

# COLLOQUIES with Pastor Brian

## Worship God and Love Others

<sup>28</sup>One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"

<sup>29</sup>Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;

<sup>30</sup>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.'

<sup>31</sup>The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these."

<sup>32</sup>Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other';

<sup>33</sup>and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

<sup>34</sup>When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

After that no one dared to ask him any question. (*Mark 12:38-34*)

Given that Northwood UMC is joining Asbury UMC for worship on March 15 to hear Bishop Ough preach and Norton Park UMC is celebrating a baptism, we may not get too far this week in Dr. Levine's study of Jesus' Passion. If we were to read and digest her informed perspective, we would be reminded how difficult some of Jesus' teachings were to people of his day. To be fair, Jesus' teachings are STILL difficult for people of our day. That said, after two millennia of gloss and constant repetition, we might have gotten used to the sound of these revolutionary ideas.

What does it look like to love God with all parts of ourselves? Since we are moderns, it is often hard for us to think of our selves as whole parts. We have gotten used to talking about our emotions, rarely considering how they affect our bodies or cloud our vision. Or how our body's health affects our spiritual selves and the capacity to heal emotionally, to evolve or to offer forgiveness. Yet it is all intertwined.

The Hebrew people didn't always make such distinctions. Yet as Greek thought and customs pervaded their language and culture, the gospel writers had to consider their audience. They would need to hear about how to love God with their whole selves, naming each part of the individual as a piece making up the whole. Yet the message is important for us as well. We might think we can forgive and let that be a spiritual decision. But if we have not followed through on the forgiveness with our hearts, our minds and the actions of our bodies, our commitment is hollow.

This week, let me invite you to consider and identify one way that you might give ALL of yourself in an action to Worship God and love Others. It might take some time. But all good... and challenging teachings are hard. And, worth it.

Peace to you today and in the week ahead,

Pastor Brian