



# **Rollstone Congregational Church**

**United Church of Christ**

199 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA

Pastor: Rev. David B. Hanks 978-821-9571

Moderator: Paul Stansel 978-337-1608

Church Organist and Musician: Gavin Klein

# ***Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost***

## **October 25, 2020**

**Prelude:**

**Be Thou My Vision**

**Peterson**

### **Let Us Rejoice as We Worship:**

People of faith, we are God's children.  
We are God's family, God's own flesh and blood.  
We are God's heirs, God's legacy.  
We are beloved and redeemed, chosen and called.  
We have nothing to fear, for in Christ, God's love is poured out upon us.  
It is our joy to bear the family resemblance of Christ to the world.  
Let our lives proclaim the truth that God is love and perfect love casts out fear.

### **Opening Hymn:**

**"Lord, Speak to Me"**

**Schumann/Havergal**

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak  
in living echoes of thy tone;  
as thou has sought, so let me seek  
thine erring children lost and lone.

O strengthen me, that while I stand  
firm on the rock, and strong in thee,  
I may stretch out a loving hand  
to wrestlers with the troubled sea.

O teach me, Lord, that I may teach  
the precious things thou dost impart;  
and wing my words, that they may reach  
the hidden depths of many a heart.

O fill me with thy fullness, Lord,  
until my very heart o'erflow  
in kindling thought and glowing word,  
thy love to tell, thy praise to show.

O use me, Lord, use even me,  
just as thou wilt, and when, and where,  
until thy blessed face I see,  
thy rest, thy joy, thy glory share.

## **A Time of Prayer:**

O God, you are worthy of all our praise and worship. Today we celebrate your love and our relationship with you through Jesus Christ. Thank you for expressing your love for us in so many ways. As we think of your love, we are reminded of your call to love those around us. Help us to discover that the more we give ourselves to you, the more we have left to give ourselves to others. Make us servants in your name. Amen.

## **A Reading from the Scriptures:**

**Matthew 22:34-46 (NIV)**

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ 37 He said to him, ‘ “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’ 41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: 42 ‘What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?’ They said to him, ‘The son of David.’ 43 He said to them, ‘How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 44 “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’ ”? 45 If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?’ 46 No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

## **Musical Interlude:**

**I Need the Every Hour**

## **The Message:**

**“If Jesus was a Tweeter”**

“I keep a baseball bat under my bed in case someone tries to break in and pitch a no hitter.”

“Our scariest president was probably Rushmore, because he had four heads.”

“‘Fill’er up, please,’ I say as I pull my van up to the cat shelter.”

“Wait, what do you mean Jesus loves me? Did he say something to you?”

What do these lines have in common?

Not much, except that they are tweets.

Funny tweets.

A tweet is a post on the social media application Twitter, usually about 33

characters in length. The challenge of a tweet is to say something funny or provocative or profound ... in just a few words.

Funny: "Everyone says to follow your dreams, so I went back to bed."

Provocative: "Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future!"

Profound: "The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why."

In just a decade, the tweet has "eclipsed the essay, fiction, and poetry to become the dominant literary form of our era." That's a line from a book called *The Best American Tweets of 2019*, profiled in *Fast Company* magazine (November 2019). "The tweet turns out to be a perfect vehicle for such elemental forms of human communication: lamentations, angry shouts, and acerbic wisecracks." It is contemporary literature's most potent genre.

President Donald Trump is a prolific tweeter, sometimes sending out single words, such as "BORING!"

The singer Cher recently wrote: "I NEED TO SHOOT MY PHONE."

"I don't like healthy snacks," tweeted Kristin Chenoweth. "I wish i did. I can no longer pretend."

"I love the term 'partner,'" wrote a Twitter user named Criedwolves. The person then explored the word by asking, "are we dating? are we detectives on a case together? are we cowboys? are we cowboy detectives in a relationship? there's no bad answer."

Like it or not, the tweet has become a powerful form of communication.

What if Twitter had existed in the first century? Jesus might have been the greatest master of the tweet, literature's most potent genre. In just a few words in the gospel of Matthew, he answers a tough theological question. The Pharisees gathered together, and one of them — a lawyer — asked Jesus a question to test him: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" (22:34-36).

Difficult question. If you name one, you'll be accused of ignoring others. If you say they all are great, you look weak for not answering the question.

Jesus could have said that all 10 of the Ten Commandments were equally important. Or that the book of Leviticus was the greatest expression of God's law. Or that the entire Torah, the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, contained the fullness of the commandments of God.

But instead, Jesus gave a tweet-sized response: "'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'" (vv. 37-39).

Jesus names the greatest commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 74 characters. The Greatest Tweet.

On this powerful formulation, he says, "hang all the law and the prophets" (v. 40). Case closed.

A preaching professor named David Lose says that "our Lord names his center" with this greatest of commandments. Yes, his center. Jesus is tweeting

“the center of his ministry, the center of his mission, the center of the kingdom he has been sent to proclaim and build.”

The center is love.

That’s an even shorter tweet than the greatest of commandments. Just four characters: Love.

“By naming his center,” Lose goes on to say, “Jesus reveals something not only about himself, but also about God.” Jesus is telling us that “God’s law, finally and forever, is the law of love. It is that simple ... and that difficult, because loving others means putting them first. It means sacrificing. It means being vulnerable to the needs of those around us.”

A tweet can say a lot about a person. It can reveal their center.

For Jesus, along with God, the center is love.

The Pharisees scratched their heads and pondered this, wondering what to make of it. They knew that they had not succeeded in causing Jesus to stumble. But before they could come up with another question, he asked them, “What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?”

They said to him, “The son of David.”

Jesus followed up with another question, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet?’ If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” (vv. 41-45).

Talk about a tough question. The Pharisees were completely stumped, and from that point on, no one dared to ask Jesus any more questions (v. 46). The tweetstorm was over.

On the one hand, it seems that Jesus asked this question just to silence his critics. He was tired of their attacks and wanted to shut their mouths. We can hardly blame him.

But on the other hand, Jesus was interested in establishing himself as a divinely authorized leader. He did this by showing that he knew the Scriptures even better than the Pharisees knew them. In the first verse of Psalm 110, David writes, “The Lord says to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’” In this case, the Lord God is saying to David’s Lord, “Sit at my right hand.” Since David’s Lord is the Messiah, it doesn’t make any sense for David to call his own son the Lord and Messiah.

So, who is David’s Messiah? It’s Jesus, of course, the one that is simultaneously the Son of David and the Son of God.

Jesus won this particular battle with his opponents, but he was not interested in taking a victory lap. No, since he knew that God sent him to be the Lord of love, he used the last days of his earthly ministry to communicate what love looked like. So he told the crowds and his disciples that “the greatest among you will be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted” (23:12). You Pharisees give your tithes, he said, but you “have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (23:23).

Come to think of it, those are some pretty good tweets!



#Service. #Humility. #Justice and mercy and faith.

The problem with tweeting is that it is very easy to do. You can put a message on Twitter without having to back it up. If we are going to follow our Lord and Messiah in a life of love, we are going to have to put our words into action.

At a mental hospital in Washington, D.C., a number of years ago, a chaplain was visiting a patient and telling her again and again how much God loved her. He thought she needed to hear this, since her mental illness was very distressing and her life as an inpatient was difficult. The woman listened to him for some time, and then she responded, “Chaplain, don’t tell me how much God loves me. First, you love me. Then I’ll know that God loves me.”

Our tweets about love are going to sound empty, unless we back them up.

Through the last days of his earthly life, Jesus remained committed to his Greatest Tweet, and he put it into action. Soon after offering the love commandment, he gathered his disciples, broke bread, and shared a cup. “Take, eat; this is my body,” he said. “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (26:26-28). He shared that meal, and himself, out of love.

Then he was arrested, flogged and nailed to a cross. He cried “with a loud voice and breathed his last” (27:50). Jesus gave his life, his body and blood, out of love.

When Jesus says, “You shall love the Lord your God. You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” he is not just tweeting. No, he is giving us the center of who he is, and he is backing it up with his own life. Jesus went to the cross filled with love — he loved the Lord his God with all of his heart, soul and mind, and he loved his neighbors as himself. He loved each of us enough to die for us.

Jesus didn’t just tell us that God loved us. He showed us. And that helps us to know that God loves us.

When it comes to love, Jesus is not a tweeter. He’s a doer. And he invites us to do the very same.

**Musical Interlude:**

**Air**

**Gordon Young**

**A Time of Prayer** – *let us remember all of our brothers and sisters on the prayer list, especially those who are having a difficult time during this period of social distancing. Please share your prayer concerns so that they may be added to the prayer list by emailing your concern to Pastor Dave at [dbhanks92@comcast.net](mailto:dbhanks92@comcast.net) or by calling him direct at 978-821-9571. He is available every evening and on weekends. During this time we suggest that you create a prayer partner with whom you can pair up until we are able to worship together at the church.*

Gracious Lord Jesus,

Today we lift up those in need of your presence. And so we pray ...

Prayers of peace for those who are passing through waters that would

seem to overcome them;

Prayers of strength for those who are passing through rivers, beset by the raging currents of life;

Prayers of protection for those who are passing through fires of tribulation, that they will not be burned;

Prayers of faith for the one who is venturing into uncharted waters;

Prayers of wisdom for the one who is making some major decisions;

Prayers of love for the one who is feeling rejected and unloved;

Prayers of comfort for the one who is grieving; and

Prayers of contentment for the one who wants to let go of material things and walk with you.

Bless these prayers, and may we all find all we need as we seek to do your will in every situation. For you are the image of the invisible God, at the head of all creation. In you all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through you and for you. You are before all things, and in you all things hold together. And you are the head of the body, the church. Nothing is impossible with you. And therefore we come to you, and we pray, and we pray in your name especially as we remember those words that were taught to us long ago as we say..... “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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.”

### **Closing Hymn:            “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”**

Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.

Before our Father’s throne,  
We pour our ardent prayers;  
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,  
Our comforts, and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,  
Our mutual burdens bear;  
And often for each other flows  
The sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part,  
It gives us inward pain;  
But we shall still be joined in heart,  
And hope to meet again.

### **Benediction:**

Go forth, children of God, as people who are forgiven and who have much love to share with those who have yet to sense their forgiveness, who have yet to experience God's love. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you and rest upon you and upon those you love. Amen.

**Postlude:**

**Rigaudon**

**Andre Campa**

### **PRAYER LIST**

Amy Belli  
Carolyn Barney  
Jack Brigham  
Becky Colwell  
David Dufour  
Diana Escarbie  
Cathy Fontaine  
Chuck Funk  
Bob and Pat Goguen  
Donald Hanks  
Jerilyn Hoffman  
Linda Hurd  
Mary Jackson  
Tom Kazanjian  
Sarah Kee  
Bob and Doris Lane  
Diane Lane Cormier  
Linda Long  
Lorraine Michaud  
Audrey Painchaud  
Maria Piazza  
Melanie Pouliot  
Jackie Reiss  
Martha Quinn



Del Sampson  
Elwin Shepard  
Ron Smith  
Arlene Sirois  
Diane Staples  
Carole Ann Sumner and Henry  
Donna Thorne  
Daniel Tousignant  
Marilyn Wales  
Mary Wayman

All who are experiencing difficult times and situations

All who are lonely or depressed

All who are personally dealing with the affects of the COVID-19 Virus

All medical personnel – doctors, nurses, testing staff, first responders

Our Church and all of its members and friends

All members of our armed forces who have committed themselves  
to the protection of liberty

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**God,**

**Thank You for reminding me  
that it's okay to be  
weak—because You are all the  
strength I need. *I admit that I  
am tired, I am scared, and many  
days, I don't feel up to the  
challenges of life.* But Your grace  
is enough! Your power works  
best in my weakness! I invite  
You to work through me today.**

*inspired by 2 Corinthians 12:9*