

## “SECURE STEPS”

### Psalm 40:1-11

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True or false? We are law-abiding **Christians**.

Consider how well we obey the *Ten Commandments*.

Are there any other gods in our lives that are more important to us than the Lord our God? Do we have idols we worship? Do we ever make wrongful use of God's name? Do we remember the sabbath and keep it holy? Are we caring for our fathers and mothers as they age, given the instruction that this is how we honor them? Are we refraining from murder? Adultery? Theft? Spreading lies about others? Do we want what other people have?

On a scale of one to ten, how well would each of us score in terms of obeying the Ten Commandments? Are there any 10's in worship this morning?

Jesus also gave us a law -- the law of love. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. And we are to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. How well do we keep *the Law of Love*?

It is fair to say that we are well-intentioned in our efforts to be law-abiding Christians. We try to obey God's law and honor Jesus' teachings. We recognize we are not perfect. We fall short. We know that just because there is a law does not mean we automatically will obey it.

True or false? We are law-abiding **citizens**.

How many hard-earned dollars have we turned over to the Village of Marlborough in fines for exceeding the speed limit on Highway 9W? Just because there is a law that says we are to respect a set speed, we do not always comply.

There is a law in some towns that directs homeowners to keep their sidewalks in good repair, but you better watch your step if you ever walk through the neighborhoods. It is easy to get tripped up. Unless municipal authorities enforce fines for failing to comply, many homeowners ignore their responsibility to provide safe footing.

The establishment of a law does not mean it will be obeyed.

Consider the ruling of the Supreme Court in *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court issued a decision that struck down segregated schools. The decision was unanimous! Yet even though there was not one justice who voted to permit having separate schools for blacks and whites, numerous states defied the law of the land. The states refused to obey the

law. Some school districts closed their schools. Some white people chose to keep their children at home rather than have them matriculate with black people.

In 1964, Congress passed and President Lyndon Johnson signed into law *The Civil Rights Act*. In 1964, it became illegal for employers to discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission was established at that time to implement the law. After worship, go home and Google *employment attorney*. The number of names to be found demonstrates ongoing resistance of that labor law.

The establishment of a law does not mean it will be obeyed.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968. He was killed 14 years after *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. King was killed 4 years after the *Civil Rights Act*. He was killed 3 years after the *Voting Rights Act (1965)*. Resistance to the full acceptance of African-Americans continued after laws mandated educational integration, employment opportunity, and voting rights.

The establishment of a law does not mean it will be obeyed.

This truth is prescient this week as we find ourselves celebrating the birthday of one Nobel Peace Prize winner on Monday and, on Friday, saying goodbye to another — Barack Hussein Obama, our 44th President.

Of this moment, Michael Eric Dyson observes that:

*No matter the criticisms one might have of our beloved first black president, there is no denying the importance of his presence in the Oval Office. The sight of him striding across the White House lawn; the prospect of seeing him daily on television; the fact that his photo would often appear on the front page of many newspapers across the globe; the fact that he filled the White House with black guests during Black History Month celebrations or other occasions of black recognition; the fact that Stevie wonder and Aretha Franklin, and Beyonce and Jay Z, too, seemed to pop up at White House events often; the fact that young children of all hues saw this man as the country's leader were of incalculable value in the fight for black worth and personhood.\**

Not everyone welcomed the presidency of an African-American and far too many will celebrate its conclusion. There is no legislation of the heart.

A new Administration and Congress and Court will continue, repeal, and write legislation and decisions that will be the law of our land. Civil rights that now are in place may change.

None of us will register a vote in the deliberation of those laws.

All of us either will obey or defy the laws that will be set before us.

Much of what we do in worship and Christian community is to sort through how we remain faithful to God in our daily walks of life. Discernment is needed at

all times. We use our Christianity as a compass for our choices. The psalmist reminds us that we may rely upon God to *set our feet upon a rock, making our steps secure*. (Psalm 40:2). If we open ourselves to the invitation, God will *set our feet upon a rock, making our steps secure*.

As we go forth from this place . . .

True or false? We will walk in God's ways.

Amen.

\* "How Black America Saw Obama," by Michael Eric Dyson, *The New York Times*, 1/14/2017.