



“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”

Gathering

*Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle. This week, it would be appropriate to find a **green** cloth or scarf because we are now in “ordinary” time or a time of “growing together”. Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

Video - Let Us Be Known (Porters Gate, Neighbour Songs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FErmfaLbX2o>

Light Candle.

We light this candle...

Light the candle

And we breathe...

and we turn towards the one who is the Light of the World:

Jesus the Christ.

We seek the light.

We celebrate the light.

We allow ourselves to be drawn to the light.

Acknowledgement of Country

In this place,

where the land meets the sea,

where the sea makes a noise,

since time beyond our imagination,

the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have cared for the land and the sea and its creatures great and small.

We pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders:

those who have carried the sacred stories from generation to generation

those who carry the sacred stories today

and those who are learning and growing so that the sacred stories may be carried into the future.

And we pray for our future together - there is work to be done -

to build relationships that honour and respect those for whom this land is embedded in their being.

We commit ourselves to the way of love.



Call to Worship - (loosely) based on Psalm 90

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

So we come, Lord God,
once more to dwell in you, to encounter you,
**acknowledging we are but dust
before your holiness.**

A thousand years are like a day to you,
a day like a dream,
like a blade of grass renewed each morning,
and still you love us.

Make us glad to worship you today and all our days
and reveal to us your glorious power.

Let us worship together the God who is Love!

Let us pray...

God,
thank you for your amazing love.
We feel your love every day.
We feel it in the smiles of our friends when we gather together for a catch-up,
we feel it in the arms of our family when we hug,
we feel it when we are sad and someone makes us happy.

We show it when we help other people instead of hurting them,
we show it when we stand up for people who are bullied,
we show it when we accept other people for what they are,
not what we think they should be.
God, thank you for your amazing love,
and help us to open our hearts to feel it and our lives to show it every day of our lives.
Amen.

Adapted from Spill The Beans, Issue 36 , Resources for Pentecost 21, 25 October 2020, p.85

Sing - Praise The God Who Changes Places (TIS 178)

After the disappointment of these past weeks, amidst the pain of a world broken by violence and war, let's stand as you are able and sing our praise to the one who comes among us, showing us, teaching us what God's love is like and inviting us to do the same...

Praise the God who changes places,
leaves the lofty seat,
welcomes us with warm embraces,
stoops to wash our feet.

Friends be strong!

Hold your heads high!

Freedom is our song! Alleluia!

Praise the rabbi, speaking, doing
all that God intends,
dying, rising, faith renewing,
calling us his friends.

Friends be strong!...

Praise the Breath of Love, whose freedom
spreads our waking wings,
lifting every blight and burden
till the spirit sings:

Friends be strong!...

Praise, until we join the singing
far beyond our sight,
with the Ending-and-Beginning,
dancing in the light.

Friends be strong!...

*Words: Brian Arthur Wren
Music: William P. Rowan
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Prayer

God of love,
our foundation and source,
we stand in awe of your unending love for your beloved children,
we know that your great love is given freely and in abundance for all
whatever or whoever we are.

God of love,
we give thanks this day
for the message,
for the commandment,
to love and to be loved.
Guide us in our journey
to truly live as you have commanded,
teach us to love you,
to love our neighbour,
and to love ourselves.

God of love,
it is the greatest of your commands, and though we strive
to live each day attempting to fulfil it, we too often fail.

Love You, love ourselves, love others.
Why do we make it so much more complicated?
We will love You provided You don't not ask anything of us,
we will love others provided they love us back,
we will love ourselves as long as we do not look too closely in the mirror,
we will love You when the going is good,
we will love others when they are part of our group,
we will love ourselves when we feel resilient.
So many qualifications to love, so many conditions,
we cannot help ourselves.

In a world of conflicting allegiances and distractions,
where hate is easier than care,
or perhaps worse, when apathy is easier than commitment,
help us to know your love.

God of love,
teach us to know a love that is patient, kind, and giving
a love that seeks justice and equality for all,

a love that eschews the easiness of discrimination and prejudice
for the brilliance of a world,
a community,
a life lived in the warmth of true love, given freely,
for and to all. Amen.

Adapted from Spill The Beans, Issue 36 , Resources for Pentecost 21, 25 October 2020, p.85, 87

Sing - Love The Lord Your God

Let's sing the verses we are about to hear...

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and
all your soul and all your mind and
love all humankind as you would love yourself and... .
Love the Lord your God
with all your heart
and all your soul and mind and love humankind.
We've got Christian lives to live,
We've got Jesus' love to give,
We've got nothing to hide because in him we abide.

Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Matthew 22:34-46

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that [Jesus] had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' ³⁷He said to him, ' "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.'

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question:

⁴²'What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.'⁴³He said to them, 'How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴ "The Lord said to my Lord,
'Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet' ")?

⁴⁵If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?' ⁴⁶No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions..

For the Word of God in Scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us,

Thanks be to God!

Reflection

Let me begin with a reflective prayer that takes us into the words of Jesus we have just heard...

Reflective Prayer

Love our neighbour as we love ourselves.
How, O God, do we live this command?
How do we love our neighbour as ourselves,

when loving ourselves can be so hard?
How do we love our neighbour as ourselves,
when our neighbours may be the ones who cause us pain?
How do we love our neighbour as ourselves,
in a world where love is so often given over to hate?

We live in a world where the difference of
our politics,
our wealth,
our mental health,
our race,
our sexuality,
our gender,
is demonised.

We live in a world
where what makes us, us,
is so often condemned
or discriminated against.

How can we show love,
when we are so often denied it by those closest to us?

Help us to see love,
to show love,
to know love,
and work always,
for a more just and loving world.

Spill The Beans, Issue 36 , Resources for Pentecost 21, 25 October 2020, p.86

So what does it mean to place love of God and love of neighbour at the very centre of our lives, at the centre of our being?

This is such a familiar passage to many of us, but I wonder whether its familiarity means that we assume that we all know what it is asking of us and we stop pondering and/or allowing it to challenge us; or even that we forget just how counter-cultural this posture really is.

These words are so familiar.

As followers of Jesus, hopefully we try to live in ways that this is true of us.

But my goodness isn't it hard in the everyday moments of life, in the challenge of living in the world and attending to all that we need to attend to, in the stresses and strains of managing homes and jobs and children and friends, let alone attending to the needs of someone who is struggling or who is not so easy to get along with, or trying to hold ourselves and each other accountable for our actions and impacts on the people around us.

This passage draws to a close the collection of incidents we have been hearing over the past number of weeks, where the author of Matthew's gospel has drawn together a number of the debates and conflicts that Jesus has had with the religious leaders. After this, the gospel writer will move into another of the longer collections of Jesus' teaching before turning the narrative towards the events in Jerusalem and Jesus' death and resurrection.

So this is where the tension between Jesus and the religious leaders has reached a high point.

This last two exchanges, then, focuses on the law (22:34-40) - the foundational structure of Jewish religious life - and who the Messiah is said to be (22:41-46). *If you are interested in the second part of the reading, have a look at the materials I have put online, I have included a paragraph there about that. This morning I want to focus on this first part of the reading.*

One of the experts in the law asks Jesus which commandment is the greatest?

And Jesus answers - quoting from the Torah in Deuteronomy 5:6 -

You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul and with all of your mind. (22:37)

And we should note that the verse in Deuteronomy adds “all of your strength” to that list... There is plenty of commentary on why Jesus (or Matthew’s author) may have left that bit out - but that’s for another time.

But Jesus doesn’t stop there, he reaches into another part of the Torah, into Leviticus 19:18, to add

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. (22:39)

Love God - with all that you are.

And love your neighbour as yourself.

On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 22:40)

These words are fundamental to who we are called to be as followers of Jesus.

And to live them out calls us to re-order our lives in ways that run counter to much of the messaging of the world in which we live.

The world we live in values love of self - or at least values the pursuit of the “perfect” self - the beautiful, thin, clever, healthy self. And most advertising is in the vein of “you are worth it”, or “you deserve it”. The self is prioritised, wealth and possessions are accumulated, and care or concern for another is only when the self is satisfied, or out of what is left-over when the self is satisfied.

The other extreme is that we devalue our self. Many people, particularly women, spend their lives caring for others - children, partners, parents - at the expense of their own well-being.

We also live in a world that seems to think that if we make space for another, someone somewhere, needs to miss out in some way - and our fear is that it is usually us. But every parent knows that no matter how much you love your partner, there is always room for the love of your first child, and the next, and the next, and the next... Love is not something we can divide up like a birthday cake! And God’s love, well, it never ceases, it never comes to an end (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Jesus, then, invites us to bring the love of God, self and neighbour into balance.

It is about loving God... being deeply committed to growing a relationship with God through prayer and study and reflection and practice and through loving the world as God loves the world.

And so it is about offering to our neighbour, the people with whom we share this life, this planet, the same kind of love and respect we expect for ourselves.

That is not to devalue the self rather we lift the other to value them - their needs and dreams - as much as we value our own.

Which can be problematic if we have forgotten how to love ourselves, if we have forgotten how much each one of us is a loved, valued, child of God - each one of us. But at its most basic, most of us here love ourselves enough to eat well, to be clothed adequately, to provide a roof over our heads, to go to the doctor and take medication when we are sick.

To love our neighbour, then, is to ensure that our neighbours have at least those same opportunities which means both attending to their needs ourselves and advocating into the systems and processes that create disadvantage and lost opportunities. Love of neighbour means that we act, we do something, when our neighbour does not have the same opportunities that we enjoy.

God's love is extravagant, unbounded, and it is not dependent on whether or not we respond in any particular way. So love for our neighbour is not about reciprocity either - in the example of Jesus, it is about loving to the utmost of our being whether or not our neighbour responds as we would like.

"From these hang all the law and the prophets".

What if we could see the world through the lens of love - for God, for ourselves and for our neighbours?

What if love is the lens through which we engage with the Scriptures and seek meaning?

What if this love could truly be the posture we take in the world - not just when we remember or when we are feeling good, but every day, every moment of every day - what then will our neighbours see or hear or encounter?

What would it look like if the followers of Jesus were able to love the world extravagantly? What does it look like when I, when you, shape our living, shape our responses, shape our speaking and our doing in love?

What would it look like if we, together, could love the communities around us like that?

When we think about what is good news in our world today, and how we as the followers of Jesus share good news in our community, isn't this it?!

Isn't this love - for God, for self, for neighbour - isn't this good news?!

As hard as it can sometimes be to choose to love, isn't this exactly who Jesus calls us to be in the world?

Let us pray...

God of Love,

sometimes it is so tempting to hold your love to ourselves,

perhaps even it has become a habit to accept your love for us forgetting that your love is meant for all the world.

May we learn again what it means to love you, to love ourselves and to love the world for whom Jesus died,

that in our love,

our friends, our family, our neighbours will know the wonder of your love. Amen.

For online readers...

The last part of this reading is often overlooked as it is a little perplexing to our ears.

After all the questions the religious leaders have asked of him, Jesus then poses them a question.

What kind of Messiah are you looking for? (22:42)

And they answer, predictably, and accurately from the Hebrew understanding and the predictions of the Hebrew prophets.

Jesus then responds by asking a question that arises from Psalm 110.

If David (Jesus assumes David is the author of the psalm), the king, calls this Messiah, 'Lord', then how can he be David's son? That is, the king would not call his son, 'Lord'.

Jesus' question and reasoning stops the religious leaders in their tracks. No one dared to say any more (22:46).

Behind this question is another question that goes to the expectation of who the Messiah would be, and to the heart of Jesus' own identity - Jesus, the son of God, not the son of David.

Responding

Sing - Everyday Loving (Seasons 5-16)

A song that speaks of the everyday ways we show and share God's love in the world.

This welcome here is simply free.

It's for the world, for you and me.

We bring our smiles and cares,

our heart's own prayers

and the stories of our days,

to worship God in many ways.

And together we're...

Ev'ryday loving!

Ev'ryday loving!

We're just ev'ryday loving!

The way that God loves us!

God's love is deep. God's love is wide.

It's all around, and here inside.

So when we lend a hand or take a stand,

it's love we're sending round.

In ev'ry day, that's where it's found.

And together we're...

Ev'ryday loving!...

Then can we dare to use our eyes,
and tune our ears to others' cries?

To hear the silent words of those
unheard,

and sing with them their song.

We know that God will lead us on.

And together we're...

Ev'ryday loving!...

O God of Earth, you hear us call.

Shower your love upon us all.

And like a mustard seed, the faith we
need

will blossom as we grow.

Give us your faith, to live and show,
that what you're giving is...

Ev'ryday loving!...

*Words and Music: Linnea Good
© Borealis Music 1992*

Prayer for Others (Narelle Dempster)

Gracious God, as we bring before you our concerns for our world, our nation, our community and ourselves, we rejoice in your unconditional love and faithfulness.

Lord, sometimes we don't understand why things happen the way they do or why things don't happen the way we want them to. So during those times we need to make a choice to trust you and your promise that we will find grace and mercy in time of need.

We think of places in our world like Israel and Palestine which are the forefront of our world news. Our hearts break at what we see and we feel helpless, such that all we can do is pray for the innocent people suffering from the violence bought on by politics, pride and

religious power. We also think of the people in other places who continue to suffer from the devastation of natural disasters. They might not be front page news any more but their lives and livelihoods are still broken, and in need of healing and rebuilding.

Lord, we continue to walk with our First Nation peoples, as they emerge from their silence and dig deep yet again to search for the way forward towards recognition and reconciliation. Our aboriginal brothers and sisters are our neighbours, yet instead of loving them as you call us to, we collectively we chose to ignore their gracious invitation to honour their rightful place in our country, a land that always was and always will be theirs. Give us courage to speak out against the ongoing racism that they continue to experience, and help out to counter the lies and fear we hear, with truth and respect.

Lord, we pray for people in our local community who struggle because they feel oppressed or fearful - physical or mental illness, financial hardship, loss of loved ones or livelihoods. We also think of friends and family members affected by sorrow or illness. So we hold before you in silence those people and situations you've laid upon our hearts {silence...}

For our congregation in Kiama-Jamberoo we ask your Holy Spirit to open our eyes and hearts to know how you are leading us to make you and your love known to those around us. Lord, without you we can do nothing. Keep us humble and teachable as we share in your work of healing and transformation in this place. In your name we pray. Amen

Offering

As we have received, so we consider our response...

We make space now to think about what we have heard and seen today and consider our response to God's nudging today.

We come before you in love, O God.

We come before you as hopeful children,

searching always for greater knowledge of you and the ways of your love.

We offer this money

as a sign of our dedication to you and your community.

And we offer ourselves in love.

May our love for you, for ourselves and for our neighbours be ever deepening

as we seek to show your love to a world

so in need of your care.

Amen.

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Sending

Sing - Community of Christ (TIS 473)

We go singing a song about how we offer practical love in the world we serve

Community of Christ,
who make your cross your own,
live out your creed and risk your life for
God alone:

the God who wears your face,
to whom all worlds belong,
whose children are of every race
and every song.

Community of Christ,
look past the Church's door
and see the refugee, the hungry, and the
poor.

Take hands with the oppressed,
the jobless in the street,
take towel and water, that you wash your
neighbour's feet.

Community of Christ,
through whom the word must sound –
cry out for justice and for peace the whole
world round:

disarm the powers that war
and all that can destroy,
turn bombs to bread, and tears of anguish
into joy.

When malice melts away,
so shall God's will be done,
the climate of the world be peace and
Christ its Sun;
our currency be love and kindness our
law,
our food and faith be shared as one for
evermore.

*Words: Shirley Murray
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Sending

As we close our time together and return to our daily rhythms
may we find ways of loving God with our hearts, our minds and our souls.
And then to offer that same love
to our friends, family and neighbours.

Go now with God's love sustaining you today, tomorrow and every day.

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Blessing

Be blessed in the name of the Creator, whose Love embraces all the cosmos;
Be blessed in the name of Jesus the Christ, whose love took him to the cross;
Be blessed in the name of the Spirit whose love enfolds you and all whom you will meet.
Amen.

Liturgy adapted from material from:

Spill The Beans, Issue 36 , Resources for Pentecost 21, 25 October 2020

Rev Kath Merrifield

29 October 2023