

**25<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021**  
**DON'T DISCONNECT**

*Prayer*

Lord, please use this sermon to bring glory to your name, joy to your people, and salvation to the lost.

AMEN

*Law*

The past several weeks, the sermons have focused on the Epistle readings from the book of Hebrews. They have highlighted the differences between the old covenant and the new.

Although not formally enumerated until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century after Christ, Jews who were alive during Jesus' earthly life had not only the 10 commandments, but over 600 specific commandments! These included both positive commandments – things they were required to do, as well as negative commandments – things they were to abstain from. They range from the overarching – to know that there is a God – to the routine – to burn incense every day – to the obscure – not to eat worms found in fruit.

In contrast, Jesus summarized the whole of the Law in the two great commandments (Matthew 22:37 – 39):

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*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*

The old covenant was written on tablets of stone, stored in the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, as well as on the scrolls containing all of what we call the Old Testament.

Today's text tells us that the new covenant is not written externally, but internally: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.

Why two places? Because God designed us in such a way that we have two fundamental ways in which we make decisions; some of us are thinkers – using reasoning and logic to determine action while others are feelers – using emotions, instincts, and even hunches to determine actions. The Greek of this passage reflects just that – God has written His laws on our καρδιάς (kar dias), from which we get words like cardiac; that part of us which produces desires, as well as our διάνοιαν (di an oi an), that process that we use to arrive at truth through a process of comparing various solutions.

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*Gospel*

Two weeks ago, the sermon painted a pretty through picture of the sacrificial system of the old covenant, with the priests and the High Priests making bloody sacrifices and offering on almost a 24/7 basis, either in the tabernacle or at the temple in Jerusalem to make atonement for sins.

We've also talked about how Jesus serves as both High Priest AND sacrifice, our eternal scapegoat, who has taken away the sins of the entire world.

Today we read:

*And when sins have been forgiven – literally sent away - there is no need to offer any more sacrifices.*

You may have heard the phrase "forgive and forget;" and while it expresses a good ideal, we as fallen creatures can never really forget. God, on the other hand, is perfect and He indeed can forget – to actively choose NOT to remember.

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And what is it that He chooses to forget – again, the text uses two words that cover all situations. He forgets our sins – our ἁμαρτιῶν (ha mar tiōn) our loss because we missed the mark. This seems to cover those situations where our intentions may be good but fell short of what they should have been – our sins of omission or that which we failed to do. The second thing that He forgets are our ἀνομιῶν (a nom iōn), those sins of commission, where we purposefully and intentionally do something that we know is wrong.

This forgiveness reflects the now, but not yet process of restoring our relationship with our creator. He is available right now, 24/7 to converse with us through prayer and His word and is never too busy or preoccupied. When heaven and earth made new again, I expect that we will be able walk and talk with Him in the same way that Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden.

*Meeting Together*

The reading ends with a relatively short exhortation that I would like to try to unpack. The text is simple - *And let us not neglect our meeting together*, but why is this so important? Let me suggest a couple of reasons.

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One of the reasons we meet centers on God's word. Scripture tells us (Rom 10:17) *faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. Therefore, we both read scripture and include a sermon as part of our **worship services**. In addition, we are all called to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the scriptures, which we do on a regular basis through our **study of the bible**, be it on Sundays between services, on Wednesday evenings, or once a month on a Thursday.

A second reason for meeting is specifically mentioned in today's reading – to motivate and encourage one another. This encouragement happens when we meet for prayer on Saturday morning, talk on the patio between services, participate in a work party, write a note to our PBJ preschooler, work together during a council meeting, or go out for a beer after a meeting – just to name a few of the many opportunities we have every week.

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*Don't Disconnect*

A third reason for meeting is that as members of the body of Christ, each one of us has been given talents, abilities, and gifts that are necessary for the body to function properly. We can no more be a functioning part of the body in isolation as can a brain or an eye sitting in a jar on a shelf – we must be connected, not disconnected. And lest you think this is only about physical isolation, we can isolate in other ways as well. We can live next to neighbor for years and never even know their names, much less what they do for work or enjoy for recreation or think about the hot topics of the day. We can worship together and recognize and even greet the person who sits in the two pew in front of us every week but be just as ignorant of them as a person as we can be of our neighbor.

And just like our body needs food, we as the members of the Body of Christ need spiritual food for sustenance and growth; this comes through the means of Grace – Word and Sacrament that we received both when we meet with together and when we meet with God individually.

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*Communion*

I'd like to end by mentioning a final reason meeting together and that's to share in the meal that Jesus provides for us. We commune, we participate in the body and blood of Christ, on a regular basis. We even have a common cup available for those who want to emphasize our togetherness in this way. This is not an isolated act, even when Pastor offers this meal to the sick and shut in, he invites all of those who are present and recognize the real presence of the Lord to participate.

Let us recognize and celebrate how the Lord has made each of us, along with the roles and offices He has called us into, and not allow those differences to cause division or exclusion. Let us remember that it was also Jesus who called us to be members of His body, and, as the head of the body, guides and directs us the way we should go. Finally, Let us remember Peter's words from his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter (2 Peter 1:3-4) His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

AMEN