

## Holy Tuesday

Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer asked him a question to test him.

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Let us pray: Your law is simple, yet far reaching. You want us to become like You perfected in love. You want us to sacrificially love everyone, especially those who do not know love, because You want us to introduce them to You. Amen.

“What Is The Greatest Commandment?”

When I was ordained, like all the Methodist preachers before me I was asked a series of questions by the bishop before the whole annual conference. Two of

them being: “Are you going on to perfection? Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?” The expected answer and the only answer a United Methodist could ever give is an unqualified, “Yes!” This is because we believe God has given us only one commandment and nothing else in this life matters. We must become perfected in the art of love: loving God and loving others.

The Bible says many things about how we are to live. Some of them we listen to like “honor your father and mother”, and some we don’t like the prohibitions against eating pork and shell fish. Not everything in the Law is expected to apply to every culture through out time, so we find ourselves asking, “What is the greatest commandment?” What is it that we really must do to please God? Jesus says that if we can learn to love, we will be able to be obedient to God.

What does it mean to love? Well, lovers are patient with and kind to others; they are not envious, they’re not boastful, they’re not arrogant, and they are never rude. Lovers never insists on their own way. Lovers aren’t irritable nor are they resentful nor do they rejoice when things go wrong in the lives of others. Lovers rejoice when it hears the truth about themselves. True lovers show forbearance, they’re optimistic, and they’re in it for the long hall. Lovers never quit loving.

We know that all love comes from God and that anyone who is able to love is born of God and knows

God. Those who cannot find it in themselves to love don't really know God, because the one true God is love. When we love each other God lives in us and God's love is perfected in us. If we cannot love any of the people that we can see, then God says we will never be able to love a God we cannot see. God is love and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them. If we love God we must love others also. This is the greatest commandment.

Jesus says that whatever we do to the least important person, we do to him personally. Jesus says every hungry person is Jesus looking for a bite to eat. So he says, "feed me! Please!" Every thirsty person is Jesus needing just a sip of water. This is why God will never forget even the giving of a glass of water in Jesus name. Every homeless person is Jesus, needing a safe place to stay. Every lonely person is Jesus needing a friend. Every sick person is Christ in need of care and comfort. Every person in prison is Christ waiting for a visit. This is why love is the greatest commandment.

The need for love, the need for God who is love is so great that we can become overwhelmed. No one wants to ignore the needs of God and be unloving. But there is so much need and so little you to go around. Lord have mercy!

First, take a deep breath, and let it out slowly. You are not alone. You can work with the other lovers of God

in your church to extend the love of Christ. You can cooperate with other United Methodists around the world to address the needs of Christ. In the past we have built hospitals, orphanages, schools and churches all over the world. You can cooperate with other Christian churches, in our community, in the state of Pennsylvania, in the United States, and around the world. You can even cooperate with those of other religious faiths, and those with no faith at all to meet the needs of Christ, we see in the world. The good news is that we don't have to start from scratch, Christians have know this for millennia of time and have already established structure for cooperation, we just have to get involved.

Sometimes we do not respond in love to the needs of Christ because we do not know what we are looking at. Those who have had the privilege of going to Haiti, help us see the need, so we can find ways to respond. Those who are active in the outreaches in the Phoenixville area, share with us needs and opportunities to meet the needs of Christ.

This summer I am scheduled to teach for the United Methodist Women at the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Mission U. Each year they highlight a social issue to help us see the needs of women and children in our world. This year I will be teaching about the school to prison pipeline. This study looks at how we as a society have set up structures that add to the struggles of

poor and traumatized children, how we don't helping them stay in school, off the streets and out of trouble. And then when they get into trouble we have found that we traumatize them even more. So there are many opportunities to be in ministry to the Christ child.

We cannot do everything, but we can always do something. It is like tithing, God does not expect you to pay money you have never made, but God is expecting you to do something within your means.

God wants us to love. This means opening our hearts and caring for those that God brings into our lives. It may also mean that when God tugs on your heart strings that you may end up like Paul on a missionary journey to people you may have only heard about.

To be perfected in love is to keep growing in love. Finding more people to love. Finding more ways to love. Finding more time to love. God is longing for our growth as his children, because God loves us, and can do nothing less.

Love is the greatest commandment. And we love God more fully by loving others. Love one another, this is the true worship of God.

Let us pray: Help us to love you more deeply in all the people we meet, especially those who need love the most and experience it the least. Allow others to experience your loving

presence through us. Amen.

Tomorrow on Holy Wednesday our holy week question will be: “Why This Waste?”