

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 19 & LWML Sunday  
Saturday, October 2, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, October 3, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

# “Love is a Verb”

Mark 12:28-37

Today, we are celebrating LWML Sunday and the ongoing work of mission and ministry which these ladies have accomplished and how they continue to be a blessing to the spread of the Gospel here at Our Redeemer, within the Central Illinois District, and around the world. Therefore, our theme today will be “The Commandments of God.”

I doubt that is what you were expecting. But when you listen to what Jesus says about the commandments, what is the most important of the commandments, and how this all comes together under the banner of “love,” I believe that talking about the commandments on LWML Sunday is absolutely appropriate.

In Mark’s Gospel, one of the scribes came up and heard Jesus disputing with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection. The Sadducees denied that there was life after death. “When you die, you live on forever in the memory of

your children.” That was their idea of what God’s promise of eternal life was all about. The Sadducees basically viewed God as a convenient concept which allowed them to gain money and power through their control of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The scribes were typically Pharisees who had a genuine faith in God and a belief in life after death, however, many of them saw the path to that eternal life as being paved by their own good works – keeping God’s Law as they interpreted the Law. Jesus called their teaching nothing but “rules taught by men.”

This particular scribe, who will later be commended by Christ, asks Jesus, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus begins with the great “shema,” which is like the Jn. 3:16 of the Old Testament: “Shema Yisrael” – “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” It means to “hear, listen, guard, keep, cherish” God’s Word of Law and Gospel given by the One and Only Living God.

And we are to “love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.” And we are to “love our neighbor as ourself.” This is where the connection to the LWML comes in. These two commandments are alike in that they both exhort us to love someone else. God’s Law directs His children outside of themselves, toward others, and toward the Divine Other who is above us all and has shown us what it means to be particularly concerned with the needs of others first.

As John says in his first Epistle, “we love, because He first loved us” [1 Jn. 4:19]. While we were still His enemies and did not love Him, the Lord our God promised to send His Son. And even when the children of God continued to rebel and grumble against Him, He sent His Son so that we could live.

The love and devotion of the ladies of the LWML to the Lord our God is not perfect. We have been talking quite a bit in recent weeks about our inability to be perfect. We all fall short. But we have been made complete in Christ and now stand before the Lord our God in righteousness and innocence. The Law has been fulfilled for us. The Commandment to love the Lord your God has been fulfilled perfectly by Christ.

And this now gives us opportunity in regard to love for our neighbor. The two commands cannot be separated. If the ladies of the LWML, or any of God’s children want to serve the Lord my God, that will necessarily entail love for my neighbor. Again, John speaks of this in his first Epistle, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother; he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” [1 Jn. 4:20].

When we look for a genuine expression of love for the Lord our God, it looks quite a bit like love for our neighbor. Our God-pleasing actions in regard to loving the Lord are very often seen in our love for our neighbor, as our Father in heaven is very concerned for all whom He places in our path, just as He was

concerned for us while we were still His enemies, and He washed us clean in the blood of the Lamb.

Love, as seen in the commandments and as defined by the Word of God, involves looking outside of yourself. Our Father in heaven sending Christ our Lord to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was the most selfless action God could undertake. Instead of simply starting over after Adam sinned, because He loved Adam, because he was His son, God considered Adam's welfare, Adam's future, Adam's eternity to be a higher priority.

We love because He first loved us. God directs our attention outside of ourselves to the needs of others. God shows us that love is a verb. God saw a need and immediately took action. The history of the LWML is for these ladies to look outside of themselves, to see a need, and as they state in their pledge, "wherever and whenever" they see a need, they seek to display the love of God and the joy of the Gospel through the opportunities God has given them.

None of these ladies have kept these commands perfectly. None of us ever will. Christ has kept them for us. Love is the summary of the Law. Love is a verb. Love for our neighbor is only possible because Christ first loved us. Amen.