

FAITH @ HOME

Week of October 25, 2020

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Matthew 22:34-46

REFLECT: People have always made rules about how to live. The Bible has lots of these rules. Once, when someone asked Jesus which rule was the most important, Jesus summed up all of the rules for how to live with three kinds of love: love for God, love for yourself, and love for your neighbors.

Jesus said loving God is most important. There are all kinds of ways we love God. Some of the ways we love God include worshipping and praying only to God, not letting anything take God's place in our hearts, and by using God's name for good reasons and not for bad reasons.

Don't miss that Jesus says you should love yourself too! You can love yourself by resting and taking care of your body, by being gentle with yourself when you make mistakes, and by doing things that bring you joy. When you love yourself, you can understand that other people feel love in the same ways you do. You can love your neighbors by respecting them, making sure they have what they need, and by treating them with kindness.

I wonder what ways you show love to God, yourself and your neighbors?

RESPOND: Draw a picture of yourself. Next to your heart, list all the ways you can love God with your heart. Next to your smile, list all the ways you can love God with all your soul. Next to your head, list all the ways you can love God with all your mind.

On another piece of paper, draw a giant heart. Fold your heart in half. On one half, list all the ways you show yourself love and care. On the other half, list an equal number of ways you can show care and love to your neighbors.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MICHELLE BULLOCK



Michelle Bullock serves as Rector at St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in Swansboro, NC. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education (Appalachian State University) and Master's of Divinity (Duke Divinity School) and has a background in youth and children's ministry, and formerly served as a school chaplain. She and her husband have two daughters in preschool and elementary school. You can follow Michelle on her website at revbullock.com.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Matthew 22:34-46

REFLECT: The Bible has a lot of rules. Imagine being a faithful follower of God in Jesus' time, grappling with 600 laws or commandments spelled out in scripture. Sure, some of the laws are pretty clear—and hopefully easy to abide—such as the prohibition against murder or theft or adultery. But even among the Big Ten, there are some that are hard to always follow, from coveting and bearing false witness to honoring the Sabbath and our mothers and fathers. Other laws range from the very specific (prohibitions on cross-breeding of seeds) to the seemingly arcane (how to divide challah/bread dough). It would be pretty tough to even remember to all of the laws of Moses (much less dutifully comply).

So now imagine hearing from Jesus that there are only two laws that truly matter: to love the Lord with all our heart, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Granted, these laws are broad umbrellas: loving the Lord requires prayer and worship, repentance and sacrifice, and loving our neighbors may well mean that we pay attention to how we divide our bread dough and raise our crops. Nevertheless, Jesus' words are profound. They turn upside-down a faith based on duty and law and introduce a new covenant with a foundation in love and grace and mercy. Two-thousand years later, Jesus' words still rattle the rafters, forcing us to look beyond easy answers and into the actions of our hearts.

RESPOND: Name some of the laws in your city or community. Talk about the reasoning behind them. For instance, speed-limit laws are designed to protect and save lives. Even tax laws can be seen as having an element of care for others, as our taxes collectively pay for social services such as education, care for the poor, and police and fire protection. Now, think about some of the rules in your household. Which ones can you trace to Jesus' commandments to love God and one another? Are there rules or expectations that you need to add to your household to better live into Jesus' words? Are there some that you should eliminate? Work together to create some shared household rules based on these two commandments.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: RICHELLE THOMPSON



Richelle Thompson lives in the beautiful bluegrass of Kentucky, near Cincinnati, with her husband, their two children, a horse, a cat, and two dogs. She serves as the deputy director and managing editor of Forward Movement, a ministry of the Episcopal Church and publisher of the daily devotional, *Forward Day by Day*.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 22:34-46

REFLECT: Love God and Love Others. Simple, right? Once again, when Jesus was questioned, the questioner was trying to trap Jesus. In many of these encounters, Jesus responds to a question with another question. But in this case, Jesus answers the question about which commandment in the law is the greatest directly. “Love God with your whole self and love others as yourself,” he answers.

RESPOND: Look at the Baptismal Covenant found on page 304-305 of the *Book of Common Prayer*. One of the questions is “Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?” This question from the Baptismal Covenant asks exactly how do we love others and how do we love ourselves? Loving ourselves is sometimes harder than loving our neighbors. Do you treat yourself with kindness and respect? Loving our neighbors is also an extension of our love for God and our love for ourselves. Think about which people in your life are the easiest to love? Which people are the toughest? This week, think of one person in your world who is hurting right now. It’s okay to realize that this might be yourself. How can you show your love for this person, yourself, or even both?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LAUREN WAINWRIGHT



Lauren Wainwright currently serves as the Director of Student Ministries at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Dallas, TX. She has worked with large and small churches across several dioceses over the past 13 years, serving in youth ministry. Lauren is originally from Hattiesburg, Mississippi where she first began her call to ministry but has called Dallas home for the past 4 years. In her free time, she enjoys reading, Netflix watching, and spending time with her 2 dogs at home.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Matthew 22:34-46

REFLECT: There is no doubt that I need to be constantly reminded of The Greatest Commandment that Jesus has given us: To love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind; and the second, to love our neighbors as ourselves. I need this reminder because, daily, I glance into the world and am reminded that these are sometimes the most easily forgotten. I don't necessarily see them being lived out, and I know that I too, have been guilty of not living into this. But what I love is that nowhere in this text does Jesus ever teach or show that living into such commandments would be easy. He shows the opposite. He shows that it will be counter cultural. Making a change in culture is hard work and its lifelong. Whether at work, with the family, looking at the daily news on tv, scrolling through our social media pages, or looking into the mirror, the love of God, and the love of neighbor, the love of self, can be something that is missing but is also hungered for. Maybe we begin with "small steps," and in each step, we give a glimpse of something different—we show that the light of Christ is here, within each of us, and together, can form a light that ultimately changes the way how we see this world.

RESPOND: Our lives are busy and sometimes are filled with disappointments, hardships, and places of negativity. But, yet, our God is and calls us to something different. Where have you seen God today? Where have you been or shared a glimpse of God's love to another (remember, it doesn't have to be something big, sometimes it's the small things that make a large difference)? Taking the time at the end of the day or within the day to journal and reflect about these moments is a way of engaging in prayer and celebrating where these commandments are being lived out in your own life as well as the world around you. God is present, and we don't want to miss those glimpses!

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CHRISTOPHER DECATUR



The Rev. Christopher Decatur is the Deacon in Charge at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Cleveland, Ohio. He is a graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary. Prior to seminary, Chris served at Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, OH as the Associate Minister for Children, Youth, Family, Young Adult and Campus Ministries. Chris also has served as "The Chair of The Subcommittee for Racial Reconciliation and Justice for The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music." Chris has an undergraduate degree in Comparative Religion from Cleveland State University and years of studies and practicing of Early Childhood Education at both CSU and as a student at The Catholic University of America.

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