

No theme... just random thoughts for 10 weeks!

Week 4 – We are one

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13:35

Jesus was clear to those who gathered in his name when he shared, “just as I have loved you...love one another.” Peter, James, John, Matthew, Thaddeus and all the others observed this directive by gathering in transcendent communities, sharing openly with each other, and readily supporting people in need. Their commonality was an eagerness to live in love rather than in indifference for the sanctity of life in all God’s creatures. Remember Jesus’s words and try to feel the loving connection to every being on the planet. Believe that we are one.

A reminder of this belief was reinforced today when I opened an email from my friend Ron Kocher. Ron had proudly forwarded an op-ed article from one of his “younger” cousins. The following words were written by Rev. Dr. Lillian H. Lammers. Dr. Lammers is an associate pastor of First Congregational Church in Memphis Tennessee. Her words are in response to political leaders in her state and others who pass laws loosening the safety procedures that unquestionably had slowed Covid 19 and it’s new variants.

It is disconcerting that more outbreaks are popping up around our Country and indeed the world. Her concern and my personal fear is that interfering and slowing the progress made through vaccinations coupled with wearing masks and distancing will only make the disease worse.

Early in writing this TALK, I paraphrased many of Dr. Lammers comments. The more I tried, the more I realized she had said it well. Me tampering with her words is not acceptable. My concern and hers is that many politicians have lost sight of the teachings of Jesus and often misstate what was so clearly taught in the Bible New Testament about the Old. She wrote:

There are multiple times in the Bible that Jesus is accused of breaking Jewish Law – touching a person with leprosy and healing the sick and disabled or refusing to condemn those who are hungry and picking grains on the Sabbath.

However, Jesus did not actually break Jewish Law. He disobeyed the false application of the Torah by those in positions of religious authority. Jesus was correcting the incorrect applications of the law, not rewriting it.

Jesus publicly disregarded harmful human-made rules from those in positions of authority. He was a devout Jew, and time and again offered powerful examples of how Judaism commands love of neighbor and stranger. Those in

positions of religious authority during his time created rules that ultimately undercut the call to love and care for others.

By breaking these rules, Jesus ultimately embodied the Jewish Law while educating those around him in the process. What the illustration of the “rule-breaking Jesus” offers us is a reminder that the overall ethos of the gospel is one of love for neighbor and stranger, just as it is with the Torah.

Those of you who know me and have spent time with me in Bible Studies know my focus has always been connecting the teaching of Jesus to Old Testament writings and wisdoms. So many of the actions the Christ took were in response to Jewish leaders who were charged with interpreting and imparting Torah law. Not much has changed over the past 2000 + years, and I find that truth to be frightening.

Honestly, I believe that many political leaders and clergy from certain denominations stand in need of really knowing what Jesus stood for. It is certain that words from a known rule breaker like me will be disregarded by many. To attempt to offset differences in beliefs, I pray daily for God to help me and those who make decisions regarding the safety and care for all human beings to be willing to adjust beliefs for the good of all.

Jesus said, *...everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* These words from our Lord and Savior should help us celebrate the diversity of the human family and be grateful for our place in it. Today you and I can salute the light within each person and the sacredness of all beings. We are indeed “*one*” in Spirit.

Peace always,
Ted