

## Deuteronomy 34

34 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, <sup>2</sup> all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, <sup>3</sup> the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. <sup>4</sup> The LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.” <sup>5</sup> Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the LORD’s command. <sup>6</sup> He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. <sup>7</sup> Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. <sup>8</sup> The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

<sup>9</sup> Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the LORD had commanded Moses.

<sup>10</sup> Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. <sup>11</sup> He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, <sup>12</sup> and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

## Matthew 22:34-46

<sup>34</sup> When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, <sup>35</sup> and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

<sup>37</sup> 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.” <sup>38</sup> This is the greatest and first commandment. <sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

<sup>41</sup> Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: <sup>42</sup> “What do you think of the Messiah?<sup>[a]</sup> Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” <sup>43</sup> He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit<sup>[b]</sup> calls him Lord, saying,

<sup>44</sup> ‘The Lord said to my Lord,  
“Sit at my right hand,  
until I put your enemies under your feet”’?

<sup>45</sup> If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” <sup>46</sup> No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’<sup>38</sup> This is the greatest and first commandment.<sup>39</sup> And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’<sup>40</sup> On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

The Greatest Commandment. The entire message of the Bible in one instruction.

Love God with you whole being, without reserve, allowing God into every part of life and creation, knowing that nothing is beyond God’s knowledge or reach.

What does that mean? First. It means to accept that God loves you. Second. To love God back. We love God because we are first loved.

Is that not also true in human relationships? You can’t make someone love you. You just have to accept love that is given freely. Then, hopefully, we get into an unbroken cycle of “I am loved therefore I love  
“We work to be deserving of love but we cannot work to earn love.

Yet the Commandment is not complete until we get to the second part.

Apply your love of God and your acceptance of God’s love for you  
.....by loving your neighbor as yourself.

On this Reformation Sunday when we are to remember our heritage and the breakthrough teachings which rocked the 16<sup>th</sup> century establishment let us start with perhaps one who deserves the title of “first Reformer  
“Paul.

Raised in the Jewish faith Paul was an expert at following all the instructions and practices of that faith. To the extent that his first reaction to the message of Jesus was to cry “heresy” and arrest and persecute the early church.

With his conversion he realized that the faith he had been taught was being used in an over restrictive and legalistic way and above all ,I believe, he began to see that the Christian way was one not of earning God's favor by right living, right worship and right practices but simply a faith of trust and love. A faith based on just accepting the gift of God's gracious forgiveness and love.

Just accepting a gift. Something humans often have trouble doing. Surely there is no such thing as a free meal! We cry. Yet, in Communion , it is precisely a free meal which Jesus left us as a sign and a seal and a remembrance of the salvation which only he can give.

The other Reformers whom we remember today were in a very similar position. The faith of the day had again become a system of buying and selling and negotiating with God through practice and money and "works righteousness". Again faith in God had become a corrupt system of barter and people feared that they had to earn God's love and that the price demanded was far above what anyone could afford.

Luther, Calvin, Knox and so many others cried "No".

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That can't be bought or earned...it can only be accepted.

Professor Walter Brueggemann expresses it in these words:

"It is the work of a Reformation church (including those of us who are children of John Calvin) to attest to the limitless generosity of God that overcomes

Our fear of running out.

Our fear of not being good enough.

Our fear of not having done enough.

Our fear of not owning enough, achieving enough, or controlling enough.

God's perfect love casts out all those fears! The truth is so hard for us ,for as long as we are able, we think we can and must save ourselves and justify our existence and possess ourselves and establish ourselves. And the great evangelical truth is that we cannot and need not , because well-being is a gift from God.

Paul had discerned that the narrative of the demanding Torah of distorted Judaism that he had been taught was not true.

Luther discerned that the quid pro quo of "works righteousness" taught by the church was not true.

Our lives swirl around many narratives which are not true. All of those stories tell us we must be strong; we must stay on top of the heap. We are safe because we prevail over others. And when we are best, God will love us the most.

**NOT TRUE!!!!"**

Paul realized he could no longer sustain the faith he had been taught which made God a landlord demanding rent, which made eGod a tyrant demanding perfect obedience.

Paul had to unlearn the false narrative

Luther suffered mightily trying to be "good enough" for God. His personal writings make it clear that today he would have been in constant therapy and anti-anxiety medication. He toiled under a huge

burden of guilt and fear then he unlearned the falsehoods that he had taken as true.

For both Paul and Luther “the pressure was lifted. The fear dissolved.

God’s gifts of grace and love flooded in and reformed their faith.

**NO MORE FEAR.JUST LOVE.**

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The Greatest Commandment. The entire message of the Bible in one instruction.

Amen