

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Love One Another" 7/6/22

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind, and with all your strength.* (Deut 6:5)

When one is baptized, as water and God's word mingle and flow over them, they are asked to make a vow to serve all people, following the example of Jesus.

God became human and came to live among us. His life was an example of how we were created to live. Jesus' life is the standard by which we strive to live. Thankfully in His mercy, God forgives us when we fall short. God gave us His Son to show us and His Word to guide us, instruct us, remind us. And His Spirit remains to journey with us.

When Jesus was asked which was God's greatest commandment, He said, "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 neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:29-31)

James wrote, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, 'To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.'" (Jms 1:27)

It is definitely counter-cultural. It goes against the grain. It's not the norm in our world today, where we are told it is all about me. We hear it said, in a world where you can be anything, be kind. It sounds good, and we hope to do so, but that guy over there isn't kind at all, why should I be? That guy's a bully. She cheats – and gets away with it. They're crooked in business. He lies. She's a scoundrel. Etc. etc. etc. But how another acts should not dictate how we react. God told us, instructed us, modeled for us how we should react. We should love one another. Feed the hungry. Care for those in need. And leave the scoundrels to God.

We are responsible for our actions. We are to do justice, not just think it's a good idea for others to be treated fairly. We are to DO justice. It's an action verb. In words and deeds, we are to show mercy to others, as God shows mercy to us. While we were still sinners, God sent His Son to show us His love and to give up His life, to rip open the curtain, and welcome us into God's presence.

We pledge that all people are created equal. This is how we are to live. Treat others with respect, honor life, fight for the rights of the downtrodden, realize we all have our own worsts, our own fears, our own need for acceptance. We each need to be and deserve to be loved. We are not to judge, put down or push aside another. We all have worth. There is no shame standing between us and God nor should there be between us and another of God's children. God so loves the world, the whole world. And we are to love them also.

We are to serve and care for those most in need, the widows, and the orphans – those without a support system. We are not alone in this, don't let anyone feel like they are. That's not fair, not just. Everyone deserves to know they are not alone, but they are cared for. God sends us out to make a difference.

We are sent to be Church, the body of Christ, to a world of woe, to people in pain. To love God, to love one another, to serve all people. This is our mission. This is our vow.

Let us Pray

God of compassion, thank You for Your love. Help us to accept this love for ourselves and to show it to others through how we live, how we view each other, how we treat our neighbor and the stranger among us. Give us Your compassion for others, help us to choose to reflect Your love in our daily lives. **Amen**