

Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 22nd Sunday After Pentecost - October 25, 2026

00:18

[Music]

00:30

So what more could there possibly be to Reformation Sunday than I get to wear this way cool stole that Sharon made?

00:38

Is that it? Okay, let's move on.

00:44

It really, at its heart, is about returning to the heart of things, returning to the things that are basic and foundational in who we are.

00:59

I think that that claim could be applied to any time the church has struggled or has tried

01:06

to find its bearings again, that it is that return to basics.

01:12

So how appropriate that in a minute we will affirm our baptism with Thanksgiving prayer,

01:18

and how appropriate that today's gospel reading is the one that says, "The greatest of all

01:25

commandments. To love God with all your being and the second being like it to

01:31

love your neighbor is yourselves. How much more basic could we get than that?

01:43

[Music]

01:56

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 22nd chapter.

02:01

Glory to you, O Lord.

02:04

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees,

02:09

They gathered together. One of them, an expert in the law, asked Jesus a question to test him.

02:18

"Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

02:31

This is the greatest and first commandment." And a second is like it.

02:36

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the

02:43

law and the prophets." Now while all the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus

02:51

asked them this question, "What do you think of the Messiah whose son is he?" And

03:00

And they said to him, "The son of David."

03:03

And Jesus said to them, "How is it then that David, by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

03:11

'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet?'

03:18

If David thus calls him Lord, how can he call him his son?'"

03:24

No one was able to give him an answer nor from that day did anyone dare ask him any more

03:30
questions.

03:32
The Gospel of our Lord.

The Sermon

03:52
it's so easy to love one another as ourselves that well nothing for me to

04:00
preach about. Oh but there is. Buckle up friends.

04:12
It's really tempting to end the reading when Jesus articulates those first two

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commandments and not get into the riddle he poses later. That next bit of

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territory is difficult, it is complex and very difficult to preach on. So I am

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going to rely on my reductionist tendency, which is to say that there's

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one thing we can take away from this debate and that would be in order to

04:46
love our neighbor as ourselves. We need to be self-aware. We need to literally

04:54
know our connection and place in relationship to each other.

05:05
Once we know that, maybe loving another is easy. Or easy adjacent. Doable.

05:15
Something that we continue to strive toward even though we don't always get it

right. Yeah, probably more that.

05:26

Word geeks

05:28

like your preacher

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like to parse things in other languages occasionally.

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The word love

05:37

can be translated as for the benefit of the other.

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Sounds good.

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There is a shadow side to this, however.

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We might decide we know what's better for people.

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And this is where the church has gotten it wrong more than once.

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I've heard stories of people like those visiting after Hurricane Katrina years ago where people

06:07

were bringing stuff to donate and relief workers and Red Cross workers were saying, "Please,

06:12

No, this is overwhelming us and making our rescue attempts

06:16

that much more difficult.

06:19

If you want to help in this case,

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maybe a financial help would be better

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so that we can spend money on first aid

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and things that we know we need in this very moment.

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Replacement items, that needs to wait.

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Not incidentally, I heard on NPR probably two weeks ago

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that the Lower Ninth Ward is still rebuilding

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some two decades later, and it's a very slow process.

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Once upon a time, there was a classmate of ours.

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Do you love seminary stories or do you just find them

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kind of, I don't know, but I think this is a compelling story.

07:03

We had a classmate from Namibia.

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You were there, you might remember this.

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His name was Gautly.

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And we called him that as long as we knew him until we were in a class together studying

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theology that came up from the African tradition.

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And he said, "You know something?

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As a condition for my baptism, I had to take the name Gautly.

07:29

That's not my name.

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It's not what my parents named me."

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But we were fascinated and we wanted to know, well, what did your parents name you?

07:38

Kabangura, which means a beautiful bird.

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Well, we loved that so, and we felt a little weird

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about calling him God-leebe after that.

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But the church said, you have to be God-leebe

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if you're gonna be baptized.

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You see what I mean about thinking we're doing

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something beneficial to the other when maybe we're not?

08:02

And the postscript to this story,

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I have to say I so admired my classmates and whoever instigated this.

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When Gottlieb walked across the stage to get his diploma and his name was read as one, we

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stood and we called out his given name, Kabankura.

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I think he was a little embarrassed.

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But I think for us, that was a way of saying, fellow human being named in love by your parents,

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that is more than enough.

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You don't need another name tacked on as a prerequisite to belong.

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Take one if you want one, but don't have it imposed on you.

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I read this morning an article, more of a sermon,

09:02

by Dr. Diana Butler Bass, who says that loving one another

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as easy as it sounds is probably going to be the key

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to our very survival.

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She pointed to a couple of things, including,

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and maybe you've read about this,

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the election in Ohio for governor,

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and the campaign ads that are circulating

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that are unspeakably cruel and patently false.

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That should be bad enough, but the candidate stands by them

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and the leaders of his party who profess to be Christian

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are calling it fair game and it's what we do to win.

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I think the expression on your faces as I recount this tells me what I need to know about what you think.

10:00

Not exactly loving your neighbor, but it is this love of neighbor that I think is going to be the antidote against such cruelty.

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Now for those of us who are maybe new Canadians

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or been a while around here, maybe we think,

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well, we're better than that.

10:23

Now I'm gonna get in trouble.

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You were with me a minute ago,

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but I don't know if you're gonna be with me

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on this next bit.

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The referendum in Alberta,

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the one about separating versus staying,

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many of us were very relieved at the outcome.

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And then the haunting question came,

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Yeah, but what about the other nine ballot issues?

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Did you read those?

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They were all very anti-immigrant.

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And not only anti-immigrant for prospective

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people coming to Canada, but for the ones who are here now.

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Seems kind of cruel, doesn't it?

11:08

Now we can debate immigration policy, I suppose,

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And I would be coming into that fairly ill-prepared.

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But I think I know cussiveness and mean-spiritedness

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when I see it, that people would say, well,

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we will just take care of our own.

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And forget about you, because maybe you

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have a little extra melatonin in your skin.

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Melanin.

11:30

I'm sorry, melanin in your skin.

11:37

If we are to love our neighbors as ourselves,

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We need to regard our neighbor as being very much like ourselves and we like them.

11:47

That there is not this one up, one down, or hierarchy of people based on anything.

11:55

Really.

12:00

So I think it starts with self-awareness.

12:05

Humility, which literally means down to Earthness.

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I had an interesting experience just yesterday as area churches gathered to learn about something

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called mapping the sacred and it was presented by one of our pastors, Dr. Kevin Powell, and

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he was teaching us that there are lots of different ways that we connect with the sacred

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or with the divine with God.

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We all have kind of our natural ways of leaning in and he and a fellow researcher came up

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with nine of them. What was intriguing about this was the conversation that that invited.

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I kind of wandered from table to table listening to stories from other congregations. The one

12:51

that was the most interesting to me was one from a congregation, very much like us, maybe

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smaller, who does this amazing program now called Second Blessing. It began being geared

13:06

single moms and to families who were living paycheck to paycheck but never

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really making it from one to the other. Well this group said we've discovered

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this is who we are. We've discovered that we feel for people and it leads us to

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want to act in ways that are caring and generous but we panic almost every week

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because we don't know if we're up to the task because the need is so significant

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and it's just us.

13:42

I think that's still loving your neighbors yourself, even if the need is so overwhelming.

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And yet, this group knows where they keep on.

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I think it's worth mentioning that there are people from as far away as Burlington who travel to your hometown

14:04

to receive care.

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I would say that's loving your neighbor as yourselves.

14:15

Maybe a rabbinic story

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is a nice way to punctuate all of this

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and bring it together.

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If we love our neighbor as ourselves,

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we really have to think about how we look at other people.

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So here's the story. A rabbi takes students out just before sunrise, which if it were this time of year in this part of the country would be what, 730?

14:47

I don't know if that was a complaint or what that was, but there you are. Just before dawn.

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The question posed was, how do you identify the precise moment of daybreak?

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Well, the story suggests that rabbinic students are caners, and so they all had answers ranging

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from when you see the silhouette of the trees against the sky and you see the rough outline,

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when you see the contour of the land, no, when you see the first bits of color.

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And then the answer came that the rabbi sought.

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It is when you can look upon the face of another

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and see that they are created in the image of God.

15:44

That is the moment of daybreak.

15:48

That is the moment that we live into the priestly code

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of loving God with all we are,

15:58

and loving our neighbor as ourselves.

16:05

Amen.