

Alleluia, He is Coming

By Martha E. Butler

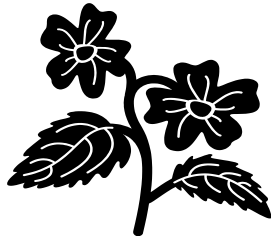
Words are in the printed copy.

'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—



See printed copy for picture.

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

September 15, 2013 — 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
New Testament Lesson: Matthew 22:34-40

Today's Sermon

“The God-Breathed Word”
2 Timothy 3:14-17

Mark Robertson, associate pastor, preaching

Love and Good and the Law

Sin is about our failure to be and do good—which means it is about our failure to love—which means it is about our failure to keep the Law. Everywhere in Scripture love, and the good, and the law are drawn together as three strands in the “cord” of what God calls us to. But how can love, a disposition of the heart, be demanded by law? Because love is what we were made for, and the law calls us back to it—back to ourselves.

Today we celebrate in our liturgy the **law** of love as Jesus sets it out in Matthew 22: the good that is good to do is what we are **required** to do; and it can all be boiled down to this: *love God and love each other*. It doesn’t mean that the good and the law have no specific definition. That’s the heresy of so-called “situation ethics”: there are no rules, no boundaries to which love, by definition, conforms; but in the situation you’ll know, somehow, which behavior love calls for. But Jesus’s words certainly don’t mean that.

They do mean that behind all the rules is the core of the law’s demand, and the center of what goodness is really about: *loving someone*. When, for instance, Proverbs 6:9 says it’s not good to sleep too much, otherwise you’ll wind up poor from committing the sin of sloth, it’s teaching us how love behaves. But how much sleep is too much? That’s the question we tend to go to first, but it’s not the most important question. The most important question is, Do I want to love by doing what’s good? If I do, then the proverb gives me something very specific and concrete to explore seriously: am I spending too much time in the sheets? The stronger my desire to love, the more determined I will be to find an answer to that question. I’ll pray, talk it through with others, try sleeping less if my conscience bothers me—there are fifty things I can do to try to answer the question, if only the question becomes important to me, if only I want to love.

Constrain my heart, O Lover of my inmost soul, that I may love as you love. Lord, grant me the inner power to glory in the law, the law of love; open my eyes that I may see goodness in the law, the goodness which serves love. Teach me to love the good and to love love. Persuade me of your right to demand that of me. Teach me the wisdom that connects the dots between law and love; teach me that in my lawbreaking I am hating others—and you. I love poorly now, I know. But in the End I shall love perfectly, when you come and everything lawless, everything loveless, everything evil, everything mortal in me will be swallowed up by Life, your Life in mine. O Christ my God, teach me that the obligation of love is not a drag on my soul, not a burden. Make me see that in losing myself in the law, in love, in goodness, I find myself—because there I find you. Show me that in Jesus’s death I died to the threats of the law that I might be free to see its glories and its goodness, for the sake of love, by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

—Ron Lutjens