



Commanded to Love

Mark 12:28-34

“Of all the commandments, which is the most important? The most important one, answered Jesus, is this: Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.”

November 1, 2015

Thought for the Week

The Splendor of Autumn

Early Sunday morning while driving to church we naturally noticed that the autumn leaves were resplendent. The yellows, browns and reds were brilliant in the early morning sun. Scattered amongst them was the occasional green fir tree. It made me realize again that God has made our earth a very beautiful place and I thanked him for his wonderful kindness to all of us who live on this little planet.

The autumn colors remind us that the long, warm days of summer are passing and the dark days of winter lie ahead. However, the regularity of the seasons points us to the faithfulness of God. He has promised, “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.” So we know that winter will not last forever, however dark and cold it may be, and that springtime will come and the trees and flowers will come to life again.

There are also seasons in our lives. The early years of childhood are full of hope and promise. The energy and enthusiasm of children hold out great potential for their future lives. Childhood gives way to adult years when physical and mental powers are at their height. It is a time for striving to achieve our full potential at home and work. Loving families and homes provide a secure and loving environment for the next generation to be born and thrive.

Then comes the autumn of our lives when mind and body are not so strong and grey hairs appear. In the early senior years there can be a beauty and poise that make it seem that things may continue as they are but, in our hearts, we know that our lives are moving inevitably to their appointed end.

Solomon, who was legendary for his wisdom, wrote, “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them.” It is best to remember God and entrust our lives to him when we are young so that he is at the center of all we do. But we can also draw near to him in the autumn of our life and find in him the peace we need now and the hope we need for the future. His beautiful creation proclaims that he exists and encourages us to seek him and find him.

A Second Chance

On 11 June Vincent Uzomah, a science teacher at a school in a small town in Wales, was stabbed with a kitchen knife by a 14 year old pupil. Vincent was very seriously injured and was afraid he was going to die. The boy had racially slurred Vincent and had told his school friends he was going to kill him. After the attack the boy put a post on Facebook outlining what he had

done and 69 people said they "liked" his post. The boy has been given an 11-year sentence and Vincent may never return to a classroom.

After the trial Vincent said, "As a Christian I have forgiven this boy who has inflicted this trauma and pain on me and my family. Our prayer for him is that he will make use of the opportunities and support that will be provided to him to become a changed person who will make a positive contribution to society." People like Vincent shine light into our dark world.

Why could Vincent speak of forgiving a young man who so obviously hated him? Hatred and revenge are the normal human responses to those who mistreat us; forgiveness is rare. Vincent is able to forgive the boy because he himself has experienced God's forgiveness. He became a Christian when he realized his own sinfulness before God and acknowledged that God could justly condemn him for all the sins he has committed. He confessed his sin to God and asked for forgiveness. He also put his trust in Jesus Christ, God's Son, who died on the cross to pay the price of his sins. Vincent experienced the amazing love of God and found forgiveness and new life in Jesus. Every day Vincent continues to need forgiveness and prays, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Vincent's experience of God's love and grace in Jesus has also taught him that God is a God of second chances and new beginnings. No matter what we've done, God is able to change us from the inside and give us a new heart. That is why Vincent and his wife are praying for the boy during his time in custody. He, too, can experience God's forgiveness and find new life in Jesus. This offers real hope to us all in our daily struggle with our sinful hearts and ways. God's promise in Jesus is, "I will forgive their wickedness and I will never again remember their sins."



God Bless America

Prayer for Peace - Comoros

Giver and sustainer of life, we bow in this sacred space to pray for peace. Thank you for our lives that become intertwined in this moment of prayer. Thank you for the opportunity to partner with you as builders of the peaceable kingdom.

Come into the brokenness of our lives and our lands with your forgiving and healing spirit. Restore us to right relationships with you, with others and with your world.

God of unity, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Comoros. Please guide political and religious leaders to give direction for their people to build just communities of love and peace.

We pray for families who strive to create havens of love and nurture but are often tormented by strains and pressures from within and without. Where human frailty or condition shatters family bonds, inspire us to create families of choice who offer sanctuary to every child of God.

God of all creation, as we depart this place may we be ready to do our part to create peace wherever we are. Amen.

Stewardship Thought

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matthew 5:3)*

“Poor in spirit” is confusing for many of us. It simply means to place your trust in God, putting His will first and being strong in faith. As we celebrate the lives of the people of Comoros, remember, we, too are called to be people in the world but not of the world. Dialing down our own pride and ego and turning up the humility will help us on our path to God.