



Sermon for the Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost, 10-29-2023 – These Two

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene, The Reverend Glenda Emsall, Deacon

[Deuteronomy 34:1-12](#), [Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17](#), [1 Thessalonians 2:1-8](#), [Matthew 22:34-46](#)

In the Collect for today we heard, “increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command.” God’s commandments are about love. “If it’s not about Love, it’s not about God.”<sup>1</sup>

I have preached this before and I am saying it again, because repetition is the mother of retention! If we REALLY loved God and loved our neighbors there would be no need for any of the other 613 commandments! But - A mindset of scarcity and worst-case scenario causes fear that there may not be enough. What will happen if I outlive my resources? If I take care of my neighbors, would my neighbors take care of me?

I am grateful to all of you who give donations of time, talent and treasure (as you are able) to St. Luke’s, our guilds and groups, the seasonal offerings, Camp Cross, Fr. David’s discretionary fund (and mine), for helping us help our neighbors at Family Promise, Safe Passage, local food banks, Heritage Health, St Vincent de Paul, and so many other charitable causes in the broader community - and to pay the bills and keep the lights on at St. Luke’s! We may be a ‘small’ church, but we are mighty in the spirit. Let the Stewardship Campaign begin and thank YOU in advance for your generosity!

Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. The 8 o’clock folks hear that Summary of the Law every Sunday, and in today’s Gospel reading, we hear the words spoken by Jesus in response to a question from one of the Pharisees, a lawyer. ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’

Jesus knows Torah and you would think the Pharisees would know that by now! Why did they slow-pitch that softball question about the ‘greatest’ commandment? Of course Jesus responds correctly to the Pharisee’s question. Devout Jews (then and now) recite The Shema<sup>2</sup> at morning prayer and at evening prayer. ‘The first is, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall 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, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’

“The gospel for this week is so familiar that we should not have to say it, but we must continue to say it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” [MT 22:39]. More importantly, and by some miracle of grace, we must not just say these words, but actually live them in real life. Jesus linked our love of God with our love of neighbor.

<sup>1</sup> Says Presiding Bishop Michael Curry ALL the time!

<sup>2</sup> The Shema: Deut. 6:4–9, Deut. 11:13–21 and Num. 15:37–41. Quoted by Jesus in the NT: Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:28-30.

You cannot separate the two. To have one is to have the other, and to neglect one is to lose them both.

This connection between claiming to love God and demonstrating that we love our neighbors became so embedded in the early Christian traditions that three Gospels contain a version of this week's story [Matthew 22:34–46, Mark 12:28–31, Luke 10:27]. This command to love our neighbor is repeated almost verbatim by Paul [Romans 13:8–9, Galatians 5:14], by James [James 2:8], and most memorably in the first letter of John: "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother" [1 John 4:20–21]."<sup>3</sup>

When it was Jesus' turn to question the Pharisees he asked, "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" Now I wonder why Jesus lobbed that question to the Pharisees. Perhaps because those religious authorities were obsessed with lineage and Jesus already knew how they would answer. In many cultures, including ours, "Who's your daddy?" is not a casual question! According to a research report from [www.marketwatch.com](http://www.marketwatch.com), the global genealogy products & services market was \$3.5 billion USD in 2022 and it is expected to triple [\$10.13 billion USD] by 2032.

The New Testament provides two accounts of the genealogy of Jesus. The one in the Gospel of Matthew [MT 1:1-17] begins with Abraham, tracing through Joseph and Mary to Jesus; "fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah." Matthew emphasized the Jewishness of Jesus.

Although some scholars believe Luke was a Hellenized or Greek Jew, he also could have been a gentile Christian. Therefore, the genealogy in the Gospel of Luke [LK 3:23-38] reverses Matthew's perspective, beginning with Joseph and backtracking all the way to Adam, thereby focusing on the universality of the gospel message, the Good News — a message for both Jews and gentiles.

Whose son is the Messiah? The Pharisees answered Jesus, "The son of David." You may remember other times in the New Testament, when this phrase, "son of David" has been used. When Joseph was planning to quietly divorce Mary, "an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'" [MT 1:20] Jesus is called "son of David" by some unlikely characters: blind beggar(s) followed him, crying loudly, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!' [MT 9:27, 20:30-31, MK 10:47-48, LK 18:38-39]; a crowd asking, 'Can this be the Son of David?' after Jesus healed a blind and mute demoniac [MT 12:23]; a Canaanite woman shouting, 'Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.' [MT 15:22]; the crowds ahead and behind Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem were shouting, 'Hosanna to

---

<sup>3</sup> Dan Clendenin, received his Ph.D from Drew University in 1985. He worked with graduate students and faculty at Stanford University w/ Intervarsity Christian Fellowship from 1995-2003 & founded a weekly newsletter *Journey With Jesus* in 2004. This is an excerpt from "On Israel and Palestine" 10-26-2023.

the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’ [MT 21:9]

“If the Messiah is the son of David,” Jesus, said to the Pharisees, [paraphrasing here] “Then how do you explain that David calls the Messiah ‘Lord,’ saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet”’? If David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, calls the Messiah ‘Lord,’ how can the Messiah be David’s son?” How can the father be servant to the son? “No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.”

These confrontational Pharisees [my personal opinion] have blown perfectly good opportunities to learn from Jesus; to advance their own scholarship. They are so laser focused on being right, on putting this upstart young Rabbi from Nazareth in his place, that they cannot accept Jesus’ message of love and inclusion. The gospel reading for next Sunday celebrates All Saints Day. We won’t hear Jesus’ scathing rebuke of the Pharisees in MT 23:1-12, **Jesus Denounces Scribes and Pharisees**.

[Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear,<sup>[a]</sup> and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them. They do all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long. They love to have the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and to be greeted with respect in the market-places, and to have people call them rabbi. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students.<sup>[b]</sup> And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah.<sup>[c]</sup> The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

- a. [Matthew 23:4](#) Other ancient authorities lack *hard to bear*
- b. [Matthew 23:8](#) Greek *brothers*
- c. [Matthew 23:10](#) Or *the Christ*

I’m reading this fun little book, **What if Jesus was Serious?**<sup>4</sup> The author uses “Christ’s longest lesson of ethical teaching: the Sermon on the Mount” aka The Beatitudes, to examine the contrasts between what Jesus taught and the way many Christians, who are allegedly followers of Jesus, actually live; “how we ignore crucial elements of Jesus’ teachings to stay comfortable and justify disobedience.” Next Sunday we will celebrate All Saints Sunday with baptism(s) and learn from the Beatitudes. Who is really Blessed?

May the power of God surround us; the love of Jesus enfold us; and the fire of the Holy Spirit burn in our hearts and shine forth in the way we live our lives. Amen.

---

<sup>4</sup> 2020, Skye Jethani (MDiv, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School), award-winning author, Christian keynote speaker, consultant, cohost of the Holy Post podcast, former pastor. More “What if Jesus was Serious...” About Prayer (2021); About the Church (2022)