

April 9, 2024

Devotion:

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, an expert in the law, 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."

–Matthew 22:34-40

Years ago, we lived across the street from an elderly woman who watched us day and night. The house we lived in was owned by the church I served. One spring a member of the church gave me a white cross that her husband had made. He made many of them around Memorial Day to give to friends to place on the graves of loved ones. She thought it would look nice in the flower garden in front of the parsonage. So one beautiful spring day, I placed it near some plants that I had just put in the ground. A few hours later, I received a call from another elderly lady who said how sorry she was that my cat died...they all knew how important my cats were to me. I told her my cat had in fact not died but thank her for thinking about me.

Then, over the next few days I received many sympathy cards about the loss of my cat. At service that Sunday several people came up to me to express their sadness for me. Finally, I asked the council chair if he knew what made people think my cat died. His wife spoke up and told me the lady across the street had seen me digging in the dirt in front of the parsonage, placing the white cross, and apparently, I stood up and the lady thought I had bowed my head in prayer. Likely, I was admiring the garden and my work. Well, the lady proceeded to call everyone she knew in town associated with the church to tell them to love on me because I had lost my beloved cat.

The next day, I went to visit her. I thanked her for her kindness and told her what I had been doing on that day when she saw me put up the cross. She was kind and we both laughed long and hard. She then said to me, "You know I take seriously when Jesus said, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'. And you are literally my neighbor." That day we grew quite close and became fast friends as well our relationship as pastor and church member was loving and strong. I came to appreciate her watching our house because I always knew she was there for us.

How do you live out Jesus' commandment to love your neighbor as yourself? Is it about the literal neighbors that live around us? Or are neighbors from all over the planet? What do neighbors look like? Think like? Or act like? Jesus didn't specify an answer. Who is your neighbor and how do you love them?

In Christ's love,

Pastor Cindy