

A Handful of Words

Proper 24, Year A – Matthew 22:15-22

preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, October 26, 2014

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

The other day, the Wardens were giving me a hard time about the length of last Sunday's sermon. It was 1,448 words, and ran fourteen minutes, thirty-two seconds when I reprised it to an empty church that afternoon.

They were just having fun with me, of course. Which I kind of like, of course. But I responded that I thought y'all would think I wasn't working hard enough for you if my sermons were ever shorter than thirteen hundred words.

When the Pharisees sent one of their experts to ask Jesus about the Law of the Lord, perhaps they expected something along the lines of what they had heard him tell the disciples in the Missionary Discourse from Chapter 10 – 776 words. Or maybe they expected to hear a replay of the Sermon on the Mount from the beginning of Jesus ministry – a whopping 2,380 words from the young Rabbi. Or maybe some portion of the Parables of the Kingdom that we have been hearing on and off since mid-July – 1,881 words, even without the accompanying explanations.

What they got was 52 words: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

"Love God." "Love each other."

Love... God.

Love... Each... Other.

Hmmm.