

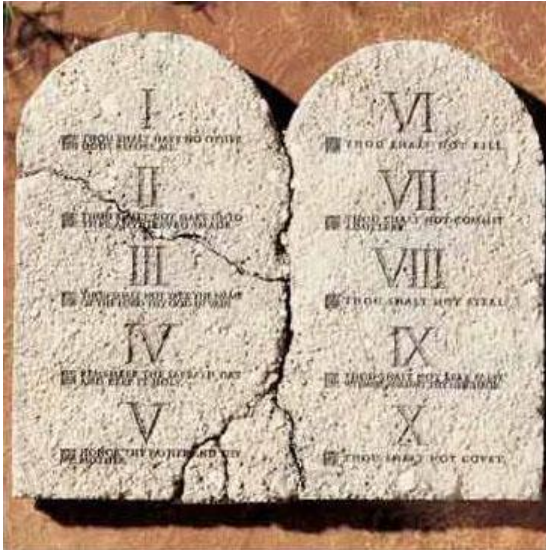
Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

November 1, 2015

“The Third Great Commandment



Reverend Bill Freeman: Senior Minister
Eckart Seeber: Music Minister
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Lou Anne Fraser: Lay Reader

Menifee United Church of Christ

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 AM

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Live Life Fully Alive!

Psalm 146

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long. Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish. Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith for ever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. The LORD will reign for ever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!

Mark 12:28-31

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, ‘Which commandment is the first of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first is, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’

The Third Great Commandment

The Ten Commandments. Some people see them as a guide for their lives. While others see The Ten Commandments as The Ten Suggestions for their lives.

According to Mel Brooks in, “The History of the World, Part One,” originally there were 15 Commandments. In that delightful movie, Moses, played by Mel Brooks, brought down three tablets from Mt. Sinai, containing the 15 Commandments. Mel Brooks, carrying three tablets, declared, “Hear me! Oh, hear me! All pay heed! The Lord, the Lord Jehovah, has given unto

you, these 15..." Then he dropped one of the tablets and it broke. "...10, 10 Commandments, for all to obey!"

Moses brought down two tablets from God on Mt. Sinai, according to the Bible. The tablets contained the 10 Commandments. Thou shalt not: have any other gods before me, make any graven images, take the Lord's name in vain. Remember the sabbath and keep it holy. Honor thy father and thy mother. Thou shalt not: kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, or covet anything of thy neighbor's.

I break the Tenth Commandment just about every time I go past the bakery in Von's. They're pretty much our neighbor and I have to confess that I covet just about every dessert they have. Donuts. Boston Cream Pie. A cake made with Kit Kat bars and M&M's. Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. Again. And again.

Have you ever broken one of the 10 Commandments? Maybe many of us have. Maybe some of us haven't always remembered the Sabbath. Maybe some of us have taken the Lord's name in vain. Maybe some of us have done even worse. The Good News is: God's mercy is greater than our greatest mistakes.

Jesus reduced the Ten Commandments to just two. That's one of the reasons, I believe, that the scribes and the Pharisees - the Biblical literalists of his day, the religious extremists of his day, the Religious Right of his day - wanted Jesus killed. "Reduce the Ten Commandments to just Two Commandments?! Who does this guy think he is?!" Well, he's Jesus.

One of the scribes came to Jesus, according to the Gospel of Mark, and asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus said, "The first is, 'Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.' And the second is this, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" Pretty simple. Love God and love your neighbor as yourself. No, "Thou shalt nots." No, honor anyone. Nothing about not coveting. The Ten Commandments encapsulated into just Two Commandments.

I've entitled this sermon, "The Third Great Commandment." So, what is "The Third Great Commandment"? Well, The Third Great Commandment is found within The Second Great Commandment, if we spell it out explicitly. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. You have to love yourself first. You can't love your neighbor, and you can't love God with all you heart, soul, mind, and strength until you first love yourself. Love who you are. Love who you've become. Love the person God made you to be.

Whitney Houston had a hit song years ago entitled, "The Greatest Love Of All." Whitney Houston sings, "Learning to love yourself, it is the greatest love of all." When I first heard that song I thought it was egotistical, narcissistic, and selfish. But now I believe it suggests The Third Great Commandment: Love yourself.

You can't say: Well, I'd love myself, Pastor, if I was taller. Or: Well, I'd love myself, Pastor, if I was better looking. Or: Well, I'd love myself, Pastor, if I was younger. No, no, no, no, no, no, no! You have to love yourself now! You have to love yourself as you are now! You have to love yourself for being the person God made you to be now!

Love yourself because God loved you first. From the beginning of time, God has loved you. And God will always love you until the end of time.

God made us in the image of God, according to the Book of Genesis. Male and female God made us. And God blessed us. So we are God's children, we are the sons and daughters of God. Everyone is our brother and sister. And God loves us all. So we should love ourselves and we should love our neighbor and we should love God.

We can love ourselves, our neighbor, and God because God sets the example of how to love and whom to love. According to the Psalmist, God loves everyone, which, of course, includes us. The

Psalms says, “the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the strangers; God upholds the orphan and the widow.” God, “executes justice for the oppressed...gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down.” That’s why we know that the Lord loves you. So love yourself. Love your neighbor. And love God.

“Beloved, let us love one another,” 1 John says, “because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.”

Those are three of the most important words in the Bible and we can’t hear them often enough. “God is love.” “God is love.” “God is love.” Don’t let anyone tell you that God is hate. Or God is wrath. Or God is vengeful. God is love. Hopefully those words will inspire us to be love, also.

You have to love the person you are inside yourself before you can love people outside yourself, and before you can truly love God. So, whenever you can, go inside yourself, deep inside yourself, and love the person you find there. And stay with that person for awhile. Ten minutes. Twenty minutes. An hour. Then, when you come outside yourself, you will be better able to love your neighbor. And to truly love God.

Soren Kierkegaard was a Danish theologian, philosopher, and poet from the 1800s. He was quite interested in Christian love. Soren Kierkegaard said, “Don’t forget to love yourself.” Good advice.

The Buddha says, “You yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.” That’s so true.

And then there’s this from that great religious philosopher...Dr. Seuss, “Today you are you, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is youer than you.” So why not love yourself?

Perhaps you don't think you can love yourself. Maybe there's a voice inside your head saying, "You can't love yourself! Remember what you did to someone?!" Ignore that voice! And love yourself! Maybe there's a voice inside your head saying, "You can't love yourself! Remember what you said to someone?!" Ignore that voice! And love yourself! Maybe there's a voice inside your head saying, "You can't love yourself! Remember that divorce you went through?!" Ignore that voice! And love yourself! Maybe there's a voice inside your head saying, "You can't love yourself! Remember that addiction that you had (or still have)?!" Ignore that voice! And love yourself! Maybe there's a voice inside your head saying, "You can't love yourself! Remember that crime you committed?!" Ignore that voice! And love yourself! Then maybe you need to replace the negative voice inside your head with a positive one. Here's the affirmation I say everyday: Love surrounds me. Love envelops me. Love permeates my being. Love flows from me. Love flows to me. I am loved. And I am love.

When you nourish your body - with the right amount of food, sleep, and exercise - you are loving yourself. When you nourish your mind - with good books, movies, and art - you are loving yourself. When you nourish your soul - with holiness, friendliness, and happiness - you are loving yourself.

Abby Wambach was introduced to soccer when she was just four years old. She played soccer in high school and college. She won two Olympic gold medals for soccer. She's the leading career scorer - male or female - in international soccer. The U.S. national team was honored at the White House by President Obama this past week for their Women's World Cup victory. Shortly after that, Abby Wambach announced her retirement. She's only 35. She'll play her last game next month. Abby Wambach would not have achieved all that she has, if she hated herself. Instead, I believe she loves herself. In a good way. In a winning way.

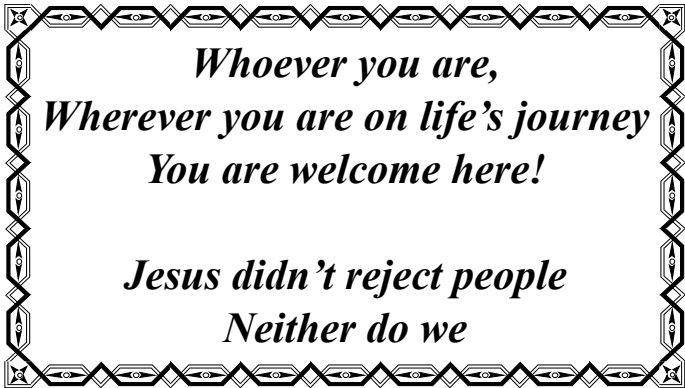
People who handed out candy to children in our parking lot last night during our Halloween Trunk 'N' Treat, were loving

themselves by loving others and demonstrating their love for God. Whenever you help anyone anytime anyplace, you are loving yourself by loving others and demonstrating your love for God.

It's like the late actress and comedian Lucille Ball says, "I have an everyday religion that works for me. Love yourself first, and everything else falls into line." Yes, love yourself first. And then you'll be able to love your neighbor and to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And you'll be able to love yourself and to love your neighbor and to love God, because you and your neighbor were first loved by God.

Let us pray...

*God of Love,
Help us to love ourselves.
Help us to love our neighbor.
And help us to love you.
Now and forevermore.
By the power of the Holy Spirit.
And in the name of Jesus.
Amen.*



***Whoever you are,
Wherever you are on life's journey
You are welcome here!***

***Jesus didn't reject people
Neither do we***

THE GOLDEN RULE

*Do to others what you would
have them do to you.*
Christianity

*What is hateful to you
do not do to others.*
Judaism

*None of you believes until he wishes for his
brother what he wishes for himself.*
Islam

*Do not do to others
what would cause pain if done to you.*
Hinduism

*Hurt not others in ways that you yourself
would find hurtful.*
Buddism

*Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain,
and your neighbor's loss as your loss.*
Taoism

*Do not do to others
what you do not want them to do to you.*
Confucianism

*Treat other people
as you'd want to be treated in their situation.*
Humanism