

Going Deeper-30th Sunday (Year A)

Scripture

The readings this weekend are:

- + Exodus 22:20-26
- + 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10
- + Matthew 22:34-40

All God's Children

This liturgy focuses on **Matthew 22:34-40**, which is Matthew's version of 'the greatest commandment' teaching. Throughout chapter 22, Jesus is tested by Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees. He avoids each of their attempts to catch him in contradiction. Verses 34-40 speak to a devout Jewish audience who were preoccupied with the question: 'Which of the Ten Commandments is the most important rule to follow?' Jesus' answer to this question seems simple, but what it implies is a rather radical idea.

Jesus says that the greatest commandment is *love*-a love this is both for God and of God. If we can successfully follow this rule, all other commandments are easy to abide. When we love God above all else, we become more honest, faithful, pure and holy. When we reflect that love on others, we naturally desire their well-being, we treat them with integrity and we reject any word, action or situation that would bring them harm.

The old adages 'do unto others as you would have done unto you' and 'if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all' probably come to mind when we hear this reading. They are the trite ways we have simplified this radical idea. For a Jewish person living in the times of Jesus, rules and rituals were fundamental to faith. Hearing someone proclaim, in a Temple, that none of that mattered beyond the commandment to *love* would have been a shock.

It is probably still a shock for us today. Loving God, truly placing Him at the centre of our lives is no small task in a world filled with more and more false idols. Therefore, we know that Matthew 22:34-40 calls us to more than being a nice person who likes God. It calls attention to those among us who cling to rules and guidelines as a safety net to salvation and thereby avoid truly putting faith into practice. Jesus tells us that life is not just about keeping every commandant word for word. Instead, it is about living a life filled with authentic love for God and for one another, a love that puts us in uncomfortable situations, pushes us to embrace those on the margins and demands that we treat everyone as we ourselves hope to be treated. Master this deceptively simple practice and all other commandments become second nature to follow.