

The Church is not
the building, it's
the people ---

Pentecost XXII

"You shall love the Lord your God." In the name...

MENTION 25-YEARS IN THE NAVE

Episcopal Church to me:

1. Unresting, unchanging, and silent as light
2. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness
3. Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus
4. 25-years: 2600+
5. Saints gone before us
6. Time matters, and is not simply a limitation—it is our present way of experiencing eternity
7. Time is our window to eternity, and therefore we can be patient with time
8. The Episcopal church has taught me to be patient with time (blows my mind that this was built the year I graduated high school)

↳ sacred space
↳ sacramental

In the end, dear friends, it IS love of God. Worship of Almighty God. We're nearing the end of Pentecost, and yet it's a statement for the beginning of every mass as well—LOVE. The medieval liturgists must've really thought we were all a bunch of Pharisees, for they put it at the beginning of the liturgy—a statement originally intended for the Pharisees of Judea.

I have spent the last 13 years trying to make sense of but ONE of those beautiful exhortations—to love the Lord my God with all of my MIND, and to think how much deeper we might go! Seven years in seminary, 12 years in building a school, 12 years serving/teaching in churches—MIND-centered, and yet to be reminded again by our Lord—'tis all for love. Love is the essence of everything. And THIS worship service, as well as any, the very culmination of it all. You need not search elsewhere for the full love of God, dear friends. It is here.

I find Jesus' answer intriguing, given the question, honestly. Jesus has been challenged first by those who deny the resurrection—also known as Sadducees. And so the Elders—the Pharisees—take their turn in presenting a question which they alone would've been given leisure to answer in any other circumstance. Sum up the law. Sum up the Old Testament, while you're at it! I assume the Pharisees knew their stuff—Jesus seems to think so in the next passage; but the political gaming of it all is interesting. In this passage alone they've sent everything from heretics, Pharisee roadies, and Herodians (the occupying enemy!) to try and catch Jesus. They've presented political obstacles to healing; legal and religious obstacles to teaching. And then they reach for their Bibles.

Hence the intrigue. Jesus reaches for love. And then reaches for Christology—the doctrines of Jesus. Which is to say that courageous love and rich theology are not religious artifacts for those bored on Sunday mornings. They are tools of the very trade of the life of Faith. To

catechize a child, for example, is to arm him for Herod. And Herod is everywhere. He's a new Pharaoh in this passage. And he's a new something in your life today. And he hates you and your children. Arm yourself with Christology. When David, Lord of Israel, says to "my Lord," his great-grandson Jesus Christ, he points us to the dual natures of Christ, to the Davidic Kingship of Christ, to the universal Lordship of a Jewish rabbi, and to a thousand other doctrines of hope. He is the greatest among us, because he was the least, he says in the next chapter. Herod cannot win. Your children must know about the dual natures of both God and man of Christ.

And on the other hand, to flood a soul with the exercises of love is to arm that soul with the arresting love that fully acknowledges the other. Which is the church. In this world. If you'll permit me one more Old Testament dive, Jesus is quoting Psalm 2 in all of this. A Psalm so rich that Creeds spring forth from it—"today I have begotten thee???" Which is to say, that when Jesus responds to the Pharisees, he's responding with a pretext for the Trinity. My Father hath begotten ME. You shall love ME, even as you have loved my Father. Your unending challenges to my teaching notwithstanding, the answer you seek is ME. I am the summary of the law. I am the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. I am the one to whom all love is due, and if you cannot grasp it when standing in front of me, then hear my words and may they ring ever more clearly when I am gone—LOVE is the answer that you seek. Moses existed for love, dear Pharisees. Law existed for LOVE, dear teachers of the law you misunderstand. I am the law, and the law is LOVE. And I will not use my love to lord a form of inferior righteousness over the people. Instead, I will give myself up and give them a righteousness that shall endure forever. I shall descend into hell, vanquish it, and rise again so that they might have a righteousness that endures forever. Jesus is not merely some walking and talking form of therapy or life-coaching for power-abusers. Instead, he overturns the Herod's and religiously confused with a crushing blow of LOVE.

So:

1. To know the Old Testament is to know love.
2. To know the Psalms is to know the lineaments of Christ.
3. To fight the societal harm and manipulation of Herod's in this world is LOVE's game.

At this altar, the law of love is perfectly fulfilled as Christ and neighbor are made one with his body and blood. The many become one, as the Son of David shows us his Lordship of Love.

In the name...