

## **XVII TRINITY 2018**

### **SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**

#### **FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**

#### **EPHESIANS 4.1-6 St. LUKE 14.1-11**



Are they the “Ten Suggestions for Better Living” or are they the Ten Commandments? There is no question when we try to keep the Ten Commandments better living happens. The challenge for us is in keeping the commandments!

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.

Saint Paul...the man who doesn't mince words...writes in his harshest tough love language to the Church in Galatia. He tells them the Ten Commandments written on stone tablets can't compel anyone to keep them...only a heart filled with the Holy Spirit can produce the change needed to even try.

Love God above all else...love others in the same way we want to be loved...appropriately called the Summary of the Law...because it encapsulates everything the Ten Commandments and the Old Testament prophets talk about.

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 for us...our love for others.

However...just hearing the Summary of the Law at the beginning of every Mass cannot produce results...only when we acknowledge God already knows what's in our hearts and we can't hide things from him...can we ask him to empower us with the Holy Spirit...and change our hearts into vehicles of love and action.

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.

Jesus often takes on the lawyers and religious leaders over their literalistic and self-serving interpretation of the Law...they used the Law to control people's lives...to browbeat them into submission...to make themselves look and feel more important and better than everyone else.

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 lawyers and religious leaders in today's Gospel don't like Jesus and want to trap him into saying or doing something they can use against him. Jesus has them figured out and uses this as an opportunity to teach a lesson about compassion.

He first asks them if it is OK to heal someone on the Sabbath...they don't answer him. He then proceeds to heal a man suffering from edema. He then asks them if they would save their donkey or ox that had fallen in a ditch on the Sabbath. They knew better than to try to answer.

The healing and the short story both teach us the same important lesson: None of us are better than anyone else...we must show love and compassion to others...regardless of the day of the week...love and compassion are Christian imperatives!

The Gospel is not just another story about Jesus and some arrogant lawyers and religious teachers from 2000 years ago. It's a story about us...our work inside and outside of the Parish is connected...not separate...it must always be active...it must always reach out to others...and it must never be self-centered or self-regarding.

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

