

XVII TRINITY 2014
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
EPHESIANS 4.1 ST. LUKE 14.1



Love God above all else...love others in the same way we want to be loved...the Summary of the Law we hear at the beginning of every Mass.

The Summary of the Law reminds us the Ten Commandments are not ten suggestions that come with an opt-out clause. They are THE Ten Commandments God gave us out of his love for us...and we do our best to try to obey them out of our love for him and our duty to love others.

Jesus tells us in Matthew he didn't come to make the Law go away but to fulfill it...to make it come true. That is the reason the Ten Commandments are still binding on us today. They are intended to make life easier for us...not harder...they are about God's love.

Jesus often takes on the lawyers and religious leaders over their literalistic and self-serving interpretation of the Law. They were using the Law to control people's lives...to browbeat them into submission...to make themselves look more important and better than anyone else. They were making life harder for others.

We often see Jesus hanging out with the wrong crowd...Samaritans, street people, sinners, the sick and the poor. They would not have been invited to lunch at the respectable lawyer's house Jesus finds himself at in today's Gospel.

The lawyers...we are told...were watching Jesus closely. They didn't think Jesus was an all around nice guy and they wanted to get to know him better. They saw him as a threat to everything they stood for and wanted to trick him into saying or doing something they could use against him. Jesus has them figured out and uses this as an opportunity to teach a lesson about compassion.

He begins by showing them in words and action how wrong they are about the Sabbath Day. He first asks them a question about healing on the Sabbath, which they can't answer. He then heals a man suffering from edema. Lesson: It's more important to show love and compassion for someone, especially on the Sabbath, which God created for us anyway.

Jesus then turns his attention to a lesson in humility. He is watching all of the guests arriving for lunch pushing each other aside trying to get the best seats at the table. Jesus tells a short story about a wedding banquet. Lesson: It's better to take a seat in the back and be asked to come up closer to the host than to be asked to give up that coveted seat and be asked to move to the back.

In the *Oxford Prayer Book Commentary*, Father Massey Shepherd explains what we should learn from the Gospel: "The people who think themselves important in the world may very well find that in the Kingdom of God their places of privilege will be taken by others who are not so self-centered and self-regarding". The Gospel is not just another story about Jesus and those arrogant lawyers and religious teachers from long ago. We too need to pay attention to what Jesus is saying.

None of us would deny one of the major attractions of Saint Joseph Parish is the Liturgy we celebrate according to the historic *1928 Book of Common Prayer* and the *Anglican Missal*. We love the Liturgy and we quite rightly proclaim on our website...*lex orandi...lex credendi...lex vivendi...we pray...we believe...we live...and we should add to that...lex docendi...we teach.*

But as much as we love the words of the Liturgy they are meaningless unless we take seriously what they really teach us and let them lead us closer to God who has been revealed to us by Jesus as our Father who loves us. The word *liturgy* means *the people's work*...and our work goes beyond what we do here on Sundays. Our work must always be active...it must always reach out to others...and it must never be self-centered or self-regarding.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, Paul tells us we are to "live lives that measure up to the standard God set when he called us". That standard is what binds us together as a Community of Believers driven by love, compassion, humility, gentleness, patience and tolerance with one another.

Love God above all else...love others in the same way we want to be loved...the Summary of the Law...must ultimately be the Summary of our Lives.

