Sermon October 29, 2017
**Matthew 22:34-46**

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“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and will all your soul, and will all your mind.” “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

These two new commandments Jesus gives to his people summarize the 10 Commandments into two distinct commands.

When you love God will all your heart, soul, and mind you will follow the first three commandments:

1. I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have any strange gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.

When you love your neighbor as yourself you follow the other seven commandments:
4. Honor thy father and thy mother

1. Thou shalt not kill.
2. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
3. Thou shalt not steal
4. Thou shalt not bear false witness
5. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife
6. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s goods.

By following these commandments we honor God and our neighbor.

You know this and I know this. We are taught these commandments as children in Sunday school. Our parents explained them to us when we got confused over big words like “adultery” (“That’s nothing for you to worry about, that one’s or adults.”) or “covet” (“That means don’t wish you have what others have.” - which didn’t really make sense to me growing up, because if you wanted to fit in with the cool kids in your grade you had to have the clothes, notebooks, pens with feathers on top.)

And I remember as a young child feeling I was close to breaking these commandments at least once or twice a week.

I knew at an early age these were definite rules I was supposed to follow, but boy sometimes it was tough to do so.

Recently, social media sites have gone viral with people (mostly women, but some men too) sharing stories about their experience of sexual harassment.

For those of you who do not follow social media, what ‘s happening is stories are now surfacing about men in positions of corporate power being fired from their jobs because of claims they’ve sexually harassed employees.

In social media this topic is identified as “#MeTooo”.

Women are joining their voices in sharing the suffering they’ve lived with for years from being silent about the trauma they’ve experienced from sexual harassment. They are supporting each other by sharing stories and offering words of compassion and empathy.

What makes this outcry so captivating is not only the number of voices, but that what could have turned into an ugly war of accusations is turning into something else entirely.

It’s turning into a process of profound healing. Where at one time few people spoke about having experienced harassment, because of the fear of losing one’s job or out of shame, they have now discovered a way to offer each other support.

It truly is an amazing thing to watch happen and it’s building strength each day.

And it’s not just happening in the corporate world. I trembled when I read posts from Elaine and Anna, our daughters, who wrote about being harassed when going for a jog outdoors, or being taught by friends to brush harassment off and tell themselves it’s no big deal, because that’s how the world works.

As a parent, I now understand a bit more why my parents were a bit elusive of my questions about the 10 Commandments. I realize my parents were trying to keep me from knowing too much about the world. They were trying to help me hold onto my innocence a while longer.

As a parent I want to do the same for our daughters.

Yet, I see now how God’s commandments are not so much ways to keep us innocent, as they are designed to teach us how to care for others and ourselves.

I believe God our Father knows the dangers that are in the world and does not wish for us to remain innocent. I believe His desire is for us to know the world around us so that we are prepared for whatever comes our way. Prepared in the sense that we can say, “No, that is not how the world should work.”

Living in a world where harassment is acceptable is not what God intends for His world. Neither is it acceptable to lower our standards for any of the other commandments.

What is acceptable and good is to use the power we have, as people of faith, to bring about healing to those who have experienced trauma. And we do this by joining our voices in outrage, by listening to each other’s story, and by creating a safe space for these things to happen.

There is something going on now that we need to pay attention to: virtual strangers are coming together to create safe spaces for healing. It’s different from the dynamic traditional support groups that are doing good work too. It’s different because people can show up anytime, from anywhere, and take part in the conversation.

It is redefining the term neighbor. It’s inclusive and nonjudgmental.

This is a different way we can live into our faith and how we can honor God and our neighbor and it’s a wonderful thing to watch happen.

Amen.