

Worship Resources - *Love Triangle* - <https://youtu.be/nLRqU1CBRZk>

21st Sunday of Pentecost, Year A,

25th October, 2020

Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18 CEV / Matthew 22:34-46 CEV

Prelude ***When The Morning Stars Together***

played by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/BTAkK-pYjPs>

Intro/Call to Worship

In a world that cries out, "Fear me!" We will listen to Jesus' words,
"Don't be afraid!"

In a world that wants us to hate the other... We will live Jesus' call to,
"Love God.

Love your neighbour, as you love yourself."

In a world that radicalizes... We, too, will be radical.

Radical with our hospitality. Radical with our hope. Radical with our love.

Then come to this place, ready to be who we are called to be.

Let us gather together
and worship God.

I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

Our tradition at Olympic View is to begin our service greeting and wishing each other peace and sharing the love of Christ with each other. As we focus on the importance of love this morning, let's think how we share that blessed love with our neighbors, as we listen to this beautiful rendition of the Love Chapter from Corinthians.

Reflection video ***Charity (Jesus Reduce Me To Love)***

with Lyrics - Kenn Gulliksen

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

Invocation

Happy are we, O God, when our hearts are full,
our ways are yours, our spirits enlivened by your call.
Happy are we, O God, when our lives are guided by delight.
We gather here today for just that, holy God.
We gather to draw on all you would give us
to be more fully yours. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. Amen.

In our reading from Leviticus this morning, God lays out what our focus should be, on others as ourselves, interacting from a place of love. As we think of how we communicate with others in this age of social media, let's give some thought as to how these words should impact how we should act with each other in the contentious world in which we live.

First Testament Reading **Leviticus 19:1-2, 15-18 CEV**

The Lord told Moses 2 to say to the community of Israel:

I am the Lord your God. I am holy, and you must be holy too!

Be fair, no matter who is on trial—don't favor either the poor or the rich.

Don't be a gossip, but never hesitate to speak up in court, especially if your testimony can save someone's life.

Don't hold grudges. On the other hand, it's wrong not to correct someone who needs correcting.

Stop being angry and don't try to take revenge. I am the Lord, and I command you to love others as much as you love yourself

Scripture Video **Leviticus 19:1-2,15-18** ***Moral And Religious Laws***

Lectinary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UL-j81fc0HI>

A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

Joys and Concerns

This morning, let's keep Free Hinton's mother in our prayers as she continues to recover and heal from contracting COVID-19. She is doing better, but could benefit from our prayers for continued healing.

Let's also continue to keep Sylvia Hersberger's mother in prayer as she continues to struggle with some disorientation and confusion following her recent hospital stay.

Keep Bill and Sylvia in your prayers as well for safe travels this week to Hawaii.

Finally, as we approach our national election, let's pray for calm and peace to prevail, regardless of the outcome.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

God of the mountaintop in prayer You walk us to the highest point from which we are offered an opportunity to view the world as You see it, and the world as You would wish it to be. There is much to be thankful for, for we enjoy opportunities of good health and reasonable living standards; of times of relaxation and times to work; of a roof over our heads, and opportunities to feed our bellies, and our imaginations and the aching of our hearts.

From your vantage point we praise You for all that is good for us, and allow You to draw our eyes from our concerns to those of our neighbours, our community, our world.

In prayer our eyes are drawn to see those in need of love in our community, both here in church and in the parish of which we are part. Help us not to be afraid of what is different or unknown to us, but instead willing to offer friendship and accept the opportunities to grow in knowledge and experience.

Our eyes are drawn to places of power and leadership as we look for those who govern to offer leadership in difficult times. May those who seek to serve as politicians and leaders of communities find themselves shaped by the words, hopes and ideals of those who place their trust in them.

Our eyes are drawn to places of hunger and need. Teach us to share the resources we would covet, and enable us through the activity of Your Spirit in prayer and with action to be part of a creation where all are treated fairly and all have enough to eat.

As You, Lord of vision, draw our eye back to the world of which we are part, may our lives be shaped by You to offer others a vision of Your love shown in our faith in Jesus Christ. Amen.

In our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus again is quizzed by the religious authorities to try and trap him heresy. He responds with how God has consistently led us in our relationships, with God, and each other. As we listen to these words from Matthew, let's give some thought as to what our personal priorities are, and how much they are in sync with the relationship focus we are called to.

Gospel Lesson Matthew 22:34-46 CEV

After Jesus had made the Sadducees look foolish, the Pharisees heard about it and got together.

One of them was an expert in the Jewish Law. So he tried to test Jesus by asking,

“Teacher, what is the most important commandment in the Law?”

Jesus answered: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

This is the first and most important commandment.

The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, “Love others as much as you love yourself.”

All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets[a] are based on these two commandments.

While the Pharisees were still there, Jesus asked them,

“What do you think about the Messiah? Whose family will he come from?” They answered, “He will be a son of King David.”

Jesus replied, “How then could the Spirit lead David to call the Messiah his Lord? David said,

‘The Lord said to my Lord:
Sit at my right side - until I make your enemies
into a footstool for you.’

If David called the Messiah his Lord, how can the Messiah be a son of King David?”

No one was able to give Jesus an answer, and from that day on, no one dared ask him any more questions

Scripture Video Matthew 22:34-46
The Most Important Commandment

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lh8FPCYLgJM>

Message - *Love Triangle*

When we think about what is most important to us, what our focus in life is, what comes to mind? A lot of us would probably say our family or our friends, while others may put their careers first. Certainly I’m sure our faith would probably rank high on the list as well. How we answer that question may change as we journey through life. Our family, our friends, our job, even our faith, may take center stage at different times in our lives. Sometimes it may be a little difficult to tell what is at our center. We may say it is our children, but discover too late that, from all the missed suppers and trips away from home, they could not tell. We may say that it is our faith, but wonder if anyone from the outside notices anything that is different about us because we are Christian.

One way to tell what is at our center is to pay attention to the rules we make for ourselves. These may be formal rules, but often they are more informal things we do not name but regularly follow. For example: “Put 10 percent of your paycheck into savings.” “Always be home in time to read to the kids.” Paying attention to the rules we make is revealing, because by and large the rules we live by orient us to our center, to what is most important, to what we want to make sure we attend to.

The same was true in Jesus’ day. So perhaps it is not surprising that one of the Pharisees asks Jesus which rule, or commandment, is most important. What stands at the center of the kin-dom Jesus preaches about? Consistent with his responses to other tests offered by religious authorities in this section of Matthew, Jesus does not give him the clear answer he expects. Instead of one core commandment, Jesus responds with two.

The first commandment, “to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind,” is probably the most well-known part of the Torah. Called the Shema, it is probably the most prominent prayer in the Hebrew tradition. It could well be called the cornerstone of Jewish faith and practice; its importance in that faith cannot be overstated. While often used as a prayer, it is more a defining statement of who God is, “the Lord our God is One.” It states the monotheistic nature of Israel’s God that set that deity apart and above the pagan gods of the neighboring cultures of the Near East. The Shema reinforces this basic truth about God and in turn, commands Israel to love the Lord with everything they’ve got. This command and truth about God are intricately linked. Because God is One, you shall love the Lord with the entirety of your being. The Lord is distinct from all the pagan deities in unique Oneness, and as a result you may love the Lord without reservation. There is no competition with any other gods. This special relationship between God and Israel is what set them apart, made them unique, made them feel special. That answer would be respected by the elders and scholars in attendance.

But that was only the first part. Jesus adds, “a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” That addition would have thrown the religious authorities, for sure. By adding this second commandment, with the implication that it is “like” the first, not only threatens the exclusivity of the Jewish nation’s relationship with God, it implies something about the nature of God. There is an intimate connection between the two, a unity, as if they were two sides of the same coin. There is no love of God without love of neighbor, and love of neighbor is love of God. Also implicit here is

the recognition that love of neighbor is inextricably tied to a properly ordered self-love. One cannot give oneself away in love to God and neighbor if a healthy self has never been formed in the first place.

To many of the Pharisees, this image of God is at once unsettling and a stumbling block. If the God of Israel loves all nations as much as Israel, then everything about their identity is threatened. If God esteems all people groups as God's chosen, and requires a corresponding love by the chosen people, are the Pharisees now supposed to love others as much as themselves? They have spent a great deal of time narrowing and outlining exactly who qualifies as a neighbor worthy of such love, those who are essentially just like themselves. Now are they called to love the unclean and rejected as much as this Jesus loves them? This upends their entire concept of what faith is. Instead of a binary system involving just love of self and love of God, they are now faced with a triangular perspective: love of God, love of neighbor, love of self. This is the triadic habit of thought and practice to which Jesus calls us. It is a calling to reflect on every issue, every decision, every action, in this triangular way, to ask in all things: how are we loving God and neighbor and self in this? This is the question that should attend our discernments as individuals and as communities of faith. Whether in how we allocate resources, what constitutes creative and faithful worship, or what the proper relationship is between the church and state, or any of the countless other issues we must sort through in our daily walks of faith: we must discern how we might love God and neighbor and self in all that we say and do.

Unfortunately, we live in a culture that entices us to begin and end with rugged individualism: what are my needs, my rights, my desires? What will bring me self-actualization and contentment? Unfortunately, this kind of thinking has gotten us to the point in which we find ourselves now. How do we promote the common good when our center is focused solely on what gives ourselves fulfillment? The results are all too easy to see: the fracturing of society, the vitriol in our public discourse, our culture centric behavior that has led to the suffering of others, human and creation alike. It seems like everything revolves around a "me" perspective: my rights, my life, my country. Even within the body of Christ, we often incorporate this expressive individualism. Our congregations often succumb to the temptation to turn from self to God without consideration of neighbor. Thus we begin with our needs as sinner and end with God's salvation in Christ, cleanly circumventing the hurting neighbor.

The church, however, is called to cultivate the habit of triadic reflection and practice, to recognize that no discernment is complete until love of God and neighbor and self has been expressed. Thus the mission of the church is all the more critical in the self-focused, troubled world in which we live. We must hear the stories, stories that render another way of being in the world, a way free of self-absorbed delusion and despair, a way that opens out to neighbor and ultimately to the God who is the source and end of all things. Our lives and the life of the world depend on us picking up the habit, of joining into this love triangle and living in relationship with each other and our Creator. I hope and pray we can find ways to step outside ourselves in everything we say, think, and do, and model caring for ourselves, and others for a world where so many find themselves so isolated, alone, and despondent. May we be the light in the darkness they seek. Amen.

Call to Serve.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. This morning, as Annie shares the following song, let's give some thought as to what role we can play in our own lives this week in ushering the kin-dom of God into this world, and truly giving to God what belongs to God, our very effort and being.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [video]

Let's sing unto the Lord,

music by Carlos Rosas,

Let's sing unto the Lord,

played by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/GczQ1ggNcVQ>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

With what you see before us, God, we demonstrate our deepest love.
Receive our gifts – our very best – as sweet offerings before you.
May they be the blessing to others that they have been for us. Amen.

Commission/Benediction

Go now, with courage in our God.

Declare the message of the gospel
which God has entrusted to us,
and in wholehearted love for God and for others,
share not only the message, but your very selves.

And may God be your haven;
May Christ Jesus lead you into love - heart, soul and mind;
And may the Holy Spirit bless the work of your hands
..... and gladden all your days.

We go in peace to love and serve God,
..... ***In the name of Christ. Amen.***

As we extinguish this candle, carry its divine spark into your lives this week, sharing God's love and light with all you encounter. Amen.

Postlude *Praise God, for whom all blessings flow*

performed by church musician Annie Center, arr.

By Phillip Keveren

<https://youtu.be/GwFYZ9ySeXw>