

Twenty-First Sunday After Pentecost, Proper 25

October 25, 2020

Year A RCL

Leviticus 19:1-2,15-18; Psalm 1; Matthew 22:34-46

“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”

By: The Rev. Fr. Fabian Villalobos

In these days where we live so close to the presidential election, the message about which commandment in the law is the greatest seems appropriate for our divided country and society. Allow me to share with you a Facebook post that reads “During the next two weeks, please don’t let the elephants and donkeys make you forget that you belong to the Lamb.”

This reminder that the Christian identity is above any political association choice is needed especially in moments like the one we live so polarized and partitioned. Our own Bishop George Sumner in a recent statement mentioned that the day after the elections, many will be unhappy no matter the results, and that finding unity and reconciliation becomes one of our tasks as followers of Jesus.

The book of Leviticus and the gospel of Matthew both tie today the love for God, with the love we have for the “neighbor” meaning for others. Please do not reduce the “neighbor” only to the person or family that lives next door to you or in the same block. The concept of “neighbor” for us Christians goes well beyond a physical location; While we are responsible and part of the welfare of our own neighborhoods, as baptized members of the Body of Christ, we belong to a bigger neighborhood called the Church and ultimately the whole humanity.

“You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin” our kinfolk is not those of our family, neighborhood or country, as humans beings our first fathers and ancestors are Adam and Eve, as believers in Jesus all men and human are our brothers and sisters.

“One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Ephesians 4:5-6

From our baptismal covenant we are all descending from the same Father, we are of the same kinfolk. We are all next of kin not only to those of the family of blood but also to those of the family of faith, which is not limited to the people of the church or denomination, it is extended to all the people of God.

From the book of Leviticus, we heard the revelation of one of the attributes that God shares with us: *“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”*

The call to holiness and participation on the holiness of God is one of our major privileges we have as Christians. What God says about Jesus in his baptism: “you are my beloved” God declares about each one of us, as a remembrance for and all men and women of how much God loves and cares for his children.

Since God loves all human beings, we need to imitate him loving them as well. This is one of the conclusions we find in today’s readings. The love to God is always connected to the love to others. Jesus ‘answer to the lawyer about which commandment in the law is the greatest links the love to God with the love to others. It is only partial love to love God and hate others.

“Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.” 1 John 4:20

If hate seems to extreme because you don’t hate any one, I will quote a phrase attributed to Elie Wiesel, “The opposite of love is not hate, but indifference.” Our love to God necessarily includes others.

No Christian could be happy worshipping God and being indifferent of the sufferance or hardships of other Christians who live in marginalization, poverty, exclusion, illness, addictions. etc. I am not talking of remote places far from us but cities, communities, minority groups, “invisible people” who are marginalized and ignored for other Christians here in America.

Jesus knows very well how fragmented and dualistic our commitment to love God and others could be, for this reason in his answer he includes: “with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Giving to God partial or restricted episodes of love is unfruitful and contrary to the wholeness of our being which God wants and deserves. The same happens when we love others only partially, the fullness and richness of love is not achieved by our incapacity to love them with all our heart, soul, and mind.

‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Everything we do or have as Christians like doctrines, rituals, disciplines, community life, outreach, etc., all depend on our love to God and others. As we continue growing and learning of what it means to be followers of Jesus, it is important to comprehend that we all are children of love, since we received and enjoyed in Jesus, we need to share it and show it with actions of justice,

righteousness and compassion among our brothers and sisters so demonstrating how much we love God. Amen.