

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity – Pr. Faugstad sermon
St. Matthew 22:34-46: “The Anointed One Fulfills the Scriptures.”
October 7/8, 2023 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Lord Jesus, we believe and are convinced that You are the promised Christ, the eternal Son of God made flesh, our Savior and Friend. To Your wounded side we come to obtain cleansing from sin, deliverance from Satan, and salvation throughout eternity. Preserve us in faith, and keep us in Your grace until we stand before Your throne in the glories of heaven. Amen. (*Mediations on the Gospels*, CPH, 2009, p. 178)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is taken from the twenty-second chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. We read selected verses in Jesus' name:

But 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 is the great commandment in the Law?” / And He 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 great and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” / Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?” / They said to Him, “The Son of David.” / He said to them, “How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls Him Lord, saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies under Your feet’? If then David calls Him Lord, how is He his Son?” / And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask Him any more questions. (ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who fulfilled the Old Testament and ushered in the New Testament, dear fellow redeemed:

It was the week of Passover. The city of Jerusalem was full of Jewish people who had traveled there from all directions. Everyone was buzzing about “Jesus of Nazareth” who had recently raised Lazarus from the dead. Some viewed Him as a great prophet, a miracle worker, and perhaps even the Messiah. Others regarded Him as an imposter, a blasphemer, an enemy. The religious leaders had been plotting His destruction for some time, but they didn’t want to create an uproar among the people by arresting Him in public.

So they waited for a good opportunity. While they waited, they decided to try to catch Him saying something false, something they could use against Him in a trial. First the Herodians came asking Him if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not. They went away marveling at His expert answer. Then the Sadducees came with a question about marriage in the resurrection. In His answer, Jesus quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures, showing that the Sadducees did not know what they claimed to know.

Then the Pharisees came. They fancied themselves as experts of the Law, the best of the best. If anyone could expose Jesus as false, they could. Their confidence in their own abilities is laughable. It was like pee-wee league players facing off against professionals. They didn't know who they were dealing with. Their pride was about to be checked.

"Teacher," one of them said, "*which is the great commandment in the Law?*" It's hard to know how they were trying to trip Him up with this. Jesus' answer came from the classic Old Testament creed in the book of Deuteronomy: "*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 might*" (6:4-5). Then Jesus added a second great commandment from the book of Leviticus: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (19:18). "This is the summary of God's commands in the Scriptures," He said. "These are the hooks on which they 'hang.'"

All that God asks of us is found in these two commandments: love God with our whole being and love our neighbors as ourselves. But what kind of love is God talking about? People use "love" today to describe things like their favorite food, their favorite musical artist, or their favorite color. Regarding relationships, our culture likes to say that "love is love," meaning any form of affection we might have toward another is a proper love, even if it is actually harmful to ourselves or others.

The definition of love given by Jesus from the Old Testament is clearly a self-sacrificing, humble love. How should we love God? With "*all our heart... all our soul... all our mind.*" That means we should attune each of our desires, plans, and beliefs to the will of God. We should apply our intellect and our thoughts to His service and dedicate ourselves to studying His Word of truth above all else.

And how should we love our neighbor? Just as we love ourselves. This means that my neighbors should matter to me as much as I matter to me. Their needs should be just as important as my needs, their struggles as my struggles, their pain and sorrow as my pain and sorrow. This is not necessarily a mutual love, as in, "I love you; you love me." This is a love that does not require or expect a return. It is love spilling over from one to another, and even to an enemy.

This is the love Jesus had for the religious leaders who wanted to destroy Him. He didn't show them love by affirming them in their pride and self-righteousness. Love does not mean supporting people in every choice they make. If that is the way we parented our children, they would be spoiled brats and would almost certainly reject the saving truth of the Bible. Instead, we correct them, call out their bad decisions, rebuke them for the untrue or unkind things they say, challenge their selfish thinking. That is love.

And we need God to do the same to us. We need to hear these two great commands of God and ask ourselves how well we have kept them. *All* our heart, soul, and mind? Love for others *as* we love *ourselves*? Most of the time, we can't rightly say that God has even *half* our heart, soul, and mind. So often we are focused on earthly concerns, things like our health, money, influence, future plans, pleasures. And our neighbors? The people closest to us don't always get our best; they might more likely get the leftovers. Instead of thinking about what I can do for them, we

think about what they can do for me. We need the Holy Spirit to convict us through the Law for our lack of love.

But while the Pharisees were still gathered together, Jesus shifted the focus from the Law with a question of His own. He asked them whose son the Christ, or the “Anointed One,” is. They said, “*the Son of David,*” meaning that the Christ would descend from the royal line of David. Jesus followed that with a quotation from one of David’s Psalms, where David recorded a conversation between “*the LORD,*” and “*[his] Lord.*” Then Jesus asked, “*If then David calls Him Lord, how is He his Son?*”

Where were the experts now? Didn’t they claim to know the Law like no one else? Their mouths were shut. They didn’t know what to say. The evangelist Matthew, who was a witness to all these things, said about them, “*no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask Him any more questions.*” Jesus had exposed their ignorance. But His goal was not to win a verbal battle. His goal was to open their heart, soul, and mind to the beautiful promise of the Scriptures.

The central promise, the core message of the Old Testament is not first of all the Law of God. The Old Testament is first of all about the LORD’s promise to send a Savior for sinners. The promise came right after Adam’s fall into sin. The written Law came much later, probably thousands of years later, through God’s servant Moses. Jesus was calling the Pharisees to consider this central teaching. He wanted them to recognize that the promised Christ was both David’s Son and David’s Lord. He was both human and divine.

And what would this Christ do? The Jews were hoping for a man who would return Israel to its former glory like it had under King David. That is probably how the Pharisees understood Psalm 110, from which Jesus was quoting. And this Psalm does speak in terms of conquest. The first verse says, “*The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’*” And later in the Psalm: “*The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth*” (vv. 5-6).

It certainly sounds like the coming Christ would be a conqueror of nations. That is probably how we would have understood it too. But now we know that this Psalm is much more. Defeating the powerful leaders of the territory would be impressive. Jesus did something infinitely more impressive. He took on the enemies that have vexed and conquered humanity ever since the fall into sin. He took on the poison of sin, the power of death, and the devil that pulls the strings of all that is evil and destructive in the world.

These are the enemies that would become Jesus’ footstool. But first He had to perfectly fulfill the command to love God and neighbor by going to the cross. His Father sent Him into the world for this very purpose, and Jesus willingly offered His perfect life for the lives of all His neighbors, for all the sinners of all time. What wondrous love is this! It is perfect love.

This love was poured out for you when Jesus shed His holy blood. He went to the cross as your substitute carrying the many ways you have failed in love toward God and your neighbors. He carried your selfishness, the anger you have felt toward others, the grudges you have nursed,

and your reluctance to help those who needed you. On the cross, He paid for all those transgressions as though they were His own, all those violations of God's clear commands. His death in your place freed you from the culpability and blame of all your sin.

You do not love God with all your heart, soul, and mind or your neighbor as yourself, but Jesus did, for you. Romans 10:4 declares that *"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."* Because He fulfilled the Law, you share in that fulfillment by faith in Him. His life of perfect love is credited to each one of us by His grace alone.

This is the comfort we find in the Word of God as recorded in the Old and the New Testaments. We certainly become more aware of our sin when we hear and learn the Word, but we also learn about our Savior, the promised Christ, from the beginning of Genesis all the way to the end of Revelation. As Jesus said to the religious leaders on another occasion, *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me"* (Joh. 5:39).

With these words, Jesus is teaching us to look for Him and His saving work all through the pages of the Bible. He is **The Anointed One** who **Fulfills the Scriptures**. This Son of David and Lord of David, Jesus the Christ, did not come to make a spectacle out of us sinners. He came to save us. He came to carry out the mission His Father sent Him to do, until His enemies—and our enemies—were made a footstool under His feet. Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, reigns over sin, death, and the devil, now and forever. He won the victory for us sinners, just as the Scriptures said He would.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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