

Friday, August 14, 2020

What do we owe each other?

- Pastor Hank French

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 (Romans 13:8-10).

Wow! Today's devotion is the 100th devotion I have written since we had to close the church to in-person activities way back in March. Whoever thought it would come to this? One cannot help but wonder where we would be today if the nation had faced this pandemic without all of the politicization and polarization that have prevented a full-scale, unified and coordinated response to the virus.

In the Old Testament, there are ten commandments. Bobbi and I discovered an eleventh commandment just the other day. It was written in large letters on the electronic sign in front of a Presbyterian Church on Lexington Ave. in St. Paul. The new commandment? "THOU SHALT WEAR A MASK—HYGENESIS 20:20.

When we stopped laughing at this witty way of making an important point, it occurred to us that the original Ten Commandments were given by God. They were not given by God to take away individual freedoms, they were given by God to encourage the creation of a civil society where people could live safe and secure lives by respecting and caring for each other. THOU SHALT WEAR A MASK on the church's electronic sign seems to have been written with the same intent.

I suspect that, if Paul were writing our text from Romans today, he might have put it this way: "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"; You shall wear a mask; You shall socially distance; You shall wash your hands; You shall not attend large indoor gatherings 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."

It is not political at all. Following health directives in this pandemic is all about love of the neighbor.

Prayer: Loving God, in the midst of these uncertain times, help us to focus our attention on loving our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.