

Home Service for October 31, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

“Love....love...love...love, the gospel in a word is love. Love your neighbor as your brother, love...love...love...love.” Everything we need to know is taught in a Sunday school song.

Call to Worship:

God is calling us today. Help us to hear God’s call in our lives. God needs our gifts and graces to help others. May we use the blessings which God has given us to benefit others. Come, let us worship and celebrate God’s love for us. Let us show our faithfulness in our words and actions. AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

Lord, we gather here this day in praise and thanksgiving for all the wonderful things you have done for us. Help us to be faithful disciples in all that we think, do and say, that your great love may be revealed and offer healing to all people. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

How often, O Lord, have we believed that the greatest commandment is our love for ourselves solely. We have not heard the cries of those in need; we have turned our backs on opportunities to serve you by serving others. Many times we have thought only of our own wants and desires and ignored the needs of others. Help us to truly understand the commandments to love you with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. Let us care for our neighbors both far and near. Bring us back to your loving light. For we ask these things in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

In the midst of our darkness and ignorance, the bright light of God’s love shines through, healing our anguished souls. Rejoice, beloved of God, for God’s love and forgiveness are given to you this day. AMEN.

Read Psalm 146

Praise the LORD.^[a]

Praise the LORD, my soul.

² I will praise the LORD all my life;

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

³ Do not put your trust in princes,
in human beings, who cannot save.

⁴ When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;
on that very day their plans come to nothing.

⁵ Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God.

⁶ He is the Maker of heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them—
he remains faithful forever.

⁷ He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets prisoners free,

⁸ the LORD gives sight to the blind,
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,
the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD watches over the foreigner
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

¹⁰ The LORD reigns forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, we have a tendency to wander in wildernesses of our own creating. When opportunities to serve you and to make commitments to your service are given, we consult our calendars to see if there is anything else we have to do. We place our needs and our schedules before our service to you. Help us to reorder our priorities. Help us to look again at the wonderful opportunities you give us to be of service to you by working with others; reaching out to heal and help. Bring us to the light of your love once again. Heal our wounded souls. Let us love you truly with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Give us courage and persistence as disciples that your great love and glory may shine through our deeds of lovingkindness. In Jesus' Name, we pray. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Ruth 1:1-18

In the days when the judges ruled,^[a] there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. ² The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

³ Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴ They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, ⁵ both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

⁶ When Naomi heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. ⁷ With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

⁸ Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me. ⁹ May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud ¹⁰ and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

¹¹ But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? ¹² Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—¹³ would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for

them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has turned against me!"

¹⁴ At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

¹⁵ "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

¹⁶ But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." ¹⁸ When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Hebrews 9:11-14

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here,^[a] he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. ¹² He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining^[b] eternal redemption. ¹³ The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. ¹⁴ How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death,^[c] so that we may serve the living God!

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 12:28-34

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹ "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'^[a] ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'^[b] ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'^[c] There is no commandment greater than these."

³² “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Message

Our minds and we would hope the minds of the rest of mankind are very inquisitive, for those are the minds that discover the answers to the problems that mankind faces. Those are the minds that come up with the vaccines to stop diseases, invent new items to make our lives easier and expand our knowledge about the universe around us. As a young child, many times the first questions that is asked, is “Why?” It is a question as a parent we sometimes find frustrating and get tired of hearing it, let alone trying to answer. But at the same time we need to remember how important it is to have an inquiring mind, the desire to want to learn and know for that child and in the future it may be the rest of the world. We spend a lot of our lives learning. Many times it is a good practice to research before making a major decision, although we do have Google, to make good decisions we need to use our minds and that starts way back at that question, “Why?”

We have to ask lots of questions that we might discover the answers for our inquiring minds. All of this knowledge searching takes place in our day-to-day living, our earthly life. As believers we also want to learn more in connection with our spiritual life. When we study the Bible; we find out there still is always something more to discover in the word of God. There is something more the Holy Spirit wishes to reveal to us. So it is today we gather that God would speak to us through His Word.

Let us look at the Gospel. Verse 28 at the very beginning of our text says: "One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating." Jesus was debating with the Sadducees. The Sadducees came to Jesus with a hypothetical question. They said, "A woman was married and her husband died." The Levitical law stated that the husband's brother should marry her and carry on the family name and provide for her. The Sadducees said there were seven brothers and she married them all. "Now in the resurrection who is her husband?" Jesus answered, "In the resurrection in heaven there is no marrying and giving in marriage." The Sadducees were not really concerned about that, because they did not believe in a resurrection. As

leaders in the church, they did not believe in heaven, the resurrection. They were only trying to stump or trap Jesus.

It was this scribe who noticed that Jesus had given the good answer. Jesus was not trapped with misleading question about marriage in the resurrection. Jesus' answer was about the fact that God was the Lord of the living, not of the dead. This scribe wanted to listen to the Lord. We also should want to listen! He asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?" Jesus responded, "'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.'" Jesus was quoting from the Old Testament. This quote is one of the first sayings that the children of Israel learned from little on: "The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Jesus reminded him there was no other God. It was the Lord God Almighty who had created the heavens and the earth. It was the Lord God Almighty that sent his Son to redeem mankind.

This scribe agrees. He is listening first to what the Lord has to say. Verse 32: "'Well said, teacher,' the man replied. 'You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him.'" How amazing that this scribe, this teacher of the law, who was so involved with the law was able to see and understand the Gospel.

We celebrate that saving fact; because, miracle of miracles the Lord has opened our ears to hear and our eyes to see the message of salvation. We don't deserve to be saved. We can't buy our way into heaven. We can't pray or work our way into heaven, but God saves us. He saves us in spite of all of our sin and the wickedness in our heart. He saves us even though we deserve eternal punishment. That is the most amazing miracle. Thank God that God has worked faith in our hearts. Praise God that we are anxious to listen to what the Lord has to say to us. That is a miracle in itself.

No wonder then when the scribe comes and says, "Which is the greatest commandment," the Lord says, "The first one is to listen, listen that the Lord our God, the Lord is one." As you and I as this teacher of the law listen that the Lord God was one, what happens? We also learn that the greatest commandment is that it is love, love that fulfills God's laws.

The scribe had to agree. He had to agree when the Lord God said, "Hear, the Lord your God is one." But there was more. The Lord didn't just stop there. He had this scribe's attention and he was listening. So Jesus goes on: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." Jesus reminded this teacher that to love God above all things was the

first and greatest command. This was the summary of the first three commandments of the Table of the Law. The first three commandments teach believers about loving God above all things.

Of course, Jesus continues: "The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." First, believers are to love God above all things and then love your neighbor as yourself. This is known as the second Table of the Law, the fourth through the tenth commandments.

As believers we ask "Which commandment is the greatest?" First of all, it all starts with hearing what the Lord has to say. The Lord our God says, "Love fulfills the law." Which commandment is the greatest? It is that we continue to grow in the knowledge of our Lord: The knowledge of the Lord which loves God above all things and loves our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

Benediction:

The pathway is open before you this day. It is a path of peace and hope, brought to others by God's mighty love and wondrous blessings. Go in peace, bringing hope to all that you meet. Go, blessed ones, to serve God all your days. AMEN.