"God the Lawgiver" | February 11, 2012 | Order Info

Text: Hebrews 12:21; Romans 7:8-13; Job 24:14, 15; Exodus 16:4-30; Hebrews 8:10, 10:16; Romans 13:8-10

They have several things in common: they live in a retirement community in Hanover, New Hampshire; they’re in their 80’s and 90’s; they remember vividly the day Pearl Harbor was bombed; and they’ve written their memoirs in the new book titled, *World War II Remembered*. Realizing that their generation is rapidly disappearing, they want to preserve history. “If these things are not put down on paper very shortly they are not going to get down on paper,” said Hanover native Mary Jenkins.¹ So she and other residents have compiled 56 stories that show the war from personal perspectives.

Perhaps the most unique is the story of a Japanese-American who was sent to an internment camp. Born in California, Lafayette Noda turns 96 this month. He was working in a lab at UCLA when he heard about the bombing. “Things changed fast after that,” he said. “The identification of the Japanese intensified.”

On December 7, a Presidential Proclamation authorized the Attorney General to coordinate a round-up of Japanese-American suspects. The next day, the Department of Treasury seized all Japanese bank accounts and businesses. A few weeks later, the AG ordered all suspected “enemy” aliens in the Western U.S. to surrender their short wave radios and cameras. Later, the forced relocation of Japanese decedents began. Tensions continued to build until the next spring, when on March 11, General DeWitt established the Wartime Civil Control Administration, which enforced the internment plan.²

Lafayette was sent off to the Santa Anita horse racetrack. “I was put with a group of bachelors who were treated as one unit. We were given one horse stall … with horse manure on the walls. It smelled.” But Lafayette Noda showed his true devotion after the war was over and he was free. Although he was misjudged and forced to obey discriminatory laws that were a result of fear and hatred, he went on to earn a doctorate in biochemistry from Stanford University. He then became a longtime professor at Dartmouth Medical School, and its first Asian-American department chair.

Our glimpse of God in this week’s lesson doesn’t portray a Judge and Lawmaker who is out to “round-up” and imprison us—but to set us free! A God whose laws are an expression of love. God’s laws do not discriminate, like some of our earthly laws. They are not fear-based, dictatorial, or hateful. It’s impossible for them to be any thing but loving because they reflect the very character of God. The law is meant to protect us. To make our lives happier. And once we realize that, we’ll want to pass on the benefits of God’s law to others.

It’s a beautiful progression, really. God gives us laws—out of love. We honor those laws—out of love. And then we go out to love others, who will be so impressed that they, too, will want to honor God’s laws—out of love. As Paul said in Romans 13:10, “Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

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Additional resource: MSNBC

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