

Sunday Sermon October 25, 2026

Good morning! It is so great to be back!

How could Bill have given me such a tough Gospel to preach? All this LOVE stuff, right? I mean, did he get to preach on all the easy readings while I was gone? You know I'm kidding, because I was preaching on those same readings up North, and I was almost giddy when I opened my Bible and saw THIS was my first Sunday Gospel.

When I stand here and look out, I know this is God's dwelling place. Because that thing upon which Jesus said "hang all the law and the prophets" is here. Love. Love is here.

Thank you for bringing some love here with you. I brought some too. And after we are done hanging out together today, we are going to have even MORE. Even more love. It's cool that way, love is. It multiplies; so when we leave today, we will have even more than we started out with. We will take it with us and give it to the folks we run into out there.

"Which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus answers this without a moment's hesitation: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

"When I learned to make the sign of the cross, I think my Catholic Grandmother edited this portion of the Gospel for her Protestant grandkids. "Love the Lord your God, with all your mind, with all your heart, with all your strength and our soul."

"And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" All of Christianity is distilled down to its essence so that maybe we'll pause long enough to hear it.

Love. Love God and love your neighbor. How could we possibly be in right relationship with God without being in right relationship with our neighbor? We can't love God and refuse to love what God loves.

Two (what I think are) anonymous quotes I believe speak bold truth are these: "When Jesus said love your neighbor, he knew your neighbor would act, look, believe and love differently than you. It's kind of the whole point."

And: "You will never look into the eyes of someone that God does not love."

And it sure sounds to me like we are to love ourselves. God looks into our eyes, too.

"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. "And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Jesus takes over 600 frequently complex, behavior-focused laws and boils them down to these two relationship-focused laws. They are simple. They are not, however, easy. On our own? They are too much for us. We need God, and we need one another.

Many of you know I came to the Priesthood through the back door. I worked with teenage drug addicts for over 20 years first.

One of my first Priest friends was a woman named Devon. One day at lunch, she looked at me and said, "You can dive down into the deepest, darkest, murkiest waters and get hold of people and drag them up onto shore where the sun hits their faces and lay there with them until you're both laughing like no one I've ever met before."

Devon is a liturgist extraordinaire. I looked at her and said, "And when I'm done with that? I would have no idea what to do with them if it wasn't for you. Left to me, we would be beached. And I believe with all my heart God wants them to get up and walk with Him. You write the Liturgies that allow them to do that.

"I can love people in the trenches and the muck of addiction in a way that comes natural to me. But helping them learn to live a daily life of growth in a prayerful, consistent faith life? Devon had to teach me how to help them do that.

Love comes in many forms, my friends.

We may tend to think of love as a feeling; we claim to "love" many things. We "love" going on vacation, or reading a well-written novel, or watching

the Brewers. But think about it: Jesus doesn't say, "I sure hope love happens to you." He isn't speaking so lightly.

Jesus is telling us that we have a God who first and foremost wants our LOVE. Not our fear, not our penitence, our worship or our piety.

We have a God who wants every one of God's children to feel loved. By us. Not shamed. Not punished. Not chastised. Not judged. Loved.

Yes, love comes in many forms, my friends.

And you and I? We are not all gifted in every single one of them. Just like my friend Devon and I? We need each other's gifts.

Some of us will be called to weep with those who weep.

Some to laugh with those who laugh.

Others to touch the untouchables.

Some of us will feed the hungry.

Some will welcome the children.

Some of us will be called to release the captives.

Some to speak forgiveness to the sinners.

Others will be called to confront the oppressors, and even more to comfort the oppressed.

In one way or another, we all wash each other's feet, we hold each other close, and we tell each other the truth.

That? That is love.

And that brings me back to where we began this morning. Love is here. We brought it with us. We found it in one another. And by the grace of God, there will be even more of it when we leave than when we arrived. So, let's take it with us.

Let's love God by loving God's children. Let's use the gifts we have, welcome the gifts of others, and remember that none of us has to do it all alone. Because the greatest commandment is not simply something Jesus asks us to believe, that's not how this works. It is something we are called to live. Love God. Love yourself. Love your neighbor as yourself. And wherever we go? May there be a little more love because we were there. Amen.