

You are all familiar with the line in the confession in Morning & Evening Prayer which says: “We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; And we have done those things which we ought not to have done.” Well, I have comic with an elderly gentleman on his knees praying “I have left undone those things that I ought to have done because I lost my list of things to do!”

As we get older we start to forget things. At least I know that I do. So I make lists, but then I often forget to look at the lists or I lose the list. In addition, I know that I have to be reminded of things that I have been told or need to do. I tell people that they will not offend me if they remind me of something frequently.

For example, my son was not here this morning to take care of the dogs before church. He reminded me at least 3 times that he wouldn't be home, so I would have to take care of the dogs. In short, there is a lot of repetition that goes on.

A few months back we looked at one of the passages in 2nd Peter, where Peter reminds his readers again of what he has already told them. Then I said that repetition was good thing – that we find it as a major teaching tool throughout the Scriptures. In short, these things are so important for us that they need to be repeated – time and again – and then repeated again. I know that it is important for me, and for you also.

We find the same thing in our Gospel lesson for this morning – so I ask that you turn with me to Matthew 22 – I will read verses 34-40 – St. Matthew 22:34-40 (READ).

These verses are familiar to all of us because we recite them each and every week during our Communion Service. Sometimes we do the whole law, sometimes we read just what is in large print, although we know that God didn't just speak in large print! – but each and every week we recite the summary of the law of God.

As I have said numerous times in the past, there is a purpose for our service beginning with the Ten Commandment, or at least the summary of the law and that is to remind us that we need a Savior – the Lord Jesus Christ – because none of us have ever kept the law of God perfectly — because we can't keep the law of God perfectly and therefore we are sinners and need Jesus who kept the whole law for us.

Now, we have already commented numerous times that the whole law of God – including the Ten Commandments is contained in what we know as the Summary of the Law.

In brief, as we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul and mind, we are fulfilling the 1st four commandments. If we love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul and mind we will not have any other gods before us, whatever they be – money, other people etc., ... we will not worship any graven images, because God is a Spirit ... we will not take the name of the Lord our God in vain and we will remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy – in other words we not fail to worship God on the Lord's day.

And as we love our neighbor as ourselves, we are fulfilling the last six commandments. If we love our neighbor as ourselves – and the Scriptures define our neighbor as anyone that we come into contact with – we will honor our parents ... we will not murder ... we will not commit adultery ... we will not steal ... we will not bear false witness against our neighbor ... and we will not desire what our neighbor has – that is, we will not covet – which are self explanatory. As one commentator said, the last time I looked, they were the Ten Commandments, not the Ten Suggestions!

We also know that all ten commandments are that which have themselves summarized all the different laws and regulations that God has given us. This is the way that we are to live.

Again, as I have said on numerous occasions – God – the creator and sustainer of the world that we live in has been gracious enough to give us His Word – the Holy Bible – and in it we have all that need to live in this world and in the world to come – that is, how to get there through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But beyond all this, what does our passage teach us? I believe that the most important thing this passage teaches us is that our God is the same today as He was yesterday – and that He will be the same tomorrow. God has not changed – what He said 2-3 thousand years ago still is relevant today – and still what God requires.

Because when we think about it, we must acknowledge that the Summary of the Law – to love the Lord Our God with all of our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves was something that God told the children of Israel 2000 years before the time of Christ. God's law and requirements were the same back then – before the time of Christ, during the time of Christ – and today. Again, God has not changed and neither has his requirements.

For example the widely accepted belief today is that Allah is just another name for God. There is only one God whatever you call him. However, as we look at the Koran we find that Allah of Islam changes. The Koran says in Surah 2:106: "If We supersede any verse or cause it is to be forgotten. We bring a better one or one similar. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things!" In other words, Islam believes that Allah changes as necessary if it is for the better.

Whereas the Scriptures teach us that God does not change. James 1:17 says: "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no varying, neither shadow of turning.*" In Hebrews 13:8 we read: "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*"

The scriptures teach us that Jesus is God, the 2nd person of the Trinity – and so if he does not change, neither does God. Again, this is another difference between Christianity and Islam – they do not believe in the Trinity or that Jesus is God. And there are a multitude of other differences between Christianity and Islam – which are not part of our purpose today.

The point of it all is that we clearly see that God does not change – and what He said 2000 years still applies to us today – with the exception of those things that were fulfilled in Christ. We believe that the whole Old Testament sacrificial system has been fulfilled in Christ, and therefore there is no longer any need for animal sacrifices.

Another clear example of how people try to change what God has said and what He requires is the so-called new morality that is widely accepted today. I do not need to go into specifics, you know what I am talking about. One example is the Bishop that proposed a liturgy for couples that just wanted to live together instead of just marriage. God calls that fornication or adultery, as the case may be. Or those that promote and hold to alternate lifestyles that are inconsistent at least, and a denial of that which the Scriptures teach.

My friends, if God has not changed and His requirements have not changed then no amount of Scripture twisting and negation of what He has stated can make what was once an abomination to Him acceptable today.

Now, I can understand when those who don't believe in God or have a unbiblical view of who He is and what He requires hold to things that are unacceptable to Him. But when you have leaders in "church" saying essentially that God has changed, or more specifically that He is a liar because He didn't mean what He said a long time ago – I find that it takes incredible hutzpah to hold to the things that they do. And just as we all must, they will stand before the judgement seat of Christ to answer for those things that they profess.

We do not have the right to pick and choose what we want to believe. We cannot be like Thomas Jefferson who did not believe in the miracles of our Savior recorded for us in the Scriptures, and so he cut them out and had his own edited version of the Bible. God's Word is not like the proverbial Chinese restaurant where we can pick one from column A and one from column B. It is either all or nothing. You have to take it as a whole – God's revelation to us as His children or you discount it completely.

And so that brings us back to our passage for today. If the whole of God's law – all that He has revealed to us is summarized in loving the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul and mind and loving our neighbor as ourselves, then we have to follow it all to the best of our abilities.

Again, I would remind all of us that we are sinners and that we cannot keep it perfectly – and that is why our service begins with the Law of God – because it shows us that we need a Savior. So while some would say that repetition is a bad thing, we need to be thankful for it because it's purpose is to keep us on the straight and narrow path that God has revealed to us in His Word.

So, if you are listening to a sermon and you think "here we go again" – be thankful. God has repeated Himself, and the preacher or pastor can do nothing less!