Sermon – October 25, 2026

There's an old tale about a young boy misbehaving in school, and causing a distraction. He is standing next to his table, flailing his arms, and making noise. The teacher cannot teach, the students cannot hear.

The teacher kindly asks the boy to sit down. He refuses. She's asks again, this time a bit sterner. Again, he refuses. She walks over to him and stands next to him, asserting her authority, and tells him to sit down. But the child still refuses to take a seat.

The teacher says, "Either you sit down, or you go to the Principal's office."

The boy looks at her with an expression of rebellion, and says, "Fine, on the outside I'll be sitting down, but on the inside I'll be standing up."

No one likes to be told what to do. No one likes to be made to do something. We could call it stubbornness. Or, we could simply say that we are independent beings, ones that like to make decisions for ourselves.

But there are things that we are made to do, and that's a good thing.

Laws are in place to keep us safe. Manners are practiced to keep things civil. But there are some things that cause us to bristle when we consider being made to do them.

I thought a great deal about all of this this week because of our Collect this morning. We began our service today with a prayer that includes the phrase, "make us to love that which thou dost command…." How do you make someone love something? Is it really love if we are forced into it?

This is a fascinating prayer. It dates back to the 600s, perhaps even earlier. It is one of the oldest prayers the Church has in Latin. So for hundreds and hundreds of years the church has been asking God to make her love that which God commands. How are we to understand this?

Well, the answer is in just how we use the word *make*. In both English and Latin, the word can mean different things. Yes, it can mean to be forced to do something, as that small child being made to sit down. But it also can mean to fashion, to be nurtured into existence.

The famous prayer attributed to St Francis embodies this meaning with its opening petition, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace…." The prayer is not asking God to force a person to become an instrument of God's peace. Instead it is asking to be made into such a blessing.

I think a great way to understand being made to love something, especially of the things of God, is to understand that the love, the faithfulness, the devotion is being called from us, from deep within that part of our souls that seeks that which is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise.

You know, over the years as I have sought to be a faithful follower of Christ I have realized that every step we take to draw closer to the heart of God is a response. It is a response to God's call, and invitation. It is never our idea, though at times it may strike us as we are the ones seeking God. Instead we are the one responding to a call.

St Augustine knew this many, many centuries ago when he wrote,

You called, and cried out, and shattered my deafness;

you flashed, shone, and scattered my blindness;

…I tasted, and I hunger and thirst;

you touched me, and I burned for your peace.

That is being made to love that which God commands. Augustine was not forced to love God. Augustine responded to the grace, and love

God had offered him, and that is offered to each of us.

So we pray, again,

Almighty and everlasting God, give unto us the increase

of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain that

which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou

dost command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth

and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for

ever and ever.