

Meditation for the Third Evensong of Advent

'And one of them, a lawyer, asked him "which is the great commandment of the law?"

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There are three heavenly virtues: faith, hope, and love: and the first of these is love.

Of course love is the first of these. Our society cannot have enough of love. We talk about it all the time; we have slogans that 'love is love'. We date for love; we marry for love; we divorce for love. We do not know what love is, for we seem that we will say that we love anything. We will even love New York.

When we hear the word 'love,' we think of many things, in many different contexts.

When we hear it in a Hallmark movie, we think of a kind of high school infatuation, love is what makes you feel warm about another person.

When we hear it from a politician talking about a social issue, we think of apathy; love is what makes you not care what others do.

When we hear it about a parent or grandparent, we think of loyalty; love is what makes you be there for them whether you like them or not.

Love seems to mean anything and everything. A soldier loves his country, which is devotion. A customer at a restaurant loves his butter, which is gluttony. I love sounding smart, which is arrogance

But none of these, none of them at all have anything to do with the Biblical idea of love.

God commands us *'The Lord, your God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord with all*

your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

It is a little subtle, but God defines love as
He understands it, which means love as it truly is, right here.

God is one with Himself. He has no parts. He has no divisions; not of heart, nor of mind, nor of strength. To love is to be one with another. When God says, '*Love the Lord*' He is simply saying 'be one with the Lord.'

And it is obvious now why Jesus says, '*this is the great commandment of the law.*' For what is greater than to be one with God?

We can never understand what this is like, to love God, to be one with God, and yet God never ceases to try to teach us. We who rely always on *the law and the prophets*.

For He dwelt with Adam and Eve in the garden, but they did not understand.

And He guided Israel in a pillar of fire by night, but they did not understand.

He dwelt in a great cloud in their midst upon Mt. Sinai, but they did not understand.

And He came into their camp within the Tabernacle, but they did not understand.

He ate with men by burnt sacrifice in the Temple of Jerusalem, but they did not understand.

They did not understand that God did not care for gardens or burnt sacrifices, *for he hates the blood of bulls*. They did not understand that God wanted something very simple. To be one with His people, His people, whom He loves.

In love, the Lord God now does not merely dwell in the midst of His people, but becomes one with them. He *is made man*. For such *is the love of God*. '*A child is born unto you.*' Will His people receive such wonderful love with joy, or with displeasure. [Will we understand?]

Perhaps King Herod will provide us an answer, or all of us on Good Friday, or will we find it on Easter?

'No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

*Sermon Texts: Deuteronomy
6:1-7; Matthew 22:34-40.*