

## LAWS OF HARVEST AND TRUE CHARITY

Rev. Robert Jungé

*Reading: Leviticus 19:1-10*

*“When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:9-10).*

Today we read several different laws that the Lord gave to Moses and that Moses told to the Children of Israel. One of these laws said that when they went to reap their harvest, the people were to leave some grain in the corners of the fields and some fruit in the vineyards, so that later on, when strangers and poor people came by, they would be able to find something there to eat.

Now this may sound strange to us, and yet if we think about it, we can see how wonderful that law was. You know, when we have plenty to eat, we have a duty to help poorer people. Fires, floods, tornadoes, bad crops—many things can make people suffer that are no fault of their own. They need our help. We should try to help them, give them something to eat, make it possible for them to find jobs and rebuild their homes, help them in every way we can.

This does not mean that we try to find jobs for people if they are too lazy to work, nor does it mean that we try to give them food and encourage them to be lazy and to do nothing that’s useful for other people. What it means is that we should help the poor if they need it and cannot help themselves.

But notice that the Children of Israel were to do a strange thing. You remember how they were to help the poor. They were to leave some grain in the corners of their fields, and they were to leave some grapes in the vineyard, so that the poor people could come and would find it. Now why would they do that? The reason was that when they gave to the poor, or helped the poor, they were not to do it with a grand show. They were not to gather their money together and look down their noses and say “Here is something for you, you poor person.”

They were to help the poor in ways that would not show off and make themselves feel proud of all they were doing. They were to do it in ways that would be easy for the poor people, so that they would be able to help themselves and would not be hurt.

This law was bitterly and badly broken at the time when the Lord was in the world. You may remember the wealthy man whom the Lord saw in the temple

giving something to the treasury with a big show. Remember also the poor widow who had only two coins that were hardly worth anything, but they were all that she had. And because she loved the church and the Lord, she humbly and quietly gave them to the temple treasury. The Lord explained that this woman had more love, and her gift was worth far more, than that of the wealthy man, who gave with such pride.

We should not give gifts to the poor just to be seen by other people, to be praised or honored, or to feel that we have done something that is great and good. We should not want to be seen and admired, even by the people we are giving things to. We are to give to the poor and our neighbor simply because they need our help.

We give, then, as if we were leaving something in the corners of our fields or in our vineyards, helping people without pride and without show. We help people so that they too can again serve the neighbor. Remember, all people are in this world to serve their neighbors, to love them even more than they love themselves. We have a duty to help others who need it. A person cannot do his job if he has no place to live, or if he is starving. If we help him get back on his feet, we are not only being charitable, we are helping him begin to do his job and his use again. By helping each other, we can all do our work better and so prepare for our eternal use in heaven.

*Amen.*

#### Possible Additional Readings

*Luke 14:7-14: Humility is an essential virtue. This lesson applies to giving to the poor with humility, not thinking of reward or their giving in return.*

*Luke 10:25-37: This story shows care for the suffering with no thought of reward. It is useful to know that wine represents truth and oil represents love.*

*Deuteronomy 15:7-11: Help should be given in the right spirit, without selfish grief. The spiritually poor are those who lack the riches of truth from the Lord's Word.*

*Luke 18:18-30: Children need praise, but they need to learn to overcome conceit and self-righteousness as well. It is important to do something because it is right, not just because of what we will get out of it.*

*Matthew 11:1-6: The Lord preached to the poor and helped the needy, showing that the Christian religion was for all people, rich and poor. There is no shame in what we do not have, nor should there be any false pride in what we do have. The heart is what really counts.*