

TRINITY 18

October 11 2020

Deuteronomy 10:12-21

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Matthew 22:34-46

Standing...

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Let us pray.

God of all grace, You desire that none should perish, but that all would turn from their sin so as to live in Your kingdom forever. Give us courage to speak about You, and we ask as well that You would continue to preserve and supply for the LWML. Bless their work we pray, Amen.

Sitting

On one side of the street, there's the Equality House—you've seen it.

Painted with rainbow-colors to show support for LGBTQ rights.

As Wikipedia says,

"Equality House is intended to stand as a visible symbol of love."

Across the street, sits the Westboro Baptist Church compound—you've no doubt seen that too.

People all over the world see it as a visible symbol of hate.

For they protest against all kinds of people,

including those religious denominations

who shy away from speaking about,

the holiness of God,

the judgement of God,

the wrath of God.

One side says, "Love more, judge less."

For **love** as they define it, is to promote, celebrate,

and encourage people to do whatever they want,

live however they please.

The other side says, "Live holy lives! Obey God's law—or you're doomed!"

You know, there may have been a time when Equality House
 would have been laughed out of existence, but not anymore.
 Their message of "love conquers hate" has become widely embraced—
 even amongst Christians, which just adds to the confusion so many
 live with, especially among our youth—
 which is why a place like TLS is so important.

1 Corinthians makes it clear that Christians really shouldn't have anything to do with
 judging those outside the Church (1 Cor. 5:12).

That is to say, since unbelievers are not members of the one, apostolic Church,
 the jurisdiction of the Church does not extend to them.

Why do dogs bark? Because they are dogs.

Why do pagans do what they do?

Because they are pagans.

You can force a pagan to act like a Christian,
 but not for long.

You want him or her to be born from above,
 just as Jesus told Nicodemus.

That said,

Christians are encouraged to not only judge themselves but also judge each other,
 taking the log out of their own eye before removing

the speck out of the brother's eye,

but doing so in light of God's Law.

What this means is that love and the Law are not opposites.

They are not at war with each other.

From our Gospel reading,

a lawyer of the Pharisees asks Jesus which is the greatest commandment.

His answer, of which you've heard countless times before...

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul
 and with all your mind."* Which is a summary of commandments 1, 2, and 3.

Jesus continues, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

Commandments 4 through 10.

So, the greatest commandment is to *love* God and to *love* the neighbor.

You know, many people like to talk about love,
 yet they fail to identify what they mean by it.

Jesus teaches love as being the fulfillment of the Law to God and neighbor.

Therefore, genuine love never disagrees with God's Law
and God's Law never obstructs genuine love.

Again, there's no conflict between love and the Law,
for love is expressed when we keep
the Commandments of God
towards our neighbor.

And God's Law is fulfilled
when our neighbor is properly loved.

These might be deep waters for you this morning, so let's get down to brass tacks.

If you want to love your neighbor,

then obey the fourth commandment by respecting police and other authorities.

As of late, we've seen a lot of people not doing this, primarily to the police,
and that ain't love.

If you want to love your neighbor,

then obey the fifth commandment by not hating or murdering your neighbor.

Seeking rather to preserve life,
especially those who are weak and insignificant,
those unable to protect themselves in the womb
or at the end of life.

If you want to love your neighbor,

obey the sixth commandment by not sleeping with your neighbor's spouse.

Furthermore, by protecting marriage from the ills of pornography
and the blight of divorce.

If you want to love your neighbor,

obey the seventh commandment by not cheating others out of their property,
defending your neighbor's possessions.

If you want to love your neighbor,

obey the eighth commandment by not gossiping and assassinating
your neighbor's character, but work to defend your neighbor's reputation.

Do you see how love and the Law are joined at the hip?

They are not to be separated to either side of the street.

For the Law defines what love looks like.

Which means if one believes he or she can love apart from the law,
then they're just making it up as they go along.

By the way, how do you love God? By doing exactly what you're doing right now.
By not despising preaching and His Word—but gladly hearing and learning it.

You love Him as well when you do not misuse His Name,
using it instead for what it was given for—
and when you trust Him above all things.

Beloved, don't take your cues from a fallen, depraved culture
that attempts to reduce the judgments of the Law.
And don't try to uphold the Law without love.
Those are deceptive paths.

And get this, Jesus calls us to pour everything into this love,
all our thoughts, words, and deeds.
Our whole life even, from beginning to end,
is to love God and our neighbor,
which is defined for us in the Ten Commandments.

But what's the problem? We cannot do this, not regularly—not routinely.
Our love is so stained with sin—
so contaminated,
that we prefer to turn inward into ourselves.

Yet, here's the good news.
Jesus didn't just suddenly come up with these statements
to answer this inquisitive lawyer.
Love for God and love for neighbor describe Jesus.
They describe the life that He lived.
For as you know,
Jesus loved God His Father with an undivided heart.
And He loved His neighbors as much as He loved Himself.

Our Lord Jesus looked at our loveless lives,
witnessing the way we sometimes treat our loved ones
and the way we almost always treat the strangers we come across...

He saw the murderous, embittered, gossiping, and angry hearts
that are the reason we fail to love our neighbors.
So, He came to live among us.
Living His whole life perfectly—
fulfilling the Law to perfection
in thought, word, and deed (and with love).
Jesus reached out with a love
that was most often never returned.
Yet that did not stop Him.

And nowhere does Jesus' endless love for God and neighbor
shine more brightly than on the Cross,
where He took the most loveless hatred we could muster,
and instead of hating us in return, He loved us through it.

And this very love from the cross comes to loveless people like us.
Not just poured out from Mt. Calvary in our baptism,
but poured out upon you when you hear His Word and receive the
forgiveness of sins in His Supper.
His love never ceases to be poured out upon us.

Jesus fulfilled the Law for those who cannot keep it,
loving those who cannot properly love,
filling you, even now,
so that you might show this love to your neighbors
in thought, word, and deed.

In the holy name of Jesus, Amen.

Standing:

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and
minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.