

Watch this week's service on YouTube by clicking: [February 28 Worship Service Video](#)

- Once or twice a year on a communion service we take a free will offering to replenish the **Benevolent Fund**. The Benevolent Fund is used exclusively to respond to requests for aid in the local community that come to the church. **Next Sunday, March 5 will be a communion service** and we invite you to make an added contribution in your offering for this purpose. For donation information please visit: www.charleswoodunited.org/donate
- Join the **HeBrews eCafé on Zoom** Sunday at 10am for an hour of informal fellowship.
Link: <https://zoom.us/j/98193600858?pwd=K0lIOWM0ZWdsRmhUTkNWcmFvbkM5Zz09>
Phone in: 1 204 272 7920
Meeting ID: 981 9360 0858
Passcode: 438120
- **Lenten Study - Faith On The Move** - Thursdays at 7:00. Special Guest this week - book contributor Nanette McKay. (*We understand some people had difficulty with the link provided last week. Apologies for that. We think we know what went wrong and should have no problem with this link*)

Join Zoom Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/96227374307?pwd=Q0xkRFpkemdtVDBZdHZlVWFwODU4QT09>
Phone in option: 204 272 7920
Meeting ID: 962 2737 4307
Passcode: 677320

Dear Friends

Welcome to worship for Sunday, February 28, 2021.

The *double rule of love* is my rather simple way of interpreting and making reference to a famous quote by early church theologian St. Augustine of Hippo (397 CE). In its fullness Augustine said, "*So anyone who thinks that they have understood the divine scriptures or any part of them, but cannot by their understanding build up this double (or twofold) love of God and neighbor, has not yet succeeded in understanding them.*"

Augustine was speaking about the task of interpreting scripture and using the Great Commandment as the key for the challenge of unlocking all biblical interpretation. Or to put it another way, if Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart, and all your mind, and all your strength, and all your soul, and to love your neighbour as yourself (Mark 12:29-31), then it follows that any interpretation of the Bible must demonstrate both loves, the love of God and neighbour. To interpret scripture in such a way that fails to honour both loves, not only does a disservice to scripture but is inherently false witness.

I refer to *the double rule of love* at times, not only as a measuring stick for the interpretation of scripture, but as a fairly good metric for authentic Christian faith. Loving God while failing to love neighbour is vain piety or empty religiosity. Loving neighbour without love of God is self-glorifying or virtue signalling. Those may seem to be harsh definitions but Augustine was interested in nothing less than giving expression to a fully authentic Christian experience. Love is meant to challenge some of our most basic assumptions and invites us to grow and expand in compassion.

Frankly I think the first is easy to recognize. Better writers than I have commented on the Christian justification and complicity in the January attack on Washington. Those who claim a living God is calling them to incite violence, break laws, and endorse hate are more than simply wrong. They are heretical.

Though not as dire as this example, the pastors who continue to insist on ignoring public health orders and lead worship in ways that contravene them may love God with all their heart, but their love of neighbour is sorely lacking.

What is more difficult to come to terms with for mainstream Christians is the growing number of examples of loving neighbour without loving God. I admit it is a bit more abstract. We are right to honour good works. It is not necessary for those who feed and clothe and shelter and care to have a faith or declare what motivates them to do good in the world. Loving the neighbour is one and the same as loving God.

However, the phenomena of the so called 'cancel culture', the epidemic of self-righteousness, and the absolute disregard for mercy and forgiveness in those who claim to be on the 'right side of history' is a trend I find most disturbing. It is often fueled by social media, an environment in which one seldom has to be held accountable for what one says about another person. Shaming is an act of violence and should be called out as such.

The *double rule of love* is not a way of avoiding conflict or preventing rigorous disagreement with another person. Rather it recalls to mind the respect and decency that many of us were taught to strive for in the pre-social media age. To dis-agree is not a licence to dis-like. It is even less permission to dis-avow the humanity of those with whom we are called to be neighbours.

Perhaps this helps put in perspective the shocking rebuke Peter receives in the gospel reading for this week. Having disagreed with the prediction of his fate, Jesus says famously to Peter, "*Get behind me Satan.*" It was harsh. I'm sure it stung quite a bit. But Peter was no less regarded, no less invited, no less loved by Jesus in this moment than he was before. For a moment Peter had forgotten *the double rule of love*.

But he would be redeemed.

Grace and peace,

Michael

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Thank you for your generous support.
- Read the scripture lesson for today by clicking here: [Mark 8:31-38](#)
- Please enjoy our online worship and feel free to share with others. The link for sharing is: <https://youtu.be/qT26-zLEBWc>