's a relationship to sin that I'm calling the wounds of sin. This is where you don't commit a sin, but instead a sin is committed against you. Maybe you're following all the rules on the road. You're driving carefully. You're paying attention. Some maniac swerves into you, texting on their phone, not watching, trying to beat the stoplight, smashes right into you. You didn't do anything wrong. You got hurt because of it. Someone hurts you physically, just unprovoked. Or maybe it was provoked, but not to the extent that they retaliated. You go into business with a partner, they betray you. This happens all the time. It's dangerous living around other sinners. Right? I remember one time hearing John

MacArthur say, there is no perfect church. And if there was, and you found it, they wouldn't let you join for fear of ruining the good thing they got going. We feel those tensions, even in the body of believers. We hurt each other in ways that maybe sometimes are intentional because we're just blind to what's going on in our hearts, or sometimes it's unintentional and we hurt someone else. So, we have the guilt of sin, the wounds of sin, which are sins committed against us.

But then there's this third category, which is the groaning of a fallen creation. This is just the impersonal effects of sin on a broken creation. Pain, disease, decay, disasters, infections, hereditary weakness, death itself. That isn't because you sinned. It's not because someone else sinned against you. It's just the dangers of living in a world that's broken by sin. Romans 8 says, even creation is groaning in child-bearing pains, waiting for the return of the Lord. Because, see, what Jesus comes to do, he doesn't just come to make you innocent. He says, I'm here to make all things new, even the creation order that's out of whack right now. And this is really important because purity rituals often deal with this third category, the category of living in a fallen world.

Now, why is this important? Just think about the story of Job for a second. What kind of suffering does Job experience? There are a couple ways you can answer that. I think from Job's perspective, he's probably thinking this is just the impersonal effects of sin on creation, right? Some kind of catastrophe comes, wipes out a bunch of his assets, he gets boils that start to develop on his skin. Maybe after everything else that happened he became really depressed and stopped washing his body, but I think more likely this is just a part of, he's just thinking this happens to people.

You could also say maybe it's the wounds of sin, because after all there are some, in one of the stories, some people come and take away all of his possessions and kill his family. And then also you have Satan who's saying, Lord, you think he's faithful? Let me do this to him and see what happens. But the book of Job makes one thing absolutely clear. All the suffering that Job experienced had nothing to do with his own sin. It's not that he wasn't a sinner, he was. It's that it wasn't God retaliating against him because of his personal sin. I think that's where making this distinction between the three different ways

is not just helpful, it's dangerous if you don't. You can really hurt other people. You can really carry a weight on your own shoulders. It's not yours to carry.

Now that still leaves one question really wide open. Why does childbirth involve uncleanness? And this is what I think the answer is. In the Bible, blood is associated with life, and the loss of blood is associated with the realm of death. Let me show you where I'm getting this. It's actually from Leviticus. This is Leviticus 17:10 - 11. It says, "If any one of those of the house of Israel or the strangers who sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood, and I will cut them off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."

Genesis 9.4 also reinforces this. "But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is its blood." I think what we see is birth is one of these events in human experience that carries both joy and fragility at the same time. Both life and kind of a brush against death at the same time. Having children has always been high risk for mothers and for the children themselves. However, in the ancient world, it was extremely dangerous. They didn't have sonograms. If you got preeclampsia, they don't know what's going on with you. They don't even have a category for high blood pressure. What's even more astonishing is they had so many children. That's crazy. Jacob had 13 kids that we know of. Seven of them were with Leah alone. How did she do that? That's not someone I want to get in a fight with at the pick-up line at school. She's built for endurance. I'm not going to win that fight. As one person said, if you want to know what it's like to have four children, imagine you're drowning and someone hands you a baby.

Even in the story of Jacob, you have this life and death contrast because Leah has seven kids. Rachel dies giving birth to her second kid, Benjamin. That's sad. But have you noticed that when you read the Old Testament, it goes out of its way to highlight how childlessness is one of the deepest sorrows that women carry. Rachel says about her own barrenness, give me children or I die. It's a sad story, but there's also something kind of beautiful, gospel-shaped that before she died in childbirth, she longed to lay down her life for her children. I think that's a truth that's probably gospel-shaped about motherhood in

general, that to be a mother is to embrace risk and brokenness of your own body, to bring about life the way you sacrifice of yourself day in and day out, even after they're born. I mean, fathers do some of this too, not like mothers do. My kids get an owie, they come to their mom. Their brother or sister's being mean, they come to me because they know I'll bring down the hammer, right? I don't heal, I judge.

I think Leviticus is highlighting that reality that in a fallen world, life and mortality are never far apart. And the Bible speaks pretty plainly about this. Death is not natural in the moral sense. Death is an enemy in God's creation. You look at 1 Corinthians 15, it says, O death, where is your sting? And he goes on to say the last enemy to be defeated is death. It's not natural. We're told that, right? Evolutionary biology – it's just a natural process. Death is a key component. It's a feature, not a bug in the program. You have Buddhism, Hinduism, it's built into the process. You die, you reincarnate, you die, you reincarnate, eventually you get where you're trying to go. That's not what Christianity says. It's the very reason why Jesus had to die and then not just die but come back to life. If there is no resurrection, there is no life. Death is an intruder into God's good world. It's a reminder that creation is wounded, that life now arrives marked by struggle, rather than with the fullness and peace that God intended.

Just think back to the Garden of Eden. God warned Adam and Eve, if they ate from the tree of knowledge of the good and evil, what would happen? They would die. Then because of their sin, pain and suffering enters the world. Wasn't there before. After the fall, their shame is so great that they hide from God. And then God does something that actually foreshadows Leviticus. He gives them clothes made from an animal skin. That is to say, he makes the first sacrifice to cover their shame. Something had to die in their place.

Later in the book of Exodus, you get Moses and God's glory. Moses says, Lord, show me your glory. And God says, I can't show you all of it because if I do, what will happen? You'll die. And then at the end of the book of Exodus, God does something he hasn't done since the Garden of Eden. He makes his presence on earth fully manifested in the tabernacle. And it says, it leaves the book, it leaves it on a cliffhanger in the book of Exodus

because you have the people, you have Moses, and then you have God. And even Moses can't go in there safely. The mediator can't go in there.

And that brings us, I think, to what is actually the main thing, what's the main theme of the entire book of Leviticus? The entire book of Leviticus is about how is it that an unholy people can be up near a holy God and not die? Because we're like fish out of water. We're not built for this environment. God is teaching that God names death as the enemy, even in life's best moments. The sanctuary stands for life with the living God. But we're stained with the realm of death. We're mortals. We weren't supposed to be, but we are. And because of that, anything that's related to the realm of death, such as blood loss, decay, skin disease, predatory birds, sea dwelling, bottom feeders, tattoos, not just any tattoo, specifically tattoos, a memorial of the dead, or contact with a corpse, all of this, if you come into contact with that, it creates a temporary roadblock between you and God. It makes you unclean. You can't approach him. You might die if you do. The sanctuary is a dramatized reminder that God is the God of life and death is the enemy.

Now, if that offends you, just consider for one moment the alternative. What if walking into God's presence was like walking into Walmart? You don't have to wear shoes. You don't have to fix your hair. You wear pajamas if you want, right? That isn't what God calls us to, right? That's not the kind of God I want to serve. But God is not ordinary, and the Bible isn't ashamed to say that coming near him isn't casual.

Let's go to verses two through five. The waiting period. Essentially what happens in this passage is the mother has a baby boy and she's unclean for seven days. There's 33 days of no worship for 40 days in total. If she has a baby girl, she's unclean for 14 days, and then 66 days of no worship for 80 days total. So, there's two issues here. Why such a long time of waiting, and why is it double the time for a baby girl? First, the long time of waiting. I think as modern-day people, we hear this and we think this must have been absolutely humiliating to go and do this kind of ritual, right? To be exposed like this and be called unclean. But I think you have to remember an Israelite would have encountered something unclean, and then themselves, they would have felt shame. So, this is what I think, this is how I think God responds.

He says, because their shame was a lived experience, God provided a restoration that was a lived experience as well. We hear that a person might be cleansed, and we assume it's degrading, but it wasn't that way to an Israelite. Cleansing was not humiliating. It was honorable. It meant God had not abandoned you. The ritual was designed to restore dignity, not magnify disgrace. It was a word of welcome, spoken by God.

Our culture claims to have moved past purity codes, but that claim is false. We have purity codes everywhere. We simply just call them by different names. We have the purity of image, the purity of brand, the purity of being on the right side of the right cause. Our modern instinct is to cancel, to freeze a person in their worst moment, to treat moral stain as a permanent identity. However, Leviticus refuses to cooperate with that. Instead, Leviticus treats people as recoverable. It says, you're not defined by your worst moment, and God's grace is bigger than your deepest stain. That's totally different from what we get in our culture.

Here's the bigger reason for restoration, or for the reason for waiting. Restoration is not a cure. It's not an instant cure. Most of Leviticus is about sanctification, the process, the process of being made holy. And even that runs against one of the quiet assumptions of our everyday life, that access should be immediate. If we want something, we click. If we need something, we order. We feel something, we express it. And when that expectation shapes how we relate to God, we lose something that's essential. We start to feel like maybe God is manageable, and that he's a servant rather than a master. Waiting corrects that.

I think there's one more very final practical reason for why such a long time of waiting. The early weeks after childbirth are already a kind of imposed distance. Sleep is fractured, the body's recovering, the mind is foggy. You can feel cut off from ordinary life, and that's just the father's experience. We're not built like moms, remember? We're fragile. Yet, God does something that's astonishingly humane. God builds rest and recovery into worship. God acknowledges the embodied weakness of women in motherhood and in giving birth, and he doesn't call it moral failure. He gives mothers time to rest. And our culture kind of swings in two opposite extremes. Either romanticizing motherhood as

effortless and glowing, or treating it as an inconvenience to be managed. God does neither. He neither sentimentalizes weakness, nor does he resent it.

That brings us to maybe the hardest part of this passage. Why is the time doubled for a baby girl? We have to start out with what is not, what the reason is not. The reason is not that females are inferior. The wider story of Scripture refuses the idea that women are lesser image bearers. Male and female are created equally in his image. The promise of rescue through a Messiah comes from not the seed or the offspring of the man, but of the woman. God repeatedly advances his purposes through daughters and mothers. So, we just have to say pretty clearly, any notion that this passage is saying that women are inferior, it goes against the Bible's own theology about creation and redemption. What does it mean then?

You have to remember the logic of the chapter. It's not about shaming mothers or children. It's about consecration and restoration. It's about being welcomed back into the life of God's people. The ritual is a provision, not a prohibition. Which brings the key question, I think, for unlocking what is it, why the difference? So, what is the only difference in the text between a baby girl and a baby boy aside from the double time? The key textual difference is circumcision marks the son on the eighth day. In other words, there's an early visible sign in the community that a son belongs to the covenant people.

I think a strong explanation then is this. Maybe the extended time functions as a fitting counterpart of consecration for a daughter. Remember, it's not a negative thing to go through the ritual. It's a positive thing. It's restoration. It's honoring. I think this becomes even more clear in the next verses because if baby girl's time is double is because she's more unclean, why is the sacrifice that comes after this the same whether it's for a baby boy or a baby girl? The text mentions it twice after this. It says, whether for a male or for a female, do this offering. This is the law, whether for a male or a female. Because if it's trying to say that baby girls makes you more unclean, you'd expect that to come over into the sacrifice too, a bigger sacrifice. But that isn't what happens.

That brings us to verses six through seven, the way back to God. Now here's the last problem in the text. If what I say is true, unclean is not wickedness, the mother has not

sinned, why is it that she needs atonement for something that is not a sin? That's what the sin offering is. It's an atonement. And here, this is what I think the answer is. The sin offering is better understood here as a purification offering.

There are two outcomes when you have a sin offering. It could be that if the sin offering is for moral guilt, you're forgiven. But if the sin offering is because you're unclean, instead you're made clean. Let me show you in the passages that talk about this. Leviticus 4:25 through 26. Listen to what it says. "Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering." In this instance, where sin offering is being offered for the sins of a leader, "so the priest shall make atonement for him and his sin and he shall be forgiven." Now read verse 7 in chapter 12. "The priest shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her and she shall be (not forgiven, but ...), clean." It's almost like the sin offering is kind of like detergent in the sense that maybe you got your stain because you're a messy eater when you eat spaghetti and you got it on your shirt. Maybe you're a three-year-old and you think shirts are good for marking on with markers. Detergent doesn't care about the backstory; it just removes the stain. In the same way, the sin offering functions in a similar way to that. It doesn't care so much as was the reason because you sinned or because you came into something that represents the realm of death. Regardless, if it's sin, you're forgiven. If it's something that was unclean, you're made clean. It doesn't care about the backstory.

The mother is told after this to bring two offerings, a sin offering. The sin offering removes impurity, restricting sacred access. Burnt offering consecrates and renewed devotion. So, here's the contrast with that. The purification offering removes what stands in the way. It's kind of like there's something blocking the gate to the entrance of the temple or the sanctuary. Sin offering removes that. The burnt offering restores the heart's direction. It opens the door. Sin offering removes the obstacle. The burnt offering opens the door so you can go through. The purification offering says, I am clean. The burnt offering says, I am yours. It's an act of devotion.

That brings us to the mercy clause. In verse 8, God makes a provision for the poor. God does not say, no lamb, no cleansing. He does not say, come back when you can pay. If you haven't seen the purpose of the purity rituals in Leviticus yet, I don't know how you avoid it when you get to verse 8. Purity rituals aren't about keeping people out. It's about drawing them near.

Think about this. If God wanted to make a set of rules that preserve the elite class of worshipers, why would he make a mercy clause? Why would he make it easier? If the goal is to keep people out, you know what you need to do? Up the cost. Not a lamb, a bull. Let's not stop there. You want to know what's really going to make an elite class of worshipers? Make them have to sacrifice a lion.

Now, hang with me. I know lions are unclean. They're predatory animals. They also don't have the right kind of feet. They also don't chew the right kind of food. They're in the right way, which are things that all make it unclean. But let's just be honest. If the goal is an elite class of worshipers, purity is not really on the table right now anyways. You know what you'd have to do to get a lion? You'd have to go hundreds, maybe thousands of miles to find a lion. Then you have to capture it alive. You can't kill it. That's the priest's job. You've got to bring it back thousands of miles to the sanctuary, and then sacrifice it.

And this ain't Narnia. It's not going to be like Aslan walking up with the white witch. He ain't going to just lay down. You could die at any moment. But you know what that's going to do? It's going to create the most elite class of worshipers you've ever seen. This is going to be a black ops, lion hunting group of Israelites. Canaan ain't going to see what's coming. The story of Jericho plays out way differently. Two spies go in, sneak in over the wall. That's it. They finish the job themselves. But that's not what happens. He doesn't make it harder. He's not concerned with worldly strength, or an elite class of worshipers, or people who are perfect. He knows we're not perfect. That's why we have the ritual.

And maybe something even more astonishing about verse 8, if you utilize the mercy clause, the result is not a lesser cleansing. It doesn't say she'll be mostly clean, if you bring a burnt offering. It doesn't say she'll be second-class clean. It doesn't say it's a down

payment on a 30-year cleansing plan. It just says she'll be clean. Why? Because cleansing isn't based on what you bring to the table. Cleansing is based on God's provision for you.

This is where reading Leviticus goes from being a nuisance to a necessity. Because verse 8 foreshadows the logic of the cross. Here's what I mean. Luke 2:22 through 24, when Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the tabernacle for her offering. You know what offering she brings? The mercy clause. She brings the offering that Leviticus prescribes for the poor.

This is not an exception in the story of Jesus. It's the native language of the whole story. Jesus wasn't born in a palace. He was born in a manger. His earthly father wasn't a king. He was a carpenter. His best friends weren't the religious elite. They were fishermen and outcasts. His death is not celebrated with a 21-gun salute. Instead, you have the crowds chanting, crucify him. And then God does something that no one expects. He takes an object of shame, the cross, and chooses to display his majesty and glory.

It's what John Owen says. At the cross, we see the death of death and the death of Christ. Jesus steps into death and then he breaks it. Here's the irony. Well, first, let me say this. I would assume none of us have this type of language, but I wonder, how many of us think to ourselves, if there's an offering I bring to the table, it's a lamb offering. Like, I work hard. I make a good living. I'm generous. I volunteer in the children's department. I teach a community group. If there's one offering I bring, I'm definitely a lamb offering type of person. And I've just got to say, no, you're not. You're a bird person. I'm a bird person. You're a bird person. Everyone on our church staff are bird people. Our elders are bird people. The people down the street at the church down the street, they're bird people. All the saints that have come before us are bird people. All the saints that come after us are bird people. There is not a single one of us that brings something to the table that adds to our cleansing. We all need the mercy clause.

Here's the end result. The priest makes atonement and God declares her clean, not based on the merit of the worshiper, but based on God's trust and God's provision. For them, the provision was animals. For us, the provision is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

What do we take away? First thing I think really crucial is that weakness is not wickedness. I have to give a disclaimer here. My son's name is Zane Owen. Staci, I'm sure, has her reasons for allowing the middle name of Owen. My reason is John Owen. It's the only reason I agreed to Zane Owen. With that being said, we've all heard it said, and I think it's true, be killing sin or sin will be killing you. That's true. Indwelling sin is a problem. You let sin run rampant in your life. It will end you.

However, here's the nuance. I think it's not that John Owen gets it wrong. It's that it's incomplete. See, it's true. Be killing sin or sin will be killing you. The problem is not everything that tries to kill you is a result of your own sin. I think some of us need to hear this. Because for whatever reason, we assume that if you are struggling, you must be failing. If you're anxious, you must be faithless. If you're depressed, you must be disobedient. If you're sick, you must be guilty. And Leviticus says, no, not necessarily. It could just be weakness. It could just be your body groaning. And it makes sense in a world where the body is still cursed and the creation is still cursed, that you feel pain and you feel weakness.

I love what Charles Spurgeon says on this. He says, certain of my brethren are frequently in trouble. Their whole life is floundering out of one swamp of misery into another. You've had many losses in business, maybe nothing but losses. You've had many crosses, disappointments, bereavements, nothing prospers with you. However, it is no sign, beloved, that you are not a child of God. Remember that none of your trials can prove you to be a lost man.

Now, I have to provide one caveat to this, just real quick. Weakness is not wickedness, but it's also not righteousness. Often, weakness functions as a fork in the road. It's often the moment when you have to decide, are you going to trust God? Or are you going to run from him to something else? Hear what I'm saying. I'm saying, look, if you're an anxious person, it could be that you're in sin right now because you're running from God. But just because you are frequently visited by anxiety or depression, it doesn't mean you're not a child of God. It just means you're weak. It means you live in a fallen creation.

Next point, in a fallen world where heaven is not yet and sadness is sanity. Leviticus tells us that our best gifts come with reminders of the shadow of death. The Bible does not ask you to pretend. It does not demand that you paste a smile over grief like a cheap sticker. Ecclesiastes 3:4 says there's a time to weep, which means tears can be the right response to what is broken. Ecclesiastes 7:2 presses the point further. It is better to go in the house of mourning than the house of feasting because on this side of heaven, death is real. Even Jesus wept. He did that for a friend that died moments before he was about to heal him. Is that sanity or insanity?

I tend to agree with Sarah Clarkson on this point. We were not created for disaster. We were not created for disaster nor formed for destruction. And to lament our pain is to honor the beauty that God intended and for us to yearn towards its restoration. To lament our pain is to honor the beauty God intended. Maybe that's why lament is the most common theme in the Psalms because in a fallen world, lament is a type of faithful sorrow that exposes the darkness and honors God as the God of life.

Then the last point, there is nothing new under the sun, but the gospel responds. That's what Ecclesiastes says, right? There's nothing new under the sun. The gospel responds, all things are being made new under the sun. Ecclesiastes looks at the world under the sun and says, you could change the wallpaper, but the house still leaks. You can repeat cycles – work, birth, death, gain, loss – and still feel an aching sameness. Leviticus 12 in its own way agrees. It says, yes, joy still comes with pain and life still arrives with weakness. Death still shadows the edge of the room, but the gospel adds the sentence that Ecclesiastes makes you long to hear. Under the son of God, all things are being made new.

Now, this doesn't make any of this easier. It's still hard. You're still going to be tempted to despair, but I think what Tim Keller says is really helpful here. He says, we may hear our hearts say it's hopeless, but we should argue back. If you're here this morning, don't miss what's being offered. Jesus Christ is not merely one that brings you to God, or he's not one who shows you what God is like. He is the one that brings you to God. He's not simply a teacher of purity. He is purity in person, given for the impure.

I would encourage you, if that's you and you don't know Jesus, if you haven't trusted him, bring your sin and bring your sorrow to Christ. Trust in his death for the forgiveness of your sins and his resurrection for new life. And hear at last what Leviticus could only whisper through days and birds and priests, you are forgiven and you are clean.

Let me pray for us. Lord, thank you for this morning. Lord, please help us be people who not just walk carefully and wisely and lean on you during our weakness, but that we also do it with others. Lord, that we would be people who are moved quickly to compassion, that we would set aside the purity rules that our culture imposes and let us treat people like Leviticus does, that there's no one beyond repair, that everyone is recoverable, and that you are a God of merciful love, that pursues us even when we run, even when we're weak. I pray this in Jesus name, amen.