

“Maundy Sunday”

Mark 12:28-34

November 11, 2018

St. George’s Episcopal Church

Fr. Chris

Maundy Sunday

What does God want us to do? How does God want us to live? Or in more modern times, there is the question, What would Jesus do?

What do you think Jesus would do? In any situation, I believe that Jesus would do the most loving thing that he could do. And I also believe that that is what he wants you and me to do. God is all about love, and God commands us to be lovers in this life.

- Lovers, not haters.
- Selflessness, not selfishness.
- Giving not taking
- Sharing not hoarding
- Caring not careless
- Grateful, not wanting more

What are the great Commandments? Love God. Love your neighbor. Love yourself. Love others as you would have them love you.

Last week I went out to dinner twice. The first time was in Hartford, and we went to our favorite restaurant, “J’s” across from Hartford Hospital. Walking up to the restaurant, we noticed a man raking the tiny lawn at 8:00 pm at night. When I say tiny, I would be surprised if the lawn encompassed more than 30 square feet. He was just finishing up, and walked in ahead of us. Jordan, the owner, asked us to wait and he got the man a pizza from the kitchen, obviously, his main meal for today. Where this knight of the road would sleep tonight, was not clear. Did he have a room in a rooming house? Would it be a shelter? Or maybe under one of the many bridges that dot our city. They could have sent him packing when he knocked at their door seeking help. What was really striking was the power of love, and the love that Jordan and his staff showed to this man, respectfully, quietly, faithfully. This is love. This is the great commandment. They knew it, they lived it.

The second dinner was yesterday at noon at a Restaurant called Marguerite's up in Westport, Massachusetts, which is a very blessed community, not unlike many of the towns in Fairfield County in our own state. Marguerite's is like a country, family place, unpretentious, with delicious, reasonably priced food. It is full almost all day long, whenever you go. No different yesterday. When we arrived, we were offered a seat at the counter, where space was available, but we eyed a newly vacated table, which we preferred to sitting at the counter. We had to wait a couple of minutes while they cleared and prepared the table. Just then, I noticed a rather scruffy looking fellow in a tired looking green jacket sitting at the end of the counter, slowly eating his food, which looked like a large bowl of soup and a sandwich. I did not acknowledge him. When we sat down at our table. Not far away, I noticed he had a few grocery bags filled with bottles and cans under his counter chair, not a lot, but which gave away his identity. He sat there for a long time, savoring and eating his food. Another diner came in, a nicely dressed woman, and sat down next to him and engaged him in conversation while she waited for her own lunch. Instead of avoiding him, she sat next to him. He could not have smelled too well. When he got ready to go, I over heard him tell her that they were very kind to the homeless and hungry there, and kind to him. Standing up, many in the restaurant bid him farewell, as did many of the staff. We even joined in. What I had just witnessed is real love, love in action, on many levels. It could have been straight out of a Gospel passage. What would Jesus do? There it was right in front of me in action. The staff and owners and customers of this restaurant did it. They loved. They sat at table with their neighbor. They did not discriminate based on pride, looks, presentation or income. You are welcome here. You are loved. This is the great commandment at work.

A third restaurant visit happened on the way home that night, when we stopped at our favorite pizzeria along the way, "Famous Pizza on route 6. We ordered a small pizza as a snack, and ate it in the truck so we could listen to the radio while we were eating. During the middle of that, the pizza chef came out and waved to us. He had a bag of pizza dough bits crushed up. I rolled down my window and said hi, and he announced that he was feeding the pizzeria mascot, a pigeon that visits them every day. Just then, a beautiful dove flew in front of my truck and began eating the pieces of cooked dough he was broadcasting on the ground. This was the third of these special moments happening to us, fuel I thought for this sermon. Here they were lovingly caring for a wild pigeon, that most people would simply shoo away. And the holiness of it was shown to me when I saw the pigeon he referred to like he was ordinary, but rather extraordinary, a dove. What a sing of God's love to me.

Last week I also saw someone get a farewell party at work. There was plenty of food that everyone contributed. There was a cake that some chipped in on to buy. There was someone being valued, thanked and told he would be missed. There was someone being hugged by his coworkers. This is love. Even in the workplace.

I saw a group of Boy Scouts on T.V. camped out for two nights in the cold, collecting a huge amount of food for Thanksgiving dinners and other canned and prepared foods for local food pantries. This is love. This is learning to care and love.

I saw friends and news staff comforting a grieving father who was told that his son had just died in a shooting this past week. Their comforting response was loving, and much needed for a father whose love and heart were breaking before our eyes on the T.V. news. This too is love on many levels.

Love you neighbor. Love as you would want to be loved. What would Jesus do? Is there any question?

True love is able to move not only hearts, but also overcomes the mountains of fear and loneliness and despair that human beings can feel. True love is giving of yourself, from your heart, to others. Love matters. Most of the other things we worry about don't, and in fact aren't even a fraction of a grain of sand in the whole scheme of life and things. What matters is that you and I are lovers. This is who we are. This is how other people know we are Christians, by our love.

What would Jesus do? What do you think? Today we remember the great commandments are the new commandment of Jesus: [John 13:34-35] "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." AMEN.