

## Leonia Presbyterian Church - April 24, 2016 – It's All About Love –

<sup>34</sup>I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” – John 10:34-35

If this is the new commandment, what was the old commandment? And is it really new?

I think about Jesus in the twenty-second chapter of Matthew verses 36-40 where he answers the question, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” <sup>38</sup>This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

The same is true for the community of Luke. In chapter 10 when told to love one’s neighbor as one’s self, the question is asked, “Who is my neighbor?” To which Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. One might infer that Matthew’s and Luke’s communities are so inward focused that they’ve forgotten that they’re not here just for themselves. Somehow both communities have lost their focus, so much so Jesus has to bring them back to what’s important: that the love of God leads to the love of one’s neighbor, to the love of the other, not just of the self.

Now if these are the “old” commandments, it would appear the problem in John’s community is just the opposite. They’re so focused on the outside, they’ve neglected the relationships that are supposed to provide the foundation for what they’re doing. Isn’t that the way of the church? We’re so passionate about our causes, we ignore or slight or deem worthless those who don’t share that passion.

What Jesus gives to John’s community – and us – isn’t so much a new commandment, as it is a reminder that caring for those who you are in relationship with is the real proof of whether you’re living out the first and greatest commandment: to love God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind. 1 John 4:20 says “Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.”

Loving our brothers and sisters will always be an ongoing issue for the Christian community. It’s human nature to think of what we want for ourselves first. That’s the original sin: to act as if what we want is all that matters. We don’t see another’s humanity because it interferes with what we’re preoccupied with at the moment. This doesn’t make us selfish, but if we’re not careful we can become self-centered and eventually selfish.

It’s going to happen, so instead of beating yourself up when it does, use two checklists. The first is 1 Corinthians 13:4-8: <sup>4</sup>Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup>It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup>Love never ends. Just asking yourself simply “Am I being patient, am I being irritable, am I rejoicing in the truth, etc...” would interrupt quite a bit of our unloving behavior.

The second is this handout called One Anothering: A Sample. On it are 84 New Testaments scriptures that remind us how to love one another in concrete ways: forgive, rejoice with, weep with, serve. If we did these – even just one per day – we’d be bringing love in concrete ways to each other and eventually to the world Jesus has asked us to reach. Genuine love is what the world is looking for. We have it. Let’s share it. Let’s love one another as he has loved us so the world will know that we are his disciples.