

Love that Surpasses All Understanding *Amor que Sobrepasa Todo el Entendimiento*

Que las palabras de mi boca y la meditación de nuestro corazón sean aceptables ante tus ojos, oh Señor, mi roca y mi salvación. Amén. [Salmos 19:14]

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer. Amen. [Psalm 19:14]

The setting for today's Gospel lesson is the last supper. Jesus knows that he will soon be tried, tortured, and crucified. Jesus has explained this to his disciples, who are still struggling to understand what is to come.

In comforting his disciples, Jesus tells them, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." [John 14:1-3] But the disciples still do not understand.

Jesus tells his disciples that he is the path to the Father; that he is "the way, and the truth, and the life;" that "no one comes to the Father except through me;" and that "if you know me, you will know my Father also." But the disciples still do not quite understand.

Jesus continues – with that part of John's Gospel that is our lesson for today – a promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Father is the creator and the Son is the redeemer, and the disciples seem to understand that much, but in today's Gospel lesson, Jesus tells the disciples that "[i]f you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you."

So, what are Jesus' commandments? Jesus answered that question in Matthew 22: 37-40, saying that: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

But this message was not just for Jesus' disciples back then; it is for us yesterday, today, tomorrow, and for all time.

It is clear that we are to love our neighbor, but Matthew's Gospel begs the question: who are our neighbors and how are we to demonstrate our love?

Several years ago I saw a beautiful clock. It caught my eye, in part, because I love

antique and interesting clocks, and because of the message. Apart from the artistic design and workmanship, the message inscribed on the clock was particularly poignant – especially given the conflicts all over the world and the growing divisions among God’s people. For me, the clock’s message seems to take on even more importance, in a world where people seem to be resisting Jesus’ message “to love our neighbor as ourselves” with every fiber of their being.

In the center of the clock face, inscribed in tile, were the words “**Repair the World.**” And the prescription – as simple and yet as nearly inscrutable as Jesus’ own message – marking each of the clock’s twelve ordinals, were the words: *Justice, Devotion, Tolerance, Service, Peace, Compassion, Community, Charity, Generosity, Mercy, Respect and Love.* What a wonderful world this would be if the whole world could live by these admonitions.

So where do we start?

Jesus teaches that in loving our neighbor, we should go far beyond our comfort zone. Jesus bids us to turn the other cheek, to give more than what is asked, to love our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us, to give to the needy, and not to judge others. In Matthew 5:43-48, Jesus said:

You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. [Matthew 5:43-48]

It’s a tall order, but it’s all about love.

And, Jesus practiced what he preached:

- When Jesus turned the water into wine at the wedding in Cana, it was about love.
- When Jesus healed the sick, the lame, and the blind, it was about love.
- When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, it was about love.
- When Jesus fed the multitude, I believe he was modeling for them and for us how to share the blessings we have received with our neighbors; and it was about love.
- Even when Jesus up-ended the money changers’ tables, it was about love. Tough love; but love nonetheless.

- When Jesus washed his disciples' feet, it was about love.
- And, when Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice and gave himself up to death so that we might live, it was about love. It was all about love.

Jesus bids us to "Go into the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." In the words of St. Francis of Assisi – "*Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.*"

It's about walking-the-talk 24-7 by-365, so that people, ***our neighbors***, can see Jesus and God's love reflected in us in our daily walk: at church, yes; but also at work, at school, at the ball game, in the grocery store, behind that slow driver in the fast lane; with neighbors who are like us and neighbors who are not, among those with whom we agree and those with whom we do not, with those with whom we are close and with those with whom we are estranged; through the choices we make, through how we forgive and seek forgiveness; and through how we minister to the least of those among us.

I would like to share a story with you that I read in the news this past Thursday; but first a little background: You may have heard or read about a horrible practice some cash-strapped public schools are using to deal with children, many of whom are in extreme poverty, that are unable to pay for their school lunches. It is called "lunch shaming" – or holding children publically accountable for unpaid lunch bills by taking away the child's hot food and throwing it in the trash; providing less desirable food choices like cold sandwiches; requiring them to clean cafeteria tables in front of their peers; branding them with markers; or other forms of public humiliation.

Some states and localities have outlawed the practice, but one determined dad, as the news account described, "went on a mission to ensure every student at his son's school was debt-free." Jeffery Lew found out that the lunch debt in his third grade son's Seattle Washington school was \$97.10, so he started a "GoFundMe" Internet campaign to raise money from parents willing to help. Within a few days he met that goal, but he did not stop there.

He found out that the total lunch debt for the entire Seattle school system was \$20,531.79. Although Mr. Lew believed raising that sum would be an ambitious goal, he thought, "[i]f you don't try for something you don't know if it's going to happen or not." In a few days, his campaign raised over \$22,000, to pay the outstanding lunch debt for the Seattle Public School System. Because of the success of this effort, Mr. Lew wants to expand this success into a nation-wide campaign.

Mr. Lew is quick to point out that he is not a hero; he is just the guy who went on-line and started the campaign. The real heroes, according to Mr. Lew, are the hundreds of generous strangers who donated to this cause to benefit thousands of students.

Now this is what I call love thy neighbor. Mr. Lew and those hundreds of generous people who banded with him to raise the money to pay the lunch debit helped to let the light of Christ shine bright in their community and in the world.

The late John F. Kennedy famously said, "God's work on Earth must truly be our own." And he was right! There is an old saying: "It only takes one candle to light the darkness."

Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit, make us an instrument of your love. Make us each that one candle that shines your light of love on this broken world. With your strength, help us to **repair the world**...

En el nombre del Padre, del Hijo, y del Espíritu Santo, Amén.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.