

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday  
St. Matthew 22:34-46  
October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC  
Simpsonville, SC  
St. Michael and All Angels Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Augusta, GA  
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC  
Myrtle Beach, SC  
Pastor Jerald Dulas

## Which Is the Great Commandment?

*In Nomine Iesu!*

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

### **Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:**

Lord God, heavenly Father: We are poor, miserable sinners; we know Thy will, but cannot fulfill it because of the weakness of our flesh and blood, and because our enemy, the devil, will not leave us in peace. Therefore we beseech Thee, shed Thy Holy Spirit in our hearts, that, in steadfast faith, we may cling to Thy Son + Jesus Christ, find comfort in His passion and death, believe the forgiveness of sin through Him, and in willing obedience to Thy will lead holy lives on Earth, until by Thy grace, through a blessed death, we depart from this world of sorrow, and obtain eternal life, through Thy Son, + Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Lord + Jesus had silenced the Sadducees on account of their unbelief in the resurrection from the dead. He showed that the Triune Lord God is the God of the living and not of the dead. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He lives and reigns for all eternity—forever and ever. The Lord God is not a God of the dead, but of the living. Having silenced the Sadducees over their unbelief in a resurrection from the dead, the Pharisees take their final at bat against the Lord + Jesus. It is a swing and a miss.

The Pharisees ask our Lord + Jesus which is the great commandment? Which one of these ten commandments is the great one? This question is designed so that the one answering is forced to pick one of the commandments; to spin the wheel and see which one the person answering lands upon. Our Lord + Jesus, however, does not play that game. He instead goes back to the words of Moses, just like He did with the Sadducees. Those words we heard in the Old Testament Lesson from the Fifth Book of Moses, commonly called Deuteronomy. The great commandment is: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." And, the second great commandment is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The whole of the Law of God is summed up in these two commandments. We refer to them among ourselves as the First Table of the Law and the Second Table of the Law. Commandments one through three is the First Table and Commandments four through ten are the Second Table of the Law.

Therefore, the summary of the Law is love. We are to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, mind and soul, and love our neighbor as ourselves. This sounds pretty simple on the surface. Just love one another and the Lord God. How hard can it be? There are many people who think are

able to do this simple task. The Pharisees and Sadducees surely thought they were capable of obeying these Commandments. They were under the delusion that they did not sin, and if they did not sin, then love for the Lord God and for their neighbor was an easy task. Many people today think the same thing. They think, "It is easy to love, just do not hate." Their problem, like it is with us, is we all think that it is easy to love because we are judging our ability to love based upon how we treat the people that we like. It is easy to think that we love when we are only considering our love for the people that we find easy to like.

The Commandments require perfection, however. We must have perfect love for the Lord God and perfect love for our neighbor—our fellowman. Our inability to love perfectly is shown us whenever we have to deal with people we find hard to like. For some of us, as I have said before, all we need to do to show how little we have perfect love is to get behind the wheel of a car. We will see just how little we love perfectly when we curse and harangue other drivers on the road because they are either going way faster than us, or not fast enough for our liking. Or, they drive in a way that makes us cringe with how stupid or crazy they are. If you want to see how little you love your neighbor perfectly, just drive on the interstate for a little bit.

Our Love for the Triune Lord God is also not perfect. We complain about our situation in life. We complain about the things we have or do not have. We complain about the weather; too much rain, or not enough; too much sun, or not enough. When our health fails, or we have medical issues—or our loved ones do—we grumble and complain about our lot in life. All of these things are provided by our Lord God. We are complaining and grumbling against the Lord God. We are showing our imperfect love for the Lord God.

Even more, we daily fail to pray to Him. We neglect the reading of His holy Scriptures. We fail to take the opportunity to come to church and worship Him with others. All of this shows our lack of love for the Triune Lord God. We do not love our Lord God or our neighbor perfectly. It does not matter which is the great commandment, for we cannot keep it perfectly anyway. Love is the fulfillment of the Law of God, but we do not fulfill that requirement because we do not love as perfectly as the Law of God requires.

Our Lord + Jesus could have left both the Sadducees and Pharisees in their error, but He does not. He showed the Sadducees that the Triune Lord God is a God of the living and not the dead. For Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were still alive in Heaven when our Lord God appeared to Moses in the burning bush. The Sadducees may not have believed on the Lord + Jesus—clinging to their false teachings as many do—but our Lord + Jesus shows them the error of their false teaching, so that they are silenced. It is the same with the Pharisees in today's Gospel reading from the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew.

The Lord + Jesus corrects their—and our—understanding of love today. If the great commandment is simply to love the Lord God above all things, and the second is to love our neighbors as ourselves, we can be deceived into thinking we are able to fulfill this. But our thoughts, words and deeds, teach us otherwise. We see daily just how little we love our Lord God perfectly, and our neighbor as ourselves perfectly. Our Lord + Jesus saves us from trusting in our ability to love—our ability to just not hate. For after answering the question of the Pharisees, what does our Lord + Jesus say? He asks them about a quote of King David in the Psalms—Psalm 110 to be precise. What does that Psalm say? It gives us the answer to our inability to love perfectly. It gives us the answer to our constant and daily sinfulness. We cannot save ourselves by our love or our works, but we have a Savior in the Lord + Jesus.

Our Lord + Jesus directs the Pharisees—and us—to the Messiah. "What do you think about the Christ?" Whose Son is He? He is the Son of David. The Christ—the Anointed One—is the Son of David.

How can He be a Son, if He is also a Lord? He is both a Son and a Lord because He is both true God and true Man. He is true God begotten of the heavenly Father from eternity, and He is true Man born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As true God and true Man he is able to love His heavenly Father perfectly, and love us, His brothers and sisters, perfectly as a man. He is the fulfillment of the Law of God.

In answer to our—and the Pharisees—inability to love perfectly, our Lord + Jesus gives us the Christ—the Messiah, the Anointed One. In answer to our inability to love perfectly, our Lord + Jesus, the Christ, gives us Himself. He is the answer to the Commandments. He is the fulfillment of the Law of God. His perfect love for the Lord God and for us is shown in His life and work. He perfectly fulfills the Law as the true God/man. He is the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. He is the sacrifice that atones for the sins of the whole world. His sacrifice atones for our sin of imperfect love for the Triune Lord God and our neighbor. The Pharisees try to test to the Lord + Jesus with the Law, but He gives them the Gospel—He gives them Himself.

They are so consumed with their keeping of the Law—something that they falsely believe they are able to do as the Lord God requires—that they are silenced when our Lord + Jesus gives them the Gospel of salvation only in Him alone. They dared ask Him no more questions. No one dared ask Him any more questions. He silenced them and the Sadducees by giving them Himself. He is the One Who is raised from the dead, after His sacrifice on the tree of the holy cross. He is the One Who fulfills the requirement of the Law perfectly. He is the One Who put His enemies under Him as a footstool by humbling Himself to be hung upon the tree of the holy cross. He suffered and died for those who would question Him. He suffered and died for those who hated Him. He suffered and died for us, and all the world, who falsely think that our love is sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the Law of God. It is only His love—the love that lays down His life—that saves us.

Instead of clinging to our ability to love, which will fail us every time, we should instead cling in faith to the works and merits of the Christ. We should cling to His cross. For on the cross He paid the penalty which we deserve for our lack of love. He died so that we might live. His enemies are our enemies. The devil, the world, and our flesh constantly war against us, taking our love away and leading us into hate, anger and malice for our fellowman. We deserve the Lord God's eternal wrath and displeasure. We deserve to be hounded by sin, death and the devil all of our lives. But our Lord + Jesus does not leave us in this state. In His mercy He puts our enemies under His feet as a footstool. He triumphantly takes His place at the right hand of the heavenly Father, to intercede on our behalf to the Father until we are called to our eternal, heavenly home.

Today, our Lord + Jesus gives us Himself. He is the One Who was raised from the dead to silence the Sadducees. He is the One Who perfectly fulfills the Law of love by loving us enough to suffer and die on our behalf. He is the One Who ascended to the right hand of the heavenly Father and intercedes on our behalf. And He will come again on the Last Day and take us from this vale of tears to our eternal home in Heaven. He will come to judge both the quick and the dead. All those who trust in their own ability to love apart from the Christ will inherit eternal death in Hell. While all of us who cling to our Lord + Jesus in faith will receive the crown of eternal life.

He will reward those who wait for Him in patient faith for the day of salvation. Therefore, let us be glad to enter into the house of the Lord, and hear the Gospel that gives us nothing but our Lord + Jesus as our Savior, and receive His gifts—the Sacraments that feed our souls. For He loves us perfectly, and comes to give us Himself. Which is the great commandment? It is to love the Lord God with all your heart, soul and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. These two great commandments find their answer in the Lord + Jesus Christ. Cling to Him in faith, and He will reward you with eternal life. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:**

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Who hast given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the glorious revelation of the Gospel, cause Thy Word to dwell in us richly, we beseech Thee, and fill us with the knowledge of Thy will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may know our sin, and Thy Son as the Savior from sin, and may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

**The Votum:**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*