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Worship and Discipleship by Margo Geesing
“Challenges to Face: How Do You Show Love?”

The first Sunday of November is All Saints' Day when we hear the story of the Raising of Lazarus. In this narrative, we have Jesus in his human glory. He is perceived to have let down his friend's family. He weeps for the death of his friend. He prays. But he also teaches. He has purposefully stayed away so that he could give glory to the Father. He teaches about trust and faith. He teaches about prayer. *How do you approach God in prayer? Do you have the confidence that God hears you? How do you accept the answer to those prayers?*

The first Sunday of November is also the Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost. It is an optional day on the calendar. The Gospel lesson for that day is from the Gospel of Mark. Jesus is asked what is the greatest Commandment. As we have been studying the Ten Commandments in Bible Study, it is appropriate to look at this idea: What is the Greatest Commandment? Jesus says, *“The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ ³¹The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There are no other commandments greater than these.”* [Mark 12:29-31]. When we look at the Ten Commandments, we see the broad outline of: Worship God, Use God's Name and Symbols with Respect, Give God Your Time, Respect Authority, Treasure Life, Respect Marriage and Your Sexuality, Respect Other's Property and Ideas, Speak Only the Truth. Jesus simplified this list to: LOVE. *How do you show your love for God in your own life? How do you show your love for yourself? How do you show your love for others?*

On the second Sunday of November, we get to see what is important to Jesus. It is also the Sunday that we are having our Congregational Annual Meeting. Jesus has been engaging with the leaders of the Temple over how they are treating others, which is an ongoing issue in all of society. What is done for show compared to what should be done. In this case, he is watching people going into the Temple and putting money in the treasury. He saw people who had monetary wealth giving large sums. He was not impressed by the amounts they were giving. He also observed a widow giving just two copper coins. This is the person he called his disciples to pay attention to. He was more honored by this widow's gift because she gave even though she was in need. The wealthy were giving from their excess. The widow from her need. Jesus seems to not like the wealthy very much. There are many instances where Jesus warns those who “have” to share with those who “have not”. Here again is the call to love

others as ourselves. To love God. To be aware of our dear neighbor. To reach out. To share. *How are you going to share your time, talents, and treasure with others? How are you going to share your time, talents, and treasure with God; the giver of all good gifts?*

When was the last time you heard that we are in the end times?!? The third Sunday has Jesus warning his followers not to be taken in by people saying the end times are here and not to be afraid if they are. It was predicted so many times. First predictions were in 66-77 AD, then a few more, then in the years between 993-995, then the year 1000. Move ahead many years and predictions later. Then it we were going to end at the turn of the Century (was that 1999, 2000, or 2001 – who knows). Then in 2012 when the Mayan calendar ended. Take a dart and throw it at a calendar and you too can pick a date. We don't know. We aren't supposed to know. We have all lived through trials and tribulations and, if we are lucky, we will live through many more. Our job, our goal, is to have faith and trust in God. To stay steady and steadfast in our belief. *How wrapped up in doom and gloom do you get? How much do you let it control your actions and thoughts?*

The last Sunday of November we celebrate the last Sunday in the Church year, Christ the King. The Gospel lesson is from John and does not show Jesus as a King but rather as a prisoner before Pilate. Two different men who act with their power in very different ways. Pilate acts out of fear: fear of the Jews, fear of the crowd, fear of losing face, fear of those in power over him, fear of the unknown. Jesus acts out of love: love for Pilate, love of the Jews, love of the crowd calling for his death, love of truth, love for his Father, love of mankind. *When you are asked about what you believe or when you have to make a stand for something, how do you answer? Do you answer with love and the truth or do you let others sway your stance?*