

**THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER  
PENTECOST**



**Owe no one anything, except to  
love one another.**



Lord, open our lips and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia.

## **Venite**

Come, let us sing to the Lord;  
let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.  
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving  
and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.

For the Lord is great God,  
and a great King above all gods.  
In his hand are the caverns of the earth,  
and the heights of the hills are his also.  
The seas is his, for he made it,  
and hands have molded the dry land.

Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee,  
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.  
For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his nature and the sheep of his hand.  
Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice.

## **Psalm 119:33-40**

### *Legem pone*

33 Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, \*  
and I shall keep it to the end.  
34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law; \*  
I shall keep it with all my heart.  
35 Make me go in the path of your commandments, \*  
for that is my desire.  
36 Incline my heart to your decrees \*  
and not to unjust gain.  
37 Turn my eyes from watching what is worthless; \*  
give me life in your ways.  
38 Fulfill your promise to your servant, \*  
which you make to those who fear you.  
39 Turn away the reproach which I dread, \*  
because your judgments are good.  
40 Behold, I long for your commandments; \*

in your righteousness preserve my life.

## THE LESSON

### Romans 13:8-14

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

## REFLECTION

by  
Norm Wright

### +In the Name of our life-giving, loving God+

Building on last Sunday's message of taking up our crosses (our true selves) in order to follow Jesus, we turn to Paul's letter to the Romans. The first line of today's lesson requires us to ponder its breadth and depth:

"Owe no one anything, expect to love one another."

At first glance this sounds easy enough. In fact, it can sound rather cheap until one starts to consider what this statement is premised on.

Love is tricky word; in that, the English language only has one word - love - for all the forms of love we experience; whereas, the ancient Greeks had seven, possibly more. Most are familiar with the first three types; as love born out of deep regard and respect for the other (*agape*) which Christians frequently associate with the love of God, as brotherly or the love one has for one's friends (*philia*), and as intimate or mystical love (*eros*). We are less likely to be familiar with the other Greek forms of love; such as, playful or socializing love (*ludos*), patient or tolerant love (*pragma*), healthy self-love (*philautia*), affectionate or family love (*storge*), and jealous and/or obsessive love (*mania*). These are all helpful terms that have use in psychology and in charting the uncertain terrain of love in human relationships.

Paul, being a Jew living in a Hellenistic world, would have been familiar with these various forms and applications of love in the age and world he lived in. Paul was particular about Greek word he used to describe the type of love referenced in today's lesson; a verb form of *agape*. Why I am drawing attention to the specificity in his use of *agape*-love is that he applies it not only to how we should love God but also to how we should love others and ourselves.

Merely treating *agape* as God's love, the love of God, or as one's love for God misses the depth of its meaning. In order to love God in the sense of *agape*, one must love what God loves; as having deep regard and respect for all creation which is born of God's love.

In order to love what God loves means extending an *agape*-love to our true selves. According to Paul, *agape* is rooted in the healthy treatment of one's self (*philautia*). The love of self (*philautia*) should not be misconstrued as narcissism which is falling in love with one's illusionary (if not delusional) self-made image; as in, treating one's image of self as the only "other" worthy of such attention. Narcissism has no connection with *agape* or *philautia*. Narcissism is *mania*, a jealous obsession with one's self.

"Love your neighbor as yourself" is more than a pious platitude that has a nice ring to it. It is the essential foundation upon which *agape* is built, and it is as old as religion itself. Anything that deviates or detracts from the deep regard and respect of *agape* becomes selfish or sinful.

Paul starts us out with referencing the commandments; not committing adultery, not committing murder, not stealing, and so on. Do no harm is the first rule of medicine and it is the primary principle behind *agape*. Beyond not doing harm, *agape* proceeds from a deep respect and regard for one's self as an expression of God's creative love which, in turn, enables us to have a deep respect and regard for all of God's individual creations which God, likewise, loves with deep regard and respect.

Yes - God has deep respect and deep regard for all that God created; including you and me. In *agape* we encounter the full interconnectedness of LOVE as BEING, which is summed up in the statement "God is LOVE" - a love that permeates the entire cosmos. Such love is mind-boggling.

At the end of today's reading, Paul says, "Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires." In last Sunday's Gospel lesson, Jesus implied that as the Messiah he would fight for the soul of humanity at the expense of his own flesh and blood. In that broad term, "the soul of humanity," resides your soul and mine. Paul's instruction to put on Christ means to take on Jesus's redemptive fight for the soul of humanity in our lives; to let it shine in the darkness of this world as protective armor of light.

Like the word love, the word soul is a tricky. It is often construed to mean one's spirit or ghost that will continue beyond the death of one's physical body. The soul, however, is more than that. The soul is a combination of both our physical and spiritual natures. In essence the soul is totality of who we really are; body, mind, and spirit. We can bare our souls to each other by

what we do and say to each other. Our souls, however, are never closed to God who knows the inner-most thoughts and desires of our hearts and minds.

Although Paul's epistle is written in Greek, his mind was Jewish; thus attuned to Judaic concepts; such as, the soul. To discuss this understanding of the soul, one has to turn to Hebrew Scriptures and the Hebrew language. The word for soul in Hebrew is *nefesh*. *Nefesh* is a complex word meaning breath, life, and soul. To define it in English one must understand the context in which it is used, as is true when translating anything from biblical Hebrew into another language. The concept of the soul is first identified in Genesis 2:7 "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground (*adama*), and breathed (*neshamah*) into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (*nefesh*)."

The soul (*nefesh*) is a merism; something that combines two disparate parts in the same context; in this case, the physical matter by which the first human was formed from the ground (*adama*) and the energizing breath of God breathed (*neshamah*) into the physical human form creating the first human as a *living soul or nefesh*. In other words, the soul is not a separate entity apart from our physical existence, but rather forms an interdependent *alive-ness* involving both matter and the energizing breath of God. Our first intake of breath takes on life (taking in the breath of God) and our first exhaling of that breath is giving it to others and an offering of thanks to God. "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord" is the final declaration of the Psalms. [Psalm 150:6]

In taking on life, Paul reminds us that what we do to ourselves physically and spiritually impacts our souls. In particular, Paul exhorts us to not give into the desires of the flesh. In Hebrew, the desires or appetites of the flesh are connected to *nefesh*, the soul. This would also include our thoughts that proceed from such appetites and desires.

*Nefesh* or *neshamah*, being related to the concept of breathing out, calls to mind what Jesus said, "What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart and this is what defiles." [Matt. 15:8] In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes, "Let no evil talk come out of our mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear." [Ephesians 4:29] Our souls (imprinted with God's image) have the capacity to participate in God's kenotic creativity; to give of one's self in order to be life-giving to others. As such, love of oneself is linked to the care we give others; what we breathe on them. We can either build up or we can destroy with our breath. If we build up others, we find ourselves built up. If we tear down others, we find ourselves diminished.

I cannot help but think about the importance of wearing masks in this time of Covid-19 and the connection between protecting others as vital to protecting ourselves and those nearest to us; to be cautious with what is carried on our breath. There are so many opportunities during this pandemic to instill in ourselves and in our children the connection between the care of others and the care of ourselves.

I find it disheartening that some feel it is a "right" not to wear a mask without considering the responsibility we have to protect each other. Such disregard is nothing short of being selfish; nothing short of being sinful. No one has a right to put others at risk. Equally disturbing is that

some parents are resisting the requirements schools are making for children to wear masks at school because of the fear of the “psychological damage” that could result. This is a prime time to instill in children the importance of taking care of and being responsible for the well-being of others. This pandemic offers a real life and a real time opportunity to experience what it means to love one’s neighbor as oneself.

The need for a mask to protect others from what comes out of our mouths conveys a much deeper meaning. Perhaps we should always wear a mask to remind us of the need to be cautious about what comes out of our mouths; such as, the viral verbal pandemics caused by what we say to each other and what we say about each other. Ultimately what we do and say impacts our souls. Life is a gift of God, a trust that imbues us with an *agape* type responsibility to take care of the soul given to us and the soul given to others. Only when such *agape*-love is offered to ourselves and others is it offered to God.

“Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Giver of life and love, grant that we may truly know ourselves as creations of your love so that we may truly love in us what you have made us to be. Strengthen our souls to resist all harmful desires. Help us to be mindful of what comes out of our mouths that we may breathe life-giving love to our neighbors and to all creation. All this we ask in the Name of Jesus, the lover of our souls. Amen.





*Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew,  
that I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,  
until with thee I will be one will, to do or to endure.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God till I am wholly thine,  
till all this earthly part of me glows with thy fire divine.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I never die;  
but live with thee the perfect life of thine eternity.*

*(Edwin Hatch 1835-1889)*





### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name,  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven  
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **THE COLLECT OF THE DAY**

Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### **THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

God of Love, we pray for the whole Church and our parish family. Guide your Church and this parish in the way of truth and love.

God of Healing, we pray for Bernard, Sue, Pat, Bev Ann, Dan, Jolene, Katrine, Gladys, Darold Adamson, and for those we hold in our hearts. Grant unto them and to all in need the comfort and healing of your presence.

God of Joy, we pray for those celebrating birthdays: Emma Hershfeldt (September 8). May she find joy, happiness, and fulfillment in the coming year.

God our Protector, we pray for those affected by Covid-19; for healthcare workers around the world; for those who provide essential services; for the leaders of all nations, for all government officials every where, and for all those making decisions in this time of crisis. Grant them protection and guide those in authority to make wise decisions.

God our Defender, we pray for the homeless and the jobless in our nation, and for those who have lost their homeland, their sense of security, and who find themselves dependent on the good



will of others in strange lands; that their needs are met and grant them the comfort of your Holy Spirit.

God of Life, we pray for those who have died. On this Sunday we pray for Bishop John Tarrant. May he and all the departed find life in you.

God of Mission, we pray for guidance in discerning our mission in enlarging the Family of Faith in our midst.

### **THE PRAYER FOR MISSION**

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near; Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nation into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



**MAY THE LORD BLESS US AND KEEP US.  
MAY THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON US AND BE  
GRACIOUS UNTO US.  
MAY THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON US AND GIVE  
US PEACE. AMEN**

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