

31st Sunday of the Year (B)

November 4, 2018

Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Psalm 18

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 12:28-34

Two weeks ago we heard the apostles James and John boldly approach Jesus, “We want you to do whatever we ask of you.” In other words, “Jesus, we want that your will become our will.” Jesus responded to the apostles, “You do not know what you are asking.” And so it is for all of us, “You do not know what you are asking.” There will always be a tension between *my will* and *the will of the Lord Jesus*.

This morning you arrive at full membership into the Lord Jesus. The journey that began in your baptism here at the font, continued when you began to receive Eucharist, and now comes into fulness as we share with you the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus gave us that gift of the Spirit to draw us more deeply into the gospel, into his life, into his will. From this day forward you will walk with the Lord Jesus, and this means, you will need to negotiate the tension between *your will* and *the will of the Lord Jesus*. We were each created with a free will, God wants us to have a free will, and God wants us to fall in love, doing the will of the Lord Jesus!

I find that God’s word this morning is absolutely perfect. The focus is on love and the primary characteristic of love in the Hebrew scriptures is loyalty. As God has been unwavering in his love and loyalty to the human family, we are invited to be unwavering in our love and loyalty to God. “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!” Many times through the course of a day, the Hebrew people would recite the Shema, which begins with that acclamation, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone!” This was their way of remembering and living in relationship with that great, wonderful, and loyal God.

So when the scribe in that gospel lesson asks Jesus what do you think, there are so many commandments, which one is the most important? Jesus responds with the Shema. “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Jesus is saying that being loyal to God who has been so loyal to us is first and most important. And then, Jesus reaches into the book of Leviticus and places next to the love of God, the love of neighbor. Jesus makes it pretty clear that the two commandments are inter-related. You cannot fulfill one without fulfilling the other.

Our commitment to God takes priority over everything in our lives, yet our love of God becomes a reality or is indeed genuine only when we love one another. Perhaps to bring that more into focus, it is accurate to say that human-kind is closest to God when we reach out in love to one another. It is also accurate to say that human-kind is farthest away from God when we are at war with each other. Reaching out in love, compassion, understanding, and forgiveness, God truly dwells among us. Taking up

arms to hurt or harm, choosing words that disrespect or abuse another, pushes God away and out of our lives. God created each one of us in love and God asks that we live out that love each day. Jesus is that unwavering love of God who teaches us how to love.

And so, in a few minutes this community will call down the Holy Spirit upon you and you will be fully immersed into the Lord Jesus. What can you expect? Will tomorrow be another school day, another work day? In many ways, tomorrow will look like another school day, another work day. My hope is that you might remember that Jesus is there with you, that there is a loving presence that supports and guides you. You will inevitably get busy working on this or that project. The expectations that you and others have of you will take your attention. Yet, in the morning you might invite the Lord to be there for you. In the evening you might thank the Lord for those moments that he was indeed there with you.

Aware of God's love for us, we strive to live in that love and to be loving toward one another. May we each day immerse ourselves, more and more, into the Lord Jesus!

Intercessions

November 4, 2018

Presider: Let us pray for needs of this gathered community and for our world..

Our response: God of love, hear our prayer.

1. For the church, for all of us, for the will and desire to love God with all our hearts and strength, to live that love in generosity to our neighbor: we pray ...
2. For the U.S. and her leaders on this mid-term election eve; for all U.S. citizens that they may vote mindful of their responsibility to care for their neighbor and to promote the common good: we pray ...
3. For our young folks and adults newly confirmed in the Holy Spirit, for open minds and hearts that are ready to follow Christ in loving service: we pray ...
4. For families that will nurture the faith, for the community that will hold our newly confirmed in prayer, for examples of faith among us that will be an inspiration: we pray ...
5. For all our beloved sick, for those facing addiction or depression each day, for those living with dementia or mental illness and for all families who love them: we pray ...
6. With gratitude for the communion of saints who surround us, we remember all who have died in our parish community and those who have died among our own families and friends, for all those who have gone home to God: we pray ...

The parish community would like to support you in prayer.

Please share with us your needs and intentions.

Presider: O God, give us openness to your grace and help us to walk with you and each other with unwavering loyalty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen