All Saints Episcopal Church

Steenrijk

Heelsumstraat at Leidenstraat

October 25, 2026

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost:

Proper 25A

A Sermon by the Rev. Joseph Parrish

DRAFT

“Commandment”

The Holy Gospel according to

Matthew 22:34-46

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "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.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Now while the Pharisees were gathered

together, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet"'? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Lord, grant that we who follow you will be lovers of each other and lovers first of all of you. Amen.

We are created for greatness and once Christ liberates us we can be truly great. Pastor Howard Weeg illustrates Christian greatness by a friend of his who owned a nursery bordered by a nursery of a Japanese family that had immigrated from Japan. Soon after Pearl Harbor the Japanese family was taken to a Japanese internment camp.

When they returned after the war, they expected to see their nursery in shambles but found instead that their neighbor had almost made himself sick to maintain their business for them.

Pastor Weeg's friend said, "When I pass that nursery now and see through the windows of those greenhouses the crossed beams that mark the rows of plantings, I think of the way the cross was preached in that place."

We are created for such greatness, the greatness of serving. "Whoever receives one such…in my name receives me."

-by David O. Bales

-from A. Howard Weeg, “True Greatness,” Augsburg Sermons: Sermons on Gospel Texts from the New Lectionary and Calendar, Series B (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975), pp. 238-242.

http://sermonmall.com/TheMall/06/sep06/Dumped/092103z.html

There is a prayer inscribed at the doorway to St. Stephen's Church in London:

“O God, make the door of this house wide enough to receive all who need human love and fellowship; narrow enough to shut out all envy, pride and strife.

“Make its threshold smooth enough to be no stumbling block to children, nor to straying feet, but rugged and strong enough to turn back the tempter's power. God make the door of this house the gateway to thine eternal kingdom.”

-from George Appleton, editor, The Oxford Book of Prayer (New York:

Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 73.

world. [URL of SermonMall above]

For Jesus says in the kingdom of God greatness, real greatness, comes in developing the attitude and the ability of people of power to be of service to those who are invisible. Jesus says, “If you want a place of honor, you must become a slave and serve others.” Greatness, Prestige, Honor in the kingdom of God is given to those who make themselves the servants of those who have no power to command.

It is not some radical new idea that Jesus brings. The people of God are judged by how they treat those who are the weakest, the lowest, the poorest. The Prophet Amos spoke over and over again about the judgment and punishment of God being sent to the people of God because of the cruel and heavy way that they treat the stranger in their midst; the way they exploit the widows and ignore the needs of the orphans. The Lord said to Amos, “I will punish Israel for countless crimes, and I won't change my

mind. They sell honest people for money, the needy are sold for the price of sandals. They smear the poor in the dirt and push aside those who are helpless." The true measure of greatness of a people is how society treats the weakest and lowest in their midst.

-Rick Brand, Henderson, NC

http://sermonmall.com/TheMall/06/sep06/Dumped/092103z.html

A short story by Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Yentl", is set in Eastern Europe

in 1904. The plot deals with the internal conflict of a young girl who is fascinated by the discussions of Jewish intellectuals, but whose socially determined role is to be a homemaker.

In the opening montage, we hear a student praising the genius of a teacher whose talent is to complicate things—he has twenty-five different interpretations of Genesis alone. Later, one of Yentl's fellow students in the yeshiva praises a teacher who is able to simplify things to the extent of providing one answer which will work for ten questions. Yentl's

response is that her father was able to come up with ten questions for every answer. [But Jesus gives one great commandment.]

-by Harold Hatt

http://sermonmall.com/TheMall/99/oct99/102499d.html

My maternal grandfather, a lawyer, was famous among his grandchildren for giving us riddles. "Round as a biscuit, busy as a bee; prettiest little thing you ever will see." [a watch]

Anthony Robinson wrote a sermon on this passage titled Encountering a Riddle. He wrote of four encounters which succeed one another “in the increasingly conflict-charged atmosphere of Matthew's 22nd chapter.” In turn, Jesus is confronted by the unlikely alliance of Pharisees and Herodians with a question about taxes, then the elaborate question of the Sadducees concerning resurrection, followed by the Pharisees with their question about the greatest commandment. In the fourth encounter, which is in our gospel lesson for today,

Jesus turns the tables by posing a question to them concerning the identity of the Messiah.

"Frankly," said Robinson, "the Pharisee's question about the greatest commandment seems both more useful and more interesting. 'Whose son is the Messiah?' hardly seems a burning issue." Of course, the Pharisees answer without hesitation. Their response—that the Messiah is the son of David—suggests that the Messiah is a known quantity, is someone that fits into the scheme of things. But, of course, Jesus throws a

wrench into the tidy little answer by reflecting on the fact that the 110th Psalm finds David referring to the Messiah as “his Lord.”

“Riddles,” wrote Robinson, “are great levelers. So long as you puzzle for answers according to acquired, predictable and ‘right’ ways of thinking, you will be stumped, as were the Pharisees...I suspect that, as with riddles and parables, the real point has something to do with different ways of knowing.” St. Gregory of Nyssa once wrote that concepts create idols—but

only wonder comprehends anything; concepts create idols--only wonder comprehends anything.

Robinson reflected on his first parish in a rural setting, following his theological training at an urban and urbane seminary. One of his professors suggested that he think of himself as an anthropologist visiting a foreign culture. In the process of ministering in this unfamiliar setting, he found the capacity for wonder. Robinson reflected that in "Dakota: A Spiritual Geography", Rev. Kathleen Norris recounted her feminist

church-going journey this way: “I was drawn to the strong old women in the congregation. Their well-worn Bibles said to me, ‘There is more here than you could know.’...The point is not what one gets out of it, but the worship of God; the service takes place both because of and despite the needs, strengths and frailties of the people present.”

Jesus’ riddle illustrated for Robinson that unlearning things is sometimes necessary before new and true learning can occur. “Belief,” he wrote, “can become so rigid that it must be

suspended in order for faith to occur. But there are also times when disputation, disbelief and cynicism need to be suspended so that faith and wonder may occur."

- by Robert J. Elder

-from Anthony B. Robinson, "Encountering a Riddle," Christian Century (October 6, 1993), p. 933.

About two-thirds of Americans say they believe in God, but when one asks what kind of God do they believe in, the

answers are quite varied. Most do not think of a personal God, or a corporate God, but a God who somehow hears their prayers only in times of great distress, but otherwise, their God is pretty much unconcerned with their lives. Most have a kind of 'when the oxygen masks come down, put on your mask first—type of God'. And then maybe they know that then they are to put on the masks for those around them who may already be passing out due to the lack of oxygen. But unless the oxygen masks come down, unless some

emergency occurs, God is pretty much aloof and behind the scenes, perhaps sleeping somewhere ‘up there’ and not noticing us in our day-to-day struggles. Jesus tries to reframe God in a way that the Pharisees would recognize God—Jesus tells them to love God with all their heart, soul, and mind. And, indeed, the Pharisees would probably be repeating that verse in Deuteronomy every day in a prayer called the “Shema”. But then Jesus gives the twist that ‘the second commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself.’ Then Jesus follows with the

little word, “Hang”, “On these two commandments ‘hang’ all the law and the prophets.” But what Jesus is pointing the Pharisees to is the fact that he knows they are and will be plotting to kill him, crucify him, hang him on a cross, and yet they say they love God; however, if they actually do love God then they would be loving their neighbor. But indeed, they do not love their neighbor as they love themselves, because they are intent on homicide, killing their neighbor, killing Jesus who is standing before them.

So, we are being warned that when we are not loving our neighbor as ourselves, we are actually not loving God: First John 4:20 puts it this way, if we do not love the person God has created, how can we say we love God?

So reflect this week how we do or do not love our neighbor; that becomes a litmus test of how we love God. Scary, isn't it? Maybe scarier than Halloween.

Amen.

[A second sermon is below.]

“Commandment”

Matthew 22:34-46

October 25, 2026

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost:

Proper 25A

Description: Jesus says the great commandment is both loving God and our neighbor. So, if we do not love our neighbor as ourselves, how can we say we love God? Jesus also poses the riddle of how can King David call the Messiah both his son and his Lord. Who really is our Lord?

Tags:

Commandment, greatest, David, Lord, God, neighbor, Shema, daily, Gregory of Nyssa, believe, wonder, rigid, belief, faith, Pharisees, riddle, Bible, London, Japanese, war, garden, Amos, Yentl, Japan, Europe

[A second sermon is below.]

St. Stephen's Episcopal ProCathedral

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost:

Proper 25 (A)

October 26, 2014

A Sermon by the Rev. Joseph Parrish

DRAFT

"With all that I have"

The Gospel: Matthew 22:34-46

Many of us grew up when the church was thriving in the 1950's. Everyone was going to church. Church was the 'in thing' to do. The country as a whole was booming. Baby boomers were being born in record numbers. Schools would soon have to double in size. Junior high schools and Middle Schools were formed. Houses were growing in size. The Korean War was upon us, but it didn't really inconvenience us very much, unlike World War II, and the country was generally looking great. Television appeared, and we all sat in

awe at a sometimes disappearing signal, sometimes going awry, sometimes going into lines and diagonals. Television antennas were spouting up everywhere. And we thought we knew where we were going.

I have seen the results also in how churches expanded their Sunday School quarters—one church nearby me in Metuchen, New Jersey, built a Sunday School building that was three or four times as large as the sanctuary. Nurseries abounded. And church seemed unstoppable.

Then came the sixties. People began to be disenchanted with the way 'things' were going. There were antiwar protests. Birth control was on the rise. Children of the boomer age were becoming adults, and they were finding the opportunities their parents had were beginning to disappear, or probably those opportunities were not able to accommodate the large population boom that began after World War II. People felt uneasy. We were fighting an unpopular war. Veterans were disrespected. And the American scene

began to turn dismal in some places. A president was assassinated. A civil rights leader was assassinated. The US Attorney General was assassinated. Things were looking grim.

Then came the seventies. There was some optimism about space travel, space shuttles, space in general. But the jobs that were in place a few decades earlier were being over-occupied, in other words, unemployment became a larger and larger problem. This continued on into the eighties and nineties. The Year 2000 did not bring the Y2K crisis; but

computers were becoming so universal, that we all had at least a bit of concern that the flipping of the millennial dial could have some unintended consequences due to our over dependence on computers to run our lives, or at least augment our lives and lifestyle.

Then 2001 happened, and a new war was declared, not a war between carefully defined geographies, but a war between various religious zealots and those who were becoming more and more secular. The extremes were

beginning to fray, the edges of society were coming apart. Homelessness was growing ever more obvious following the cessation of the building of public housing during the Reagan years in the early nineties. And people began spilling out of overcrowded antiquated apartment buildings and into the streets in more and more numbers. The homeless population of New York climbed from about 50,000 in the late 1970's to 800,000 there today, 2026, more than two or three times as fast as population growth. And the solutions

were nowhere to be found at a local level. Without federal taxpayer money going into the housing for the poor, the poor found less and less affordable dwellings; they began to pile up in overcrowded apartments and houses, and a small dispute could trigger the dissolution of entire families at the 'bottom of the barrel'. Today, child support services are being stretched to their extremes. I and several other church leaders in the Union County area of New Jersey were contacted this week by the Division of Youth and Family

Services to help them find more adoptive families. The limits are being stretched to untenable limits.

Now, we are in the twenty-teens. The situation is no better this year than last as far as the homeless situation is concerned. The poor are getting poorer, a few rich are getting richer, but many in the middle range of income are finding their savings are looking less and less sufficient to carry them into their eighties where many of us will likely end up retired in a few short years. And our savings are looking less and less

optimistic as the years progress. We respond by giving the same this year to church and charities as we did ten or so years ago, averting our minds to the possibility that churches and charities can no longer survive at their previous level with dollars that are greatly discounted, with buildings that are far more expensive to maintain than they were fifty or so years ago due to the rise in electric and heating bills, and repairs due on structures that are now, well, fifty years older. If we check our doctor visits now versus fifty years ago, we find our

bodies are not quite up to their fifty-year previous vigor, in fact not even near our fifty year ago vigor. And neither are our churches. We are, in a word, suffering the ravages of the streams of age with very little to paddle with, and with a canoe that is leaking a bit more each and every year. Our church roof is at the hundred-year limit, I have been told, and slate roofs our size will take as much as a million dollars to replace. So, we need to begin in earnest to raise funds like we have never raised them before.

In the Diocese of New York, probably five out of ten full-time jobs for priests are no longer full time, but half time, or less. Seminarians are coming out of seminary with great uncertainty about how they will be able to pay off loans for seminary costs. Churches have supply priests for inordinate lengths of time, thinking that the church will 'save up' enough eventually to hire their next full time Rector or Vicar; but they find that the support dwindles, church life dwindles, and finances dwindle during their supply years. Part time might

work, but supply priests do not keep a parish alive, as we heard in the diocesan listening sessions last week here at St. Stephen's. And churches are poised for some catastrophic closings, they seemed to indicate.

So how is the state of the church, you ask, or maybe you didn't ask, but about which maybe you are just a little bit curious?

We can do just about as much as you give us, no more, no less. You get a great return on your giving. God loves a cheerful giver. And you will be blessed.

On the other hand, we have many ministries that are hanging on by their fingernails, waiting for the next grant to come in, or not, wondering how those who come to us for medical and dental care who would go completely unserved otherwise, how they will be cared for in our free clinics when our funding finally dwindles. One of our downstairs schedulers told me we have a backlog waiting list of over fifty people now for some of our health services.

I wish I could paint a brighter picture than that, but we here at St. Stephen's are

on the cutting edge, and we are getting slowly eroded by the cost of everything and the lack of any public funds to do anything, and we even offer free volunteers! It of course, 'it's just not right', but the facts are the facts, as one famous detective has been quoted. We offer more than any public facility can, housing, clothing, food, counseling, medical and dental care. But, we are here in the middle, we here sitting today in church are the ones who need both to give more funding and to find more funding. Fund finding is becoming a

major activity. And if you can help, please see me or anyone on the Vestry to register your abilities and skills in that regard.

Last week Jesus took a coin and asked, ‘whose name and authority are indicated on a coin’, and the answer was ‘the emperor’s’. But the emperor gives us less and less each year.

Today, Jesus challenges us to put in parity our love for God and our love for our fellow human being, to make our neighbor our concern, to make God our focus of worship, and to make each other

cognizant that we may not be doing enough. Our pledge income needs improvement; few are considering a tithe, when that is the bottom line of necessity according to The Episcopal Church. We need to face again God's call for ten percent of our income, earned or otherwise. There is really no justification for a 'modern tithe', only a ten percent one. So, check your numbers; see what percentage you are giving of your annual income that you report to the government. Is the church a priority in your life, and if it is, please

support us more positively his year than ever before.

Jesus challenged the Pharisees to see the Messiah as not only a human being, but as the Son of God. Our Savior not only saves us in this transitory world by the way we act and do, our Savior saves us into eternity. What we do with today is what we do for eternity.

So, take the long look. Are we moving closer and closer to God, or have we gotten into the drift of the world?

Jesus is asking us some tough questions. Let us not turn our eyes aside,

but let us face our Christian future with a new sense of hope and vitality, with new levels of giving, with new levels of concern for the down and out, and with new commitment to the faith we say we have. Jesus loves us for that.

Amen.