

Alleluia, He is Coming

By Martha E. Butler

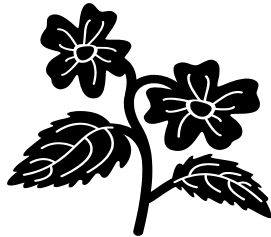
See print copy for words.

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it:

'Love your neighbor as yourself.' —Matthew 22:37-39—



We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

Credits

Song: "Alleluia, He Is Coming. © 1979 Martha E. Butler. Used with permission. All rights reserved. CCLI License # 188763. **Cover art:** Pen and ink drawing by Chinese artists, Lu Hung Nien, when in his early twenties (c. 1935).

Old Orchard Church

October 16, 2011 — 10:15 to 11:50 a.m.

Celebrating Jesus Christ, in the Greatest Commandment: The Law of Love

Before the foundation of the world God loved us;
His love is the root of all things:
the fount of every blessing,
the comfort in every pain,
the hope for every last thing out of joint in the world!
The law of love is the law of the world,
And God calls the redeemed to live it—
to love him more than we love all others,
and loving him,
to love all others as they need to be loved:
as we love ourselves.

Praise be to Christ the Son,
for bearing in his own body the guilt of our violations of love.
O Lord, we want to be holy,
Fill us with the Spirit of love
and receive our worship through Jesus Christ!



Scripture Readings

Old Testament Lesson: Deuteronomy 6:1-9
Gospel Reading: Matthew 22:34-40

Today's Sermon

“By Demonstration: God as He Is, and a Kingdom as It Is Coming”
(Part 3)
Hebrews 12 and 13:1-9
Ron Lutjens, senior pastor, preaching

Love and the Commandments

Jesus shatters many common notions. For example, one notion is that commandments and love don't mix. You don't command someone you love. And you don't tend to love one who commands. Commanding connotes military hierarchy, not relationships of love. We tend to think that commanding restricts winsomeness and willingness both ways. And this is often true. Paul wrote to his friend Philemon and said, "though I have enough confidence in Christ *to order you* to do that which is proper, yet *for love's sake* I rather *appeal to you*" (Philemon 8-9; see also 2 Corinthians 8:8). Paul probably meant his love and Philemon's love. So it's true for love's sake that a person in authority may chose not to command.

But Jesus shatters any absolute dissociation of commandments and love. He says “**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments...He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father**” (John. 14:15,21). “**If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love**” (John. 15:10). Thinking in terms of commandments and obedience did not stop Jesus from enjoying the love of his Father. And he expects that our thinking of him as one who commands will not jeopardize our love relationship with him either.

This is crucial to realize because the covenant relationship that we have with God through Jesus Christ is not a covenant without commandments. The basic difference between the old covenant offered by God and through the law and the new covenant offered by God through Christ is not that one had commandments and the other doesn't. The basic difference is that in the old covenant the gracious enabling power to obey was not poured out as fully as it is since Jesus. “**To this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know or eyes to see or ears to hear**” (Deut. 29:3). What's new about the new covenant is not that there is no law, but rather God's promise, “**I will put my law within them, and on their heart I will write it**” (Jer. 31:33). “**I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes**” (Ezek. 36:27).

What makes love possible between us and God who commands is that he does not speak from a distance and leave us to our own resources. He draws near and gives us Himself as he gives us his commandments. The new covenant, sealed by the blood of his Son (I Cor. 11:25), is a commitment to put his Spirit within us. Paul said it is a “**new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life**” (2 Cor. 3:6). When the law, written on stone, meets an unwilling heart of stone, all it does is condemn and kill. But when that same law is written on hearts made soft by the Spirit, the result is life.

Therefore we do not need to shrink back from the "commandments" of God as though they were cold, distant demands from an impersonal sovereign. We can embrace the full New Testament teaching that the commandments of God are utterly crucial in living the Christian life. Yes "keeping the commandments of God" really matters!

— John Piper ~ *Future Grace* (1995)