

Matthew 16:13-20

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Good morning,

This sermon is both the last sermon in our series on the 10 Commandments and the last sermon that I will preach with you. It is my very last day here at Zion.

I'm not going to preach much on our final commandment – it's simply, "do not murder." Don't do it. Really don't. It's a simple commandment – both on its surface and in its depth. We are asked to, of course, not harm another human but to care for our neighbor.

Luther says – "We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life's needs." ALL of life's needs. This seems like a big ask. Life has a lot of needs. I mean just this morning we all had a lot of needs that needed to be fulfilled – and it's only 10:--. And of course we are a pretty privileged group here – housed and fed, clothed and able to be connected to the world beyond ourselves.

We are charged in this commandment to help our neighbors meet all of their needs and the need at the top of the list is the need to live.

Looking into our African descent commentary, we are pointedly reminded that black and brown lives are 4 times more likely to be murdered than the national average. (According to this 2014 data.) As we have known for years and as we have seen in the last year, these deaths – these murders - are committed even by those we have charged with maintaining peace and justice.

So what are we called to do in response to this commandment?

What are we called to do in response to each one of these commandments? This list of dos and do nots.

You shall have no other Gods.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord.

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.

Honor your father and mother.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female servant, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

We are called to care for one another – really and truly care. That's why Jesus came and summed it all up with, "LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU."(John 13:34)

It always comes down to love. If only love were as simple as the word love seems to be. To truly love well in relationship is so TRULY difficult. And I'm not talking about romantic love here...but the kind of love we feel in relationship with our friends and colleagues. The kind of love I have with you all really.

Yes, I love you all and now I have to leave you...And I don't really want to. Not today. Not now – in the midst of a pandemic when we are so far apart...not now when I haven't eaten dinner with the Wednesday night crew in so so long...not now when I'm just getting to know some of you...not now when Minneapolis could be in the midst of some really interesting movements in relation to race. Just not now.

But since I have to leave now. I would rather not address my goodbye. I want to pretend that I will see you all next week and sign off like usual. Thank you very much. I, like most everyone – don't like goodbyes. I mean I love saying goodbyes to hospitals when I've been a patient and to flight attendants as I deplane. Buh bye. Buh Bye now, Bye bye...

But I would love to ignore goodbyes to people and places that mean something special to me. And yet, that feels awful too...actually that feels worse. Have you ever heard of the term ghosting? It's something the young people do. And we older folks have maybe done this too, we just didn't call it by this name. Ghosting is simply disappearing from a relationship. It can be relatively harmless way to abandon a budding acquaintanceship or it can be a devastating way to break up with a long-term love interest.

To not say goodbye is obviously awful for the one who is left behind without explanation, but it is also terrible for the one who is leaving. We are people who need to close loops in relationships. We say hello in greeting and goodbye in leaving. We ask surface level investigative questions as we get to know someone – where are you from, how do you spend your days? And as time goes by we share more and more of ourselves. We share our griefs and our joys, our struggles and our boredoms. We pray together and sing together and our hearts weave together.

To close this loop with an official goodbye is to mark this as a place in time and honor this time together. It's necessary. It's a way to say this time mattered.

And so I want to say goodbye well. I want to thank you for all this time together. I want to remember back you first welcomed me to Zion. In the church building. I had an office with a door and some of you would poke your heads in to say, "hi." I would greet others of you at the door to the sanctuary. We would greet each other with peace handshakes and waves. Get tangled in crowds as we sought to find our ways back to our seats. We sang together and we did that amazing Christmas pageant together.

That was fun. IT was all so fun

And Wednesday night dinners – so much good food – even the cactus tacos were good. And we made lefse. I made a few potato crackers, and Stan forgave me.

And then the pandemic hit and we learned to Zoom. We learned to meet each other on-line. I know it's been lonely and awkward and we've made mistakes, but I am so proud of us – of you really...coz after all I've just been a long time visitor. Really I am. Quite amazed at this place. You have stayed together and stayed being church. You've stepped up and called each other each week, showed up for zoom worship and zoom meetings and surveys...you've stuck around and stuck together and you answered the call when the neighborhood needed food in the wind and the heat after the uprising. You all are resilient in the face of a global pandemic. This church is resilient in the face of challenge and I'm going to miss this resilient place.

I've gotten to know some of you through your illness and grief and many more of you through laughter and joy. I am grateful to have spent it with all of you. I know your faces and your expressions here on Zoom. I know your voices and your intonations on the phone. You've imprinted on my heart. Whether you like it or not...and I have done so on yours. It's what happens when we do church together. This is why we do church together. We make a difference in each other's existence and in the world out there. Zion matters. Thank you for letting me learn with you. I love you all. Amen and in case I don't get to say it later... Goodbye for now.