

Sermon for Proper 25A  
Sunday, October 29, 2017  
“Show your love”

Text: Matthew 22:34-46; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Collect of the Day

I speak to you in the name of the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Have you heard the comedian Steve Harvey? Steve Harvey has a signature phrase that he uses: “Show your love!” He usually means giving a round of applause for someone or something. But I think if there’s one word in the English language that is overused, it’s the word “love.” It is thrown around judiciously in everyday conversation. It shows up in texts and emojis—you know what an emoji is, right? Those cutesy little pictures that adorn our texts, like a smiley face, or a thumbs up or down, or a heart. It shows up in reactions to Facebook posts. Those of you who send texts on your smartphones (I hope you’re not texting right now), what does a heart mean? It means, “I love it!” or “I love you.” When we feel really passionate about something, we often say, “I LOVE that!” Sometimes we get so worked up about something that we put our whole body and self into it; “OMG! I ❤️ that!” I’m sure you’ve seen those little red hearts in texts. It’s even on street signs and billboards. How many times have we seen the phrase “I ❤️ NY”? I love New York. But, what does it really mean *to love*? What is that word supposed to mean to us? The theme of the day today, the theme of our propers and our readings is love.

In today’s reading from the Gospel of Matthew, the Sadducees and Pharisees were hot after Jesus. They kept trying to trap him and he kept stumping them with the scriptures they were supposed to be so knowledgeable about. He had just stumped them when they confronted him with a question about whether people stayed married in heaven and Jesus told them it just doesn’t matter; in heaven everyone’s in equal relationship with each other. They weren’t convinced that Jesus really knew his bible, so they asked him, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” And what was his answer? “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Where have you heard this? We say it at the beginning of the mass, don’t we? We are

reminded of the great commandments every week. These commandments are rooted in the great commandment to Israel from Deuteronomy known as the *Shema Israel*. “*Shema Israel Adonai eloheynu. Adonai echad.*” Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God. The Lord is one.” *V’ahavta eth Adonai eloheycha* (and you shall love the Lord your God) *b’kol l’vavcha* (with all your heart) *u v’chol nafshacha* (and with all your soul) *u v’chol me’odecha* (and with all your veryness). We are to love God with every fiber of our being. Then Jesus goes even deeper by teaching that through the greatest commandment and from Leviticus in the Torah, we are further commanded to love each other as deeply as we should our very selves. Paul in his First Letter to the Thessalonians said, “So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves.” So how, then, are we supposed to take that command and run with it?

As you know, we are in the midst of our stewardship campaign. We are all being reminded that we are to give a portion of our time, talent, and treasure back to God. Today’s message of how we can be good stewards of God’s blessings is an invitation, a call, to give a portion of our time over to God. Giving of our time is, in fact, an act of love. It is an act of love toward God to offer ourselves and our time to him, and we are commanded to do it in two specific ways: first to love God and next, to love and care for our neighbor. How can we do that? How can we as faithful Christians show our love? Well, showing our love to God means making sure that we are always working on our relationship with God by our daily prayer life, intentional time connecting with God and by refreshing our spiritual life through our shared experience here in this worshipping community.

And the second way that we show our love is by caring for one another; Jesus said that this is God’s second commandment us. There are so many ways that we can do that—too many to try to list right now—but in the context of giving our time to this place, thinking about what our mission is can help inspire you as to how you might give of your time here. As I said, participating in the sacramental life, in the Eucharist especially, is one way, but have you considered giving of your time to prepare this place *for* the Eucharist? (if you’re not already doing that) Help us prepare the altar and the things that adorn the worship space. Help us in fixing things around the church that need repair or beautifying

and tending the grounds. Try out for the choir. Or perhaps give of your time to help by helping us fellowship with one another and in fostering respect. We need more people to help with hospitality, putting on our coffee hours and receptions. We need more ushers and greeters. We need more people to be mentors and role models for our children and young people and teaching them our faith and traditions; you know it's one of the promises from the Baptismal Covenant. If you have a vehicle, we need more drivers to help bring people to and from church. We need more people with gifts from your own professional lives to teach us things, whether they are spiritual things or practical things for our day-to-day living. We are blessed in this place to have people who function in many arenas; you can enrich us all by sharing your knowledge and advice. We can make space for that right here during the week or on a Sunday afternoon. Finally, you can take time to reach out into the community. Help with the Senior Lunch Program. Join the prayer circle team and visit our sisters and brothers who are unable to come to church. Become a Eucharistic Visitor to bring the sacrament to those same folks; we'll train you. Get involved in things happening around the community, especially here in Woodhaven. Attend community meetings to get ideas of the needs of the community, and so they can see interest and a presence from All Saints Church. Shop in the stores, and while you're there, it's ok to mention casually that you don't live in the neighborhood, but you go to a church right here on 96<sup>th</sup> Street. You never know who might be searching or where a conversation will lead. See, it's not hard to give of your time to this place. The passion is already inside of you; tap into it. Show your love.

Finally, hold the words of today's collect in your hearts, by continually asking God to increase in you the gifts of faith, hope, and charity (or love), so that you may obtain his promises and love and do what he commands. Amen.