

GATHERING IN THE WORD OF GOD

We, the The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i spend a lot of time on a lot of things: We have ministries, programs and plans, we have Bible studies and fellowship, we build and maintain our buildings and we seek to expand our reach to the neighborhoods and the world. **But**, we cannot forget the core—**that the whole foundation of the Church is love—aloha** (*we say in Hawaiian*)!

We are redeemed and restored by love, and we are to be known for our love of others; love for those near us, and those far; those like us, and those not like us; those who we like, and those who we don't like; those who are nice to us, and those who have hurt us greatly; those who think like us, vote like us, pray like us, and those who work and do things different than us.

We love! We encourage love! We are to build people and communities and cultures on love! This is the Church—The First Chinese Church of Christ—Mandarin-speaking and English-speaking!

So what do we learn from Matthew 22:34-46?

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

Matthew 22:34-46 (VOICE Bible)

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, a group of Pharisees met to consider new questions that might trip up Jesus. ³⁵ A legal expert thought of one that would certainly stump Him.

Pharisees: ³⁶ Teacher, of all the laws, which commandment is the greatest?

Jesus (quoting Scripture): ³⁷ "Love the Eternal One your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind." (*Deuteronomy 6:5*) ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is nearly as important, "Love your neighbor as yourself." (*Leviticus 19:18*) ⁴⁰ The rest of the law, and all the teachings of the prophets, are but variations on these themes.

⁴¹ Since the Pharisees were gathered together there, Jesus *took the opportunity to* pose a question of His own.

Jesus: ⁴² What do you think about the Anointed One? Whose Son is He?

Pharisees: *But, of course,* He is the Son of David.

Jesus: ⁴³ Then how is it that David—*whose words were surely shaped by the Spirit*—calls Him "Lord"? *For in his psalms* David writes,

⁴⁴ The Master said to my master
"Sit here at My right hand,
in the place of honor and power,
And I will gather Your enemies together,
lead them in on hands and knees,
and You will rest Your feet on their backs."
(*Psalms 110:1*)

⁴⁵ How can David call his own Son "Lord"?

⁴⁶ No one had an answer to Jesus' question. And from that day forward, no one asked Him anything.

Matthew begins his Gospel with Jesus' "family tree" and genealogy. Matthew is also telling us that although Jesus has a distinctive lineage in the line of King David, Jesus was and is finally **more** than his ancestry and bloodlines could produce. David was more than King David's son. **Jesus is the Son of God—Jesus is YAHWEH in the flesh, Jesus is the Lord of all lords and the King of all kings!** Matthew tells us this!

So Jesus is on the road to Golgotha (*the common name for the place Jesus was crucified*). Jesus asks the question as to the Messiah's ancestry. The Pharisees claim that the Messiah is David's son. So (*verse 43*) Jesus asks why would David himself have shown the Messiah deference and high regard by calling him his very Lord?

No one could give an answer, but the reason for their silence was **not** because they didn't know the answer. The answer Jesus was giving to the Pharisees and the Sadducees was no less than the Word of God himself and that the True Messiah is God himself!

Jesus didn't make many overt claims to being the Messiah; but for those with eyes to see and with ears to hear—Jesus did so here!

So the Pharisees say: if they can trick Jesus into picking a favorite commandment, Jesus will be guilty of downplaying the other commandments. But since every commandment represents the very word of God, picking and choosing among them would be heretical and sacrilegious and blasphemous!

Jesus knows what's going on! Jesus begins to quote a Bible verse, and at first the Pharisees maybe thought they had him. They didn't! **Because Jesus says that love of God is the greatest commandment of all!**

After all, if you don't love God, you won't be much inclined and motivated to keep *any* commandment! **If, however, you do love God, then the rest follows naturally!** And just to make the point, Jesus throws in the **second commandment** about neighbor-love. Between these two loves—Jesus manages to catch every commandment you could ever name! **Every commandment in the book has something to do with either God or neighbor!**

But then there's the **Jewish Shema** from Deuteronomy 6:5, "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*" All Jews knew this verse.

Then comes the words to the song we all learn as children:

"Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

Karl Barth (May 10, 1886 – December 10, 1968) was a Swiss Reformed theologian and is often regarded as the greatest Protestant theologian of the twentieth century said, “The greatest truth is the one you already know, the one all Christians know, the one a three-year-old can sing about.” Jesus was slyly and cleverly insulting the Pharisees, demonstrating to everyone there that the Pharisees were not really interested in seeing if Jesus could answer their question since even the youngest person there knew that answer already. And in this case Jesus makes it clear that just asking that question makes the ones posing the question look like ignorant and foolish!

In Matthew 22 Jesus subtly and cleverly changes the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:5). The *Shema* asks us to love God with all our heart, soul, and strength. Jesus revises it to heart, soul, and *mind*, and surely the Pharisees and everyone else noticed the change. **We are supposed to honor God in how we think and reason just as surely in how well we live in terms of other areas of morality and Godliness! Our God has something to do with everything! Or at least God should!**

DOING THE WORD OF GOD

So what is the Word of God for us this morning?

1.ONE: ON THIS ALL SAINTS SUNDAY—WE ARE THE SAINTS OF OUR TIME!

- ✓ Our legacy is our time, talent, and treasure.
Time spend on our children and grandchildren;

in the achievements of students and folks in our Church.

- ✓ Our legacy of our gifts and talents involved our creative work here in our Church, our neighborhoods and the world!
- ✓ Using and sharing our gifts bring healing and beauty of our world!
- ✓ Sharing our legacy of treasure, sharing our largesse for the well-being of future generations is a blessing!

2.TWO: LOVING GOD IS A CHURCH, NEIGHORHOODS AND WORLD AFFIRMATION!

- ✓ We are to love our neighbors—physical, emotional and spiritual well-being!
- ✓ We are to love our Creator God by also caring for the creatures around us!
- ✓ Loving ourselves makes us feel at home in our skin and affirms our very existence in its uniqueness! Let us bring joy to ourselves and others!

3.THREE: WALK THE TALK!

- ✓ Back up or prove what's said with action we do every day with everyone!
- ✓ Represent words with action. No only talk—do something about it for God!
- ✓ Practice what's preached. Live out the talk!

SENDING IN THE WORD OF GOD

Jesus could obviously “think on his feet.” There are a number of accounts in the Gospels of Jesus in a verbal contest with his detractors, **and Jesus wins every one of them!** Today’s reading ends at verse 46, but I suggest we look at first three verses of chapter 23:

¹Jesus spoke to His disciples and to the crowds that had gathered around. Jesus with the Pharisees listening uses them as an example of the pious but truly unrighteous. He calls the people to mind the Pharisees’ words, not their examples, because they talk about righteousness and faithfulness, but they are a faithless and unrighteous crew. **Jesus:** ²The Pharisees and the scribes occupy the seat of Moses. ³So you should do the things they tell you to do—but don’t do the things they do.

The point is clear. Those religious leaders have all the right answers. Jesus say pay attention to them and take it one step further and say, **“walk the talk.”** Because when all is said and done, a lot more is said than done.

I don’t think God gives a hoot (or shout out) about my opinions. **God cares about me and my life!**

For this week: Who might partner with me, so that we can encourage one another to stay open to how the Holy Spirit would work through us to reform us and revitalize our faith?

Prayer: Almighty God, gracious Lord, we thank you that your Holy Spirit renews the church in every age. Pour out

your Holy Spirit on all faithful people. Keep us steadfast in your word, protect and comfort us in times of trial, bring us closer together, and bestow on all of us here at TFCCCH your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

