

Be the Good!

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Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

[0 : 0 0] Thank you.

Thank you.

And again, we don't have any congregational singing, but we are going to try and do as much as we can with music.

So we're going to do This is the Day as a responsive reading, and we're going to try this with music as background. Okay, just see if we can do this. This is the day!

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

[1 : 4 1] This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us pray. Holy God, we come to you today to glorify you, to reveal our hearts to you that we may be touched by your presence.

Lord, we are praying for an encounter with you that is powerful, that is bold. We open ourselves to you for your presence to come and manifest in this place.

Anoint this time of worship, Lord, that we may hear you, we may see you, and we may know you more. For it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

So I invite you all to stand if you're able. Amen. So I invite you all to stand if you're able to join us. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. Amen. Open my eyes, that I may see Glimpses of truth outpassed for me Lays in my hands the wonderful key That shall unrest, and set me free Silently now I wait for thee Ready, my God, thy will to see Open my eyes, illumine me Spirit divine Open my ears that I may hear Voices of truth, thou standest clear

[3 : 3 6] And while the wave notes fall on my ear Everything false will disappear Silently now I wait for thee Ready, my God, thy will to see Open my eyes, illumine me Spirit divine Open my mouth and let me bear Gladly the warm truth everywhere Open my heart and let me prepare Love with thy children thus to share Silently now I wait for thee Ready, my God, thy will to see Open my eyes, illumine me Spirit divine

Please be seated. Good morning.

Good morning. The Lord be with you. And also with you. Amen. It is good to be together. For those of you I haven't met I'm Kathy Stengel, one of the pastors here And it is great to be with you on this glorious day New news, I have a son-in-law and a step-grandson How about that?

Yay! A week ago today my daughter married Jeff And so it was wonderful to know that the church was in good hands With Pastor Sherry and Pastor Scott And it is so good to be home So I welcome you.

There is much to be grateful for The brilliance of the day outside The fact that as I look across this sanctuary You are yet alive There is a hymn And are we yet alive?

[5 : 43] And it appears the answer is yes and amen So I hope and pray that in gratitude And in love and in joy We will respond to our faith With both our prayer requests Our blessings and our gifts And our offerings And there are many ways that you can give Online In the boxes Mail a check We'll take it no matter how you send it But mostly we give thanks for you And the blessing you are In the life of this church Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[8 : 49] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Amen. Amen. Amen. As we go into our prayer time, I want to lift up both Sherry and Nancy, who have had surgery this past week, so please keep them in prayer.

And there are many others that we have on our hearts that will need prayer, so let us pray together. Lord, we come to you today with open hearts.

Lord, we come loving you and praising you and knowing that you are here with us. And we lift up to you the concerns on our heart, the things that have been weighing on us, Lord, because we know that you are the master physician, the great physician, the healer.

[10 : 58] Our Lord, our Savior, Lord, we lift up to you these concerns. We pray for Sherry and Nancy, for their healing, and we pray, Lord, for everyone else who is struggling as well with physical health.

We pray that you will bring healing upon your people, that the people on our hearts, the people in our lives, that they will experience healing powerfully within their bodies.

We pray that pain will be bound up and cast out. We pray that disease will be gone, and that from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet, there will be complete healing in Jesus' name.

Lord, we pray for people who are experiencing anxiety and depression in this time, that your peace will come and fill their minds, that you will come and fill them up to overflowing with your foundation, Lord, and that you will bring healing to the mind.

We pray that you will bring communities to peace, and that you will bind relationships together in your love, that if there be any brokenness, that you will bring healing and forgiveness.

[12 : 08] Help us, Lord, to be more open to one another. Help us, Lord, to give up the things that we carry, the resentment, the bitterness, the doubt, the anger.

Lord, help us to get rid of that and give that to you, Lord. Lord, we lift up to you all who are struggling, all who are mourning, all who are not certain about what they should be doing and where they should be going, Lord.

People are mourning for the loss of loved ones. People are mourning for the loss of jobs. People are mourning for the loss in so many areas of their lives, and we pray for your healing to come in people's hearts.

And as you heal, Lord, we pray that you will also wrap them in your loving arms and help them to know at every moment that you are there with them. Open our eyes, Lord, as individuals and as a church to discern where you are heading, where you are leading, where we should be going and following you.

Help us to be bold in our footsteps, bold in our faith, strong in our knowing of who you are and who you've called us to be and where you would have us to go.

[13 : 21] Give us hearts that are strong, minds that are strong in you, Lord, and a will that is open and willing to go wherever you send. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Now let's hear from the word of the Lord. Amen. Good morning.

Our scripture reading this morning is from the book of Matthew, chapter 22, verses 34 through 46. Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question. Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus replied, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.

[14 : 56] While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he? The son of David, they replied.

He said to them, How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him Lord? For he says, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.

If then David calls him Lord, how can he be his son? No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Wouldn't want the light to go out on what I have to say.

I pray and hope that it's what God would have us hear rather than what I, a person, a pastor, might have to say.

[16 : 16] Okay. This was a tough time for the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and Jesus. They were relentless. They were testing and pushing and asking and testing and pushing and questioning and asking and trying to trap Jesus into somehow not knowing the answer or not knowing the scripture.

They wanted to test and see. Was he smart? And guess what? Because we, as people of faith in Jesus, we know that Jesus did not satisfy their hopes.

Jesus answered wisely. He answered as one who knows the scripture, knows the law of the Torah, which is part of the Old Testament, knows what God has said to God's people throughout all time.

This isn't the first time we hear this commandment. This is the first time we hear it in this way because in Deuteronomy, we hear these words.

In Deuteronomy 6, 1 through 9, Now these are the commandments, the regulations and the case laws that the Lord our God commanded me to teach you to follow in the land you are entering, the land of milk and honey, to promised land to possess, so that you will fear the Lord your God by keeping all his regulations and his commandments that I am commanding you, both you and your sons and daughters, all the days of your life, so that you will lengthen your life.

[17 : 54] Listen to them, Israel. Follow them carefully so that things will go well for you and so that you will continue to multiply exactly as the Lord your ancestors' God promised you in a land full of milk and honey.

Israel, listen. Our God is the Lord, only the Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your being, and all your strength.

These words that I am commanding you today must always be on your minds. Recite them to your children. Talk about them when you are sitting around your house and when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are getting up.

Tie them on your hand as a sign. They should be on your forehead as a symbol. Write them on your house's door frames and on your city gates.

You know, this conversation that takes place in Matthew is just days before the crucifixion. The air is electric with tension and anxiety and the proclamation of a new Savior.

[19 : 07] Oh my goodness. How that excited so many people. Finally, God has sent a Savior in Jesus Christ.

What an exciting time. And yet, what a terrifying time. For those who had been in power, for those who were the religious leaders, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, this was a frightening time.

It was frightening because they were confused. Wait. He's just the son of a carpenter. He is not trained in the ways of Scripture like we are.

He has not been blessed by heritage or by scholarship from those in the temple community. Who is this man?

And yet, he seems to know the truth. He seems to know the promises of God. Are we afraid of him or are we intimidated by him?

[20 : 12] Are we afraid of him or are we afraid that he might take our power from us? Jesus really didn't want to take power from them.

He simply wanted to offer a new way. Take all that is old. All of those Ten Commandments. Take all of the ways that God has taught you to live and now, proclaiming a new way.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your strength, your soul, your being, all the words that we use. But then there was this different part. Love your neighbor as yourself.

And, friends, you know what? He meant the Pharisees and the Sadducees too. He meant all of them. He meant everybody. Love your neighbor.

Yesterday, when I was videotaping a piece for Junior Church, I sat on my front steps and I looked to my left and I looked to my right and I looked across the street and I said, yes, I have neighbors.

[21 : 26] And I said to the children, is this who God wants me to love? Does God want me to love? Oh, wait, that's the church. That's one of my neighbors.

Okay. But across the street, on the other side of the street? And, of course, the answer is yes. And we've all heard sermons where we hear the proclamation that neighbor is not just the person in physical proximity to you, is not just the neighbor called your family or your friends or the people you work with, but neighbor means all of the people that God has made.

I don't know about you, but we hear a lot, I hear a lot, love God, love your neighbor, love God, love your neighbor, love God, love your neighbor.

And what does that mean? We think about love, and we hear about it in the scriptures, and we often translate it as the love that we know in our culture, which is kind of warm and sentimental.

It's kind of a feeling, an emotion. Maybe you love chocolate. Maybe you love to eat chocolate.

[22 : 46] Who does that serve? That serves you. Maybe you love a movie. Maybe it was the best movie ever, but who was it that enjoyed it? It was you. Maybe you love a boy or a girl.

Maybe you'd like to have more of a relationship with that boy or that girl. How does that instruct you?

And part of what we mistake is that the love your neighbor, love God, is not a sentimental hallmark kind of a feeling.

So what is the biblical meaning of love? Well, there are certain songs that come to mind. One of them, they'll know we are Christians by our love, but how do you know that? How do people know that we love God and love our neighbor?

[23 : 50] You see, the love that the Bible talks about is not a feeling. It's not an emotion. You might have one. You might feel a feeling in your path of belief in God.

You might have tears. You might have all kinds of feelings. But the love that's proclaimed throughout Scripture is the love that you can see.

The love of doing good. The love of mercy for friends and neighbors, for the poor, for people you've never met, for everyone along this road and this road and all the roads.

The love that Jesus is offering to the Pharisees and certainly to all those who listen and to the Sadducees who have recently given up trying because Jesus has silenced them by his teaching because they couldn't stump him.

They couldn't get him into a trap, so they kind of walked away. Now the same with the Pharisees. Even though the Pharisees the next day go on with their plan, to have Jesus silenced, they thought, for good.

[25 : 10] He's saying to them, all who would hear, love is not an inside job.

Love is not something you just hold in your heart. Love is not something that you can just feel.

Not the love of God. Because, my friends, if we have the love of God, then we act the love of God. If we have and know the love of God, as God says, love your neighbor as yourself, then it shows up.

And I asked the children, of course it was in a video, sort of rhetorically, well, what would that look like, loving your neighbor? Loving my neighbor?

Well, maybe, if I saw something going on and they weren't home, maybe I would call for help. Some of the times we see fires. How do the fire people get to go there?

[26 : 18] The fire companies are called by someone driving by. Someone who runs over. Can we solve all of the problems of the world?

If we have all the love of God, all the love of Jesus, all the love of the Holy Spirit, let me ask you this question. Can you fix it? It's a real question. Yes?

No? Yes? No? What do you think? Who votes yes we can if we have all that? And who votes no? The reality is, is there's not one of us who is gifted to save the world.

So one of the things that would be helpful to us is if we stop being so overwhelmed by the problems of the world. And when I invite you to look around at our broader state of the world, state of the country, would you think light or darkness?

Darkness? There's a lot of dark out there. What do you do when you find yourself plunged into the darkness? When I forget to turn on a light coming into my garage when I'm walking and need to find the light switch and then I go into the little stairway to get into the kitchen and there's not a light on there either, what do I do?

[27 : 41] I start padding the walls. Same when I come over here. Had to be shown. Where are the light switches? Well, I'm finding my way in the dark. I wonder if we might think of it a little bit differently.

Yes, there are times when we need to turn on light switches. But one of the things I think we often forget as we are fumbling around looking for darkness, looking for light in the darkness, one of the things that we don't remember is that we have the light within us.

The light of Jesus Christ beams within us. But what do we do with that light? And sometimes in a world of darkness, in a community of darkness, in an era, in a time, in a season of darkness, what are people of faith to do?

But remember, I have light. I have light within me. I have hope within me.

I have the love of God, the saving grace of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit. What is it about me that thinks that I'm in the darkness?

[29 : 04] You see, we might, we can, help to light up the darkness in our world.

How can we do that? simply by showing up and actively loving the people we encounter, all the neighbors. So someone disagrees with you.

You still can love them. You are still called to love them. So someone is filled with sadness and despair and grief.

We as Christians are called not to turn away because it's uncomfortable. We're called to be present and be a light. Not with all the answers.

We have questions too. But in that moment, we can be a light in the darkness. Do we stay lost and dark?

[30 : 06] or do we show up as people who will love all the neighbors? Can we imagine if we just said there are no sides?

because there are no sides in the Christian faith other than love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your strength, your mind, your being, and all the ways that we know it.

And love your neighbor as yourself. So much of what we're experiencing is people forgetting. They forget. Oh wait, I know you.

Wait, I love you. I love you. Some other times other people will not respond with remembering the love.

Does that stop us? Do we continue to be purveyors of the love of God made known in Jesus Christ? Do we hope and pray for the movement of the Holy Spirit to guide us?

[31 : 16] Because this is kind of personal. How do I travel through this life? How do I ride in elevators, go into the grocery store?

How do I encounter the world around me? Maybe if I stopped worrying and protecting myself against the forces of evil wherever they may show up, maybe if I lift my chin and demonstrate love, mercy, hope to others?

Not only might the flicker of the flame in their life be fanned, but my light will burn brighter because I'm reminding myself at the same time.

It's not passive. It's not passive. it's not just read the Bible and love God. It's not just listen to a hymn or praise song and love God.

It is actually not just praying for our brothers and sisters. That is a vital and important thing.

[32 : 38] But sometimes, this is why I put this paper here. Ann Voskamp writes, instead of waiting for good things to happen to us, we could be the good that others are waiting for.

I believe that. I believe that there are people out in our midst, in your life, in my life, who are just wanting someone to see them, to see beyond all the trappings, to see beyond all the signs, to see beyond the divisions in the world, and just see them with the love of God in our hearts.

I've experienced that in hospital elevators. I experienced that this past week in the lobby of Roswell, when there was a person sitting, and they were looking around, and they were looking around, and they were looking around, and they were sitting by themselves, and I simply looked and said, good morning, good morning, that person in that moment knew that they were not all alone sitting in the lobby of a cancer center.

They knew that someone had seen them. Who are the people? Who are the neighbors who feel like they've been lost in the darkness?

Do you have the light within you that might show them? As this light not only might light my way across the path to home, but it might reflect on a person's face and remind them.

[34 : 46] We are not people of darkness. We will not be overcome by all that is evil. We will not be overcome by COVID or politics or all of the things of the world.

I will not be overcome and I hope and pray you will not be overcome as well because God didn't bring me this far for me to sit in anger or resentment or guilt or despair.

God brought me this far in love and salvation and hope and with the thought that not only do I feel that inside that I impart that outside and that I remember every day of my life to try to be the good someone.

is looking for and to try to affirm the good that I see other people handing out stepping into whatever that might be.

We are not defeated. We are not defeated. We will not be defeated by all of the wars and the chaos and all the things around us.

[36 : 16] I promise you that even to the end of the age when we rise in victory in Jesus Christ we will not be defeated. And one of the ways that we can demonstrate that is by being the love of God.

By being the change. By being the hope. Now before I end let me just say does that mean that Christians have to have all good days.

No. Sometimes we need to stay home and take care of ourselves. Sometimes we need to pull a pet or a child or our spouse or just the light close to ourselves and be tended to.

That's why there's more than one of us. in the darkness in my darkness may you be the light. In your darkness may we all be the light to one another.

But let's let the world see it. The love of God the light of God the love of neighbor it's not hidden in our hearts friends.

[37 : 38] It's not meant to be hidden. It's meant to be given. Let's pray. Oh God in your mercy hold us when we forget light us when we are in darkness remind us that you come to us no matter what.

Remind us that in feeling your love which we may feel that the next step is that we may show your love.

Let us not wait let us not despair let us return to you and the commandments that you offer to us so that we may offer to others in Jesus name we pray amen God's grace is offered to everyone everyone open so the table is open even to pastors who forget their lapel mic it's open we have a wonderful God who offers himself to all of us grace compassion love a table set before us that reveals to us how much

God loves all of us and so if you're seeking God in your heart that redemptive relationship you are welcome at the table of grace the Lord be with you lift up your hearts let us give thanks to the Lord our God it is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you father almighty creator of heaven and earth you formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life when we turned away and our love failed your love remained steadfast you delivered us from captivity made covenant to be our sovereign God and spoke to us through your prophets who looked for that day when justice would roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream when nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war anymore and so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn holy holy holy holy lord god of power and might heaven and earth are full of your glory hosanna in the highest blessed is he who comes in the name of the lord hosanna in the highest holy are you and holy is your son jesus christ your spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people he healed the sick fed the hungry and ate with sinners by the baptism of his suffering death and resurrection you gave birth to your church delivered us from slavery to sin and death and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit at his ascension you exalted him to sit and reign with you at your right hand on the night in which he would give himself up for us he took bread he gave thanks to you and he broke the bread he gave it to his disciples and said take and eat this is my body which is given for you eat of this remembering me and when the supper was over he took the cup he gave thanks to you and he gave it to his disciples and said drink from this all of you this is the blood of the new covenant my blood poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me and so in remembrance of these your mighty acts in

Jesus Christ we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith Christ has died Christ is risen Christ will come again pour out your holy spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ redeemed by his blood by your spirit make us one with Christ one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet through your son Jesus Christ with the holy spirit in your holy church all honor and glory is yours almighty father now and forever amen now let us pray the prayer that

[43 : 21] Jesus taught us saying our father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name thy kingdom come thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever amen amen as we sing together open the eyes of my heart I invite you all to stand if you are able open the eyes of my heart

Lord open the eyes of my heart I want to see you I want to see you open the eyes of my heart Lord open the eyes of my heart I want to see you I want to see you to see you I am lifted up, shining in the light of your glory.

Pour out your power and love as we sing holy, holy, holy. Open the eyes of my heart, Lord.

Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see you. I want to see you.

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see you.

[46 : 09] I want to see you. To see you. I am lifted up, shining in the light of your glory.

Pour out your power and love as we sing holy, holy, holy. Holy, holy, holy.

Holy, holy, holy. Holy, holy, holy. I want to see you.

Holy, holy, holy. Holy, holy, holy.

Holy, holy, holy. I want to see you. Open the eyes of my heart, Lord.

[47 : 22] Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see you. I want to see you.

I want to see you. As you hear these words of benediction, can we have the drum beat again?

That rhythm you were playing? Could you just do that again? Yeah, that. Thank you.

You hear that? That is the drum beat. That is your call. That is your invitation to take the light and the life and the love of God everywhere you go.

And in these gifts of bread and wine, may you know that you receive it. You get it. You give it. You receive love. You offer love because God will never deny you.

[48 : 36] The grace of God made known in Jesus Christ never deny you this love. So may we receive and give.

May we go and be lights in the darkness. May we go and look for the lights in the darkness. We pray and hope in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen. And so be it. Please be seated. We pray and do what we pray. woke by nunma, the Holy Spirit.

God bless you. God bless you. And see you di■e. Amen. Thank you. Jesus did. God bless you. Amen. Bye. Amen. gift you. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[50 : 38] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.