

Good morning!

I'm Pastor Doug Browne. Thank you for joining me this morning. I'm glad you're here.

...

Now, with that said,

May the peace of the Lord be with you.

(pause to let folks say "and also with you.")

The late Richard Avery said this very well.

"I am the church!

You are the church!

We are the church together!

All who follow Jesus, all around the world!

Yes, we're the church together!

The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple,  
the church is not a resting place, the church is a people."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Avery, *We Are The Church!*" <https://www.hopepublishing.com/find-hymns-hw/hw4145.aspx>



We are the church when we are gathered in the sanctuary, and we are the church when we are out in the community, doing the work of God, and we are the church right now, when we are in our homes across Columbus. You are still part of the church. We are all still part of the people of God, even as we take appropriate precautions in this time of corona.

As the people of God, we remember that we belong to God, and God is trustworthy.

During this time when we're not meeting in person, I'm posting videos on Facebook three times a week, praying with you and walking through the Bible stories in the Gospel of Mark, continuing from where we left off with the sermon series I was preaching. I'm going to do this Sunday morning, Wednesday evening, and Friday evening each week until we're back together face to face. I hope that you can connect in and view them, and be reminded that you are part of the body of Christ. You are loved.



If you miss any, you can find them and watch them later either here on Facebook or linked from the sermons page on the church website.

This morning, we pick up immediately, Mark's favorite word, after the passage from Friday evening. Jesus is teaching in the Temple in Jerusalem, and the chief priests have argued with him a couple of times and lost. If you'd like to read along at home, the text is Mark 12, verses 28 through 34.

"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?' Jesus answered, '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.' 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"; 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.’ 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.”

So, you already know that this is an important Scripture passage. You hear me and other pastors reference it, a lot. So I’m not going to go into a lot of details about that there are six hundred and thirteen commandments in the Hebrew Scriptures, *et cetera, et cetera*.

These two commandments are the basis of the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments,

- “I am the Lord thy God, Thou shalt have no other gods before me,
- Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,
- Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, [and]
- Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy,”



All come from that first command. If you truly love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, you'll do those things.

The remaining six commandments,

- Honor thy father and thy mother,
- Thou shalt not murder,
- Thou shalt not commit adultery,
- Thou shalt not steal,
- Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor, [and]
- Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's stuff,

all come from the second command. If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself, you'll already be doing those things.

I'm sure that these are all familiar. But obeying all ten of the Ten Commandments is not enough.



You remember the story of the Rich Young Man? He had done all of these things, but Jesus told him to take the next step – to get rid of all of his stuff and to come and follow him.

You have to go beyond adhering to the letter of the law, because it's not about the letter of the law. It's about relationship.

Just about everything I talk about with y'all is about relationship. Relationship with God, relationship with each other.

God loves the whole *cosmos* enough that Jesus came down here, was born, lived, died, and was resurrected. Not to condemn the *cosmos*, but to save the whole *cosmos*! That is how much God loves us. God asks that we love God in return, and that we act like we love God.

And love our neighbors. We can try to do verbal and logical shenanigans about who our neighbors are, but remember what Jesus said when someone asked him. He came up with the story of the Good Samaritan. He identified the last person on the planet Earth that his listeners wanted to call their neighbor, and he



made them agree that this person was their neighbor. Our neighbors are everybody.

Right now it's kind of tough to...

Right now it's kind of tough, isn't it?

It feels so wrong, but the most loving thing we can do for our neighbors is not to reach out and touch them. The most loving thing our congregational leadership can do for you is to have the building doors closed.

We need to be showing our love for our neighbors in other ways. Phone calls. Emails. Texts. Checking in with people. Voice is better than just text. Video, if you can manage it, is even better.

Ask if they have what they need – groceries, medicines. If they say no, then please, either help them, or let the Deacons or me know.

Reach out!

...



And now, People of God, as you live in God's world,  
remember God's love for you. Reach out and love your neighbors.  
Just reach out with your words, not your hands.

Trust in God and wash your hands.

And may the grace of God the Father, the love of Jesus  
Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit rest upon you and rest in  
you, now and forever. Amen.