**Sunday, October 31, 2021
Twenty Third Sunday After Pentecost
Officiant - Rev Paul Woolley
Organist - Dorothy Miller**
1st Reading: Ruth 1: 1-18
Psalm: 146
2nd Reading: Hebrews 9: 11-14
Gospel: Mark 12: 28-34

**Mark 12: 28-34**

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbour as oneself,' - this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

**Message**

Every once in a while when I am in a safe environment around people that I trust, I will admit that my BA, my undergraduate degree is in Philosophy. That often leads to people asking me that age old question, that people think defines the type of thing that Philosophers study - you know the question, here it is, “If a tree falls in a forest and there is nobody around, does it make a sound?” May I convince you that in all my years of studying Philosophy, no one has ever considered that question. So all silly stuff aside, I want to say that the noun ‘philosopher’, means one who loves wisdom.

Philosophy has for centuries been considered a topic that one should study either before or during the study of Theology. Philosophy of Religion is a required study for any Master of Divinity Degree.

Among many other other things Philosophers spend quite a lot of time analyzing the use of language, since ideas are mainly expressed through language. And today, I want to touch on the religious use of language.

Generally, these the most common uses of language:

**Informative language function**: essentially, the communication of information and ideas.

**Expressive language function**: reports feelings or attitudes - this includes poetry

**Directive language function**: language used for the purpose of causing (or preventing) overt action.

**Phatic language**: "Elevator talk" and street-corner conversations accomplishing a social task.  "Hi" or "How are you?

A lot of speech is a combination of these modes.

However there a some other modes of language, which become part of what we might call ritual language

**Ceremonial**--(also ritual language use) probably something quite different from simply mixing the expressive and directive language functions because performative aspects are included as well. Example: "Dearly beloved, we are gathered here together to witness the holy matrimony of …."

{notice when I say this everyone knows the context}

**Performative utterances**: language which performs the action it reports. For example, "I do" in the marriage ceremony and the use of performative verbs such as "accept," "apologize," "congratulate," and "promise." These words denote an action which is performed by using the verb in the first person—nothing more need be done to accomplish the action. Or again in the context of a matrimony, when the Priest utters the phrase, “I now pronounce you man and wife”, by saying that the Priest has made it happen, before that point the couple was not yet married.

So the point of all of this, is that when we are reading scripture, or in any religious use of language, we have to be aware of what mode of language or mixture of language modes is being used.

So during a service when we all stand and recite the creed, you might think that we are simply giving information, since it sounds clearly like that is what is happening. Rather the reciting of a creed is rather, the ceremonial use of language. By constantly repeating the basics of our belief we are reinforcing our belief.

This brings us, finally to today’s passage from Mark. Everybody who grew up in the Anglican Church, before the adoption of the Book of Alternative Services knows the central passage of that Gospel, not from Mark’s Gospel but rather from the Book of Common Prayer Communion Service. Beginning on page 69:

*OUR Lord Jesus Christ said: Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it:*

*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

***People.*** *Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all these thy laws in ours hearts, we beseech thee.*

Now this ‘great commandment’ appears first in Deuteronomy chapter 6: verses 4-9. In Hebrew is it called the Shema Israel which means ‘Hear O Israel’ You will know it also in the more modern form in the BAS form of morning prayer. This is an important piece of scripture for both Christianity and Judaism.

The Shema expresses the essence of Judaism, that God must be loved and obeyed at all times. These words are inscibed on small scrolls contained in a box called a mezzuzah fastened to the doorpost of Jewish homes. The wearing of a small mezzuzah (usually a cylinder) around the neck on a chain is a modern adaptation of the ancient custom.

Observant Jews still chant this prayer in the morning, sometimes while standing on their balconies, as if they are proclaiming this to the world.

All of this is proclaimed in scripture, as a command:

*Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

And today we see the same words appearing in the Gospel story, when a scribe begins by trying to trip Jesus up with a question. The scribe is most likely referring to the so called ‘Ten Commandments’, the ‘aseret ha-dibrot’ in Hebrew. But Jesus answers with the Shema - the Hear O Israel. The scribe of course has to agree with him. Jesus tells him that he is nearing the Kingdom of God.

So what about the 10 Commandments, well there is a difference in the lists of Commandments in Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5 and Exodus 34. Which list did you memorize in Sunday School? Getting back to our modes of language, they are all of the **Directive** language function, thus either to cause or prevent some action. There are some possibilities of differing translation or understanding based on language culture or history.

However we see Jesus, using what we ant to call the Great Commandments instead. Here Jesus is providing us with a conceptual basis for living the Gospel life. We can hold up any contemplated action that we might do or not do against. These two precepts of loving God and loving neighbour.

So lets examine this in terms of modes of language:

Informative language function: it is essentially expressing a basic ideas of living a life based on love.

Expressive language function: there is an attitudes expressed in the words

Directive language function: yes, the language used is directing us to care for others which is an implied action. (Note that the word used for love in the Greek New Testament - agape - can be translated as caring for others or caring love.

The fact that for millennia, both Jews and Christians had used the Shema the Great Commandments within rituals attests to its power to solidify faith and to remind us of our call to be faithful people of God.

So keep on repeating those words in your daily prayers and meditations, since on those words ‘hang all the Law and the Prophets.’

Today in lieu of memorial flowers from the Chancel Guild, in gratitude, we remember for their commitment to our church, Leslie and Marion Dickinson, Margaret Conn and Nellie Palmer.

News and Events
Please send all announcements for the bulletin to Karen by 11:00 a.m. Tuesday of each week. Call 519-344-9531 or email canondavis@gmail.com

Birthday Wishes to Carol Spence, Jean Laidlaw, Mike Dawson, Brianna Dodkin from your friends at CDM.

Small Day by Day booklets for Nov/Dec/Jan has been delayed, however, two large print copies are available at the back of the church

Carol Mercurio has placed an order for 2022 Church Calendars. If you are interested in purchasing a calendar, please call 519-344-9531

Remembrance Day Service this year at CDM will be Sunday, November 7, 2021

Wednesday, November 24, Ham & Scalloped Potato Take Out Dinner.
Cost: Adults $20.00, Children $12.00

Reminder, Sunday, November 7th, it's time to "fall back" one hour at 2:00 a.m.

Sunday, November 7, 2021
BAS-Holy Eucharist
Remembrance Day Service
All Saints Sunday
Officiant - Rev Ray Jenkins

Followed by our First COFFEE HOUR
Hope to see you there