

Come, Let's Journey Together, Living Life, Loving Jesus

The Most Important Commandment

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] ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[b] 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]

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

- a. 22:37 Deut 6:5.
- b. 22:39 Lev 19:18.
- c. 22:44 Ps 110:1.

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 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.

Love has consequences

One of the dangers of oversimplifying love of God, love of self and love of any kind... is that we will fail to understand what it costs to love.

Make no mistake: love has consequences...

Most of you know that truth. Most of you have experienced grief because someone you loved has died or because your marriage has floundered on the sharp rocks of infidelity or because your body has betrayed you by becoming infected with some terrible disease. That kind of heartache, sorrow and anguish is possible only because you have committed to love. So, each of us must ask ourselves whether the joy of love is worth the risk of pain. And the Christian answer must be yes, because scripture tells us that God is love. To reject love is to reject God.

But it's that same God who walks with us through our sorrow, through our grief, through our anguish. And God does that because this is a God who has known sorrow, is acquainted with grief and who has promised not to leave us.

So when Jesus draws from the Jewish scriptures to affirm that our task is to love God and then love our neighbor as we love ourselves, he does so knowing that he is asking us to experience not just joy but also intense pain at times. And yet remember that you will not be left alone in your anguish. For what does Jesus also say to us? He says, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world," which is itself an act of love.

This October join us in person on Sunday morning at 10:45 am for Worship Only, or also online through Zoom at Furley Church. And as always we are located on the corner of 101st St. N. and North Greenwich Road!

The Kingdom is the Lord's and in Him all things hold together,
Blessings this Fall, Pastor Kent