



Love God and Neighbor

Matthew 22:34-46

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

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

October 29, 2017

Thought for the Week

Scriptures - 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16, Romans 6:3-4, 8-11, Matthew 10:37-42

As a youngster, I can still recall the occasions when my mother would say: “We have to clean up the house because company is coming on Sunday.” Actually, our house was never that unkempt but if we knew that the company was coming that would mean a special dinner with fried chicken or roast beef, mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetables and German chocolate cake or some other wonderful dessert.

Once in awhile our “company” was a family of friends that included kids that were around the same age of my sister and I. This was usually a time of great fun for me and quite often it ended with my friend and myself getting in some kind of trouble. Like onetime, soon after dinner I asked if I could have some more Vernor’s Ginger Ale. My mother said it was OK so my friend and I went into the kitchen, opened up the refrigerator door and took out the already opened bottle of Vernor’s. In those days, you used a rubber “plug” type of stopper that had a type of syringe on top that would allow the plug to get narrower when depressed so that it could be inserted and withdrawn from the bottle thus sealing those wonderful bubbles. Well, I never did like all that carbonation, so I decided to shake the bottle first before pulling the “plug”. Naturally it exploded all over the window, curtains and ceiling over the sink. My mom heard the commotion and came running. She saw what I had done and I was sent to my room and my friend to their car for the rest of their stay with us.

This experience notwithstanding, my mother’s dinners were renowned within our sizeable Highland Park and eventually Redford Congregations. We “entertained” many people, both friends and family consisting of aunts and uncles and all my many, many cousins.

Hospitality itself is the centerpiece of our theme this Sunday. It is well known from the history of the Middle East that hospitality is an essential part of family and community life.

We have an example of it in the passage from the Second Book of Kings that tells us a bit about the pastoral travels of Elisha the prophet. On his frequent trips, he had the habit of stopping at the home of an influential couple!

Realizing that he was a holy traveler, they prepared dinner for him at each visit and arranged a rooftop lodging for him with bed, chair, table and lamp! Finally after many such visits Elisha offered the couple a return gesture of hospitality. “Next year when I return,” he predicted, “you will have a son in the family!” We are not told whether this actually took place but we can assume so. Prophets do not make wild predictions! So, it’s all about hospitality!

Turning for a moment to the life of Jesus: during his many travels, we are often told that he seldom missed an opportunity to stop and visit even the homes of so-called public sinners, (Remember the story of Zachaeus the tax collector?) or the

homes of his adversaries, the scribes and Pharisees. We have the sense that hospitality was important to Jesus because such visits were not simply a time for eating and drinking; rather, for Jesus, they were an opportunity for him to make peace with his adversaries and to speak of the treasures of God's kingdom.

Of course, we also read of the several occasions when crowds of people would flock around Jesus to hear him preach. When his preaching was concluded he offered bread and fish to the hungry on at least two occasions. In short, Jesus seemed to know the meaning of two-way hospitality.

For most folks, hospitality is simply a natural gesture of human concern. We know the feeling of relief when someone takes us in and offers us a meal. Our host (hostess) is telling us that we are appreciated and valued.

As people of faith, of course, this human act of kindness is a sign of grace, a sign that when we share space and a meal we are doing what Jesus did; indeed, it is something akin to Holy Communion.

I still tend to shake a bottle of "pop" prior to partaking, but the screw-on caps they have today are much better at sealing than those old rubber stoppers. I guess I can thank the Lord that gave someone the sense and ingenuity to invent a better way. Otherwise, I'd still be getting in trouble at my age when my wife and I have company over for dinner.

Happy Birthday Karen (10/29) & Michael

How can you show God your love?

How can you show God your love? Has the success of such efforts inspired you? Or, has the failure of such discouraged you? How has God's love for you helped you to act charitably toward others?

Love of God

Love of neighbor

Easy to talk about

Difficult to live out

In spite of the effort, love of each in action will change our surroundings and us. Fidelity to God and charity toward others will challenge others to action. All we need to do is live like Jesus did. If we can't make that commitment, then we should take one step at a time toward our creator and our fellow humans. And we should not worry,

for God's Spirit will lead the way.

Write down the ways you showed love for God and others this past week.

Thank God for your efforts and give him the credit.

Then, plan for this week.

Pray for wisdom making out your list.

And pray for patience when those opportunities for love surprise you.