October 22, 2020

Dear Members and Friends,

The Bible scripture for this Sunday, 10/25/2020 is Matthew 22: 33-46, NLT.

More questions for Jesus this week, today the question is “which is the most important commandment in the Law of Moses? “

In the passage from Matthew that we will read on Sunday, a legal expert wants Jesus to boil down the Torah to just one commandment or law.

It seems at first like a silly request, given the length and complexity of the entirety of the Hebrew Bible. But Jesus not only is up to the task, he goes the extra mile by also offering what he calls the second most important commandment.

Beyond that, Jesus asserts that not just the law but the prophets all depend on

the two commands he mentions, which I now will further simplify into just four words… Love God, love neighbor…

This sermon could end right here, but to do so would be to cave into the temptation to oversimplify the Bible. The reality is that there is much richness

in these two commands, and we should explore how grasping some of that depth can guide us so that we can be the kind of disciples of Christ we are called to be…

The first command that Jesus mentioned, to love God with all your heart, being and strength is part of the central prayer of Judaism, the Shema

(or *Sh'ma Yisrael*), found in the book of Deuteronomy.

The Shema is a ringing affirmation of monotheism, which the King James Version puts this way: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD,”1

though it took time for the Israelites to become monotheists… believers in one God…And monotheism also was a new concept for Israel’s neighbors in the time after Moses. That’s one reason Jewish leaders were so insistent that their own people understand that there is but one deity.

One important aspect of monotheism was that the people were not at the whim

of a rain god or a god of the crops or a god of war. The one God to whom they pledged allegiance made all the rules both clear and redemptive and was the God who loved the people unconditionally…

The people’s job, in turn, was to love this God with everything they had.

This love was not a bribe to get God to love them. It was, rather, an expression of gratitude for the reality that God loved them already.

In fact, God loved them before they loved God. The people’s love for God was

a way of giving thanks for the divine love that was theirs for free and forever.

Why was it and why is it important that these commands were and are

part of holy scripture and not just the thoughts of someone in a private letter or words from an ancient author to a small audience?

Because, as Author Karen Armstrong says… scripture is “not designed to confirm your beliefs or endorse your current way of life; rather [it is] calling for a radical transformation of mind and heart.”

That’s what scripture does, that’s what reading and studying God’s word does…

and what could be more radical than to put ourselves second and God first?

Yes, Jesus says, we are to love ourselves, but that can happen only once

we first love God fully because only then do we know who and whose we are.

We can’t love others unless we first love God because what makes other people lovable is that they bear the image of God. It’s that very image to which we

are responding when we love others. Christianity is a difficult religion because,

rooted in Jewish concepts, it requires each of us to love people who sometimes aren’t even likable. As a Christian, I am obliged to see Christ in every person I meet, knowing that each person bears the *imago dei…* the image of God.

And I mean every single person, whether that person is saintly or a serial thief or even a fan of the professional sports team I dislike the most. None of that matters… All that matters is that he or she is human, a child of God and that we must treat all people lovingly because of that truth. We are not required just to like them. Nor are we required just to tolerate them. Those standards are far too low

for the standards that issue from the books of Deuteronomy, already mentioned,

and Leviticus3 which Jesus quotes in the Matthew passage we read today.

Once we understand that we are to love God and love our neighbor as we love ourselves, it’s time to discover how to love ourselves. One thing loving ourselves surely does not mean is to make ourselves into the people our culture often values

as opposed to the people whom God calls us to be. Our culture values fame, youth,

wealth, beauty and achievement. There’s nothing inherently wrong with any of those values except when they become our idols, and that’s exactly what they have become for so many… Speaking of idolatry, what is the first of the Ten Commandments and why is it first? It’s that you should have no other gods except the one God. And it’s first because if we get that commandment right,

we’ll get all the rest of them right as a natural consequence of considering nothing else on a par with God. In one sense, all sin comes down to idolatry, putting something or someone else ahead of God. Sometimes that someone else is us.

Loving ourselves does not mean putting ourselves ahead of God and it doesn’t mean putting the needs of others in second, third or fourth place. Instead, loving ourselves means recognizing that we, too, bear the image of God and that we are precious children of God, people whom God loves enough to die for.

Do you ever stop to tell yourself that God thinks you’re valuable enough to die for? That, in a simplified way, is the Christian message. What we are asked to do in return is to live lives of gratitude, lives that value the outcast, the rejected, the brokenhearted, the poor, the widow, the orphan…. everybody.

We will join again in live Worship and also stream the Sunday, October 25th, 10:45 am Worship Service through ZOOM at Furley Church.

The Worship Committee has re-arranged our worship space to “social distance” and keep those attending safe as possible.

Attached is the Scripture and other items for Sunday, October 25th and the 21st Sunday of Pentecost. Please let us know if you need the Zoom invitation to the streaming webcast, Thank you, Randy, Jason, Amy and Everyone who helps every week!

Don’t forget we return to Central Standard Time on Sunday, November 1st, time to Fall Back… and that is All Saints Sunday too…

Thank you again for your help, love and prayers and remember that

God loves you, and it is so very good to look forward to gathering together

again safely ***this Sunday****.*

Join us in Zoom online Worship or in person,

Blessings, Pastor Kent

**Opening Hymn, O God, Our Help in Ages Past page 117 UMH**

**Announcements…**

**Praise and Worship… He Has Made Me Glad Overhead**

**Holy Ground Overhead**

**Prayer Hymn Pass It On page 572 UMH vs 1, 2, 3**

**Sharing Joys and Concerns through Worship and Zoom…**

**The Lord’s Prayer spoken together…**

Our Father who art in Heaven,

Hallowed by Thy name.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses

As we forgive those

Who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver from evil,

For thine is the kingdom,

and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

**If you would like to share a Children’s Moment please let us know!**

Furley United Methodist Church, 21st Sunday of Pentecost, October 25, 2020

Scripture Reading, Matthew 22: 34-46 New Living Translation

**34**But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. **35**One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: **36**“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”

**37**Jesus replied, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A+34+-+46%C2%A0&version=NLT#fen-NLT-23884a)] **38**This is the first and greatest commandment. **39**A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A+34+-+46%C2%A0&version=NLT#fen-NLT-23886b)] **40**The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

**Whose Son Is the Messiah?**

**41**Then, surrounded by the Pharisees, Jesus asked them a question: **42**“What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They replied, “He is the son of David.”

**43**Jesus responded, “Then why does David, speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit, call the Messiah ‘my Lord’? For David said,

**44**‘The Lord said to my Lord,  
Sit in the place of honor at my right hand  
    until I humble your enemies beneath your feet.’[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A+34+-+46%C2%A0&version=NLT#fen-NLT-23891c)]

**45**Since David called the Messiah ‘my Lord,’ how can the Messiah be his son?”

**46**No one could answer him. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

**Footnotes**

1. [22:37](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A+34+-+46%C2%A0&version=NLT#en-NLT-23884) [Deut 6:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deut.6.5&version=NLT).
2. [22:39](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A+34+-+46%C2%A0&version=NLT#en-NLT-23886) [Lev 19:18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev.19.18&version=NLT).
3. [22:44](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22%3A+34+-+46%C2%A0&version=NLT#en-NLT-23891) [Ps 110:1](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps.110.1&version=NLT).

Furley Church…

Sunday Morning Message, October 25, 2020 “ Short Love Notes ”

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Closing Hymn, Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven page 66 UMH vs 1, 2, 3, 4

**We Welcome You to Worship… Sunday, October 25, 2020**

**Kansas October…**

