

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The phone number for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number changes every week. If you need more information, please contact Mr. Vautour. See the bottom of the bulletin the contact information.

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

The National GCI services will be at 1:00 p.m. each Sunday. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The phone number for Zoom and the meeting ID always remains the same for the National Worship Service.

For more information about special activities happening in GCI, please see the international website at www.gci.org. On the left-hand upper side of the screen, you will see 3 short lines. You simply need to click on it. A drop down menu will appear. Click on **"PARTICIPATE"**.

If you have a prayer requests, other events you would like to announce and/or praise to our great God you would like to share, **please try to contact Mr. Vautour by email, text or telephone no later than Saturday in the morning.**

Certainly, we all need to realize, during this time of crisis, that even if situations appear bleak and evil appears strong, God is still the ruler yet. Jesus sustains all things we are clearly told in Colossians. We could not be in more loving hands! Although we may go through temporary troubles, we have to always keep in mind the hope we have in Jesus.

We need to pray for our civil leaders, those in high positions as well as Christian religious leaders to give appropriate leadership as we traverse difficult periods. God tells us to pray for all people and to do good to everyone especially those of the household of God. (**"1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior," (1Ti 2:1-3 ESV)**

We all need to remember that this fallen world system will one day be replaced by the fullness of the kingdom of God. Only God knows when Jesus will return to the earth. (**"3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."** (Ga 1:3-5 ESV)

For prayer requests, please see www.worshipim.ca under "Members Only". If you have forgotten password for this section only, please contact Mr. Vautour.

There will be a Bible study Thursday, April 30. Topic: to continue in 1st John. *Anybody is welcome to join.* Please feel free to share Zoom link. The plans are to have a Bible study every other week for as long as God permits. Mr. Vautour will send you the link before the study.

Prayer group: on Thursday April 23 at 7:30 PM and every week we do not have a Bible study, we will have a prayer time organized through Zoom. Mr. Vautour will send you the link before the prayer time.

Offerings: you can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7S1 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.** Thank you for your continued generous giving to God by giving to this part of God's church, his body.

From Mr. Bill Hall – GCI Canadian Director *"Our office here in Saskatoon will remain open during regular business hours. I'm self isolating for a couple of weeks, but Kathleen will be available. We will continue to*

process the donations we receive in Saskatoon. Members are urged to mail them directly to our office for the time-being. They can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using the donate button on our website www.gcicanada.ca We are waiving the provision that all donations given via Canada Helps go toward national expenses for the time being. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend."

Now What

(April 15, 2020 Update Mr. Williams – President GCI)



Greg and Susan
Williams

Dear GCI Family and Friends,

Holy Week and Easter Sunday have come and gone. I trust your online services from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday to Easter morning were uplifting and shared with friends and family beyond our normal GCI membership. It is quite an ironic blessing to be under the "Stay at Home" orders and still be able to bolster our engagement with people outside the walls of our normal church meetings. Our amazing Triune God works in mysterious ways and he is so good to include us.

He is risen! We have celebrated. Now what?

Allow me to pick up with the New Testament passage from the postcard I sent to encourage our pastors last week:

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures... (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NRSVA)

So here is the "Now what?"

...and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe. (1 Corinthians 15:5-11 NRSVA)

For the 40 days from Easter Sunday until his ascension, the resurrected Jesus came and went with some regularity, interacting with individuals, small groups of people, and even a crowd as large as 500 people. He did marvelous works, including restoring Peter and helping "Doubting Thomas" to see and touch his scars, which was underscored by Thomas worshipping and proclaiming, "My Lord and my God." The crescendo of Christ's appearances was the giving of the Great Commission, in which he told the original disciples—and hence all followers for all ages—to go into the world with his guiding presence, to share the good news, teaching all things about him, and then to baptize through the name of Father, Son and Spirit.

Paul documents the risen Lord and several key aspects of his involvement over this 40-day period until Jesus ascended to return to the Father. Paul also extends beyond the 40 days to show how Jesus came to him. (Do you recall the "Road to Damascus" experience?) And by the grace of God, Jesus is still coming to humanity—and the "acts" of the church continue.

The "Now what?" for GCI is asking the question, how do we maintain relationship with those he is drawing to himself in March and April 2020 in the middle of a historic pandemic? It is great for us to be encouraged by seeing swelled numbers of viewers in our online services, but what about follow-up? What ways and means are we deepening relationships with these viewers? What practical ways are we extending the love of Jesus? Are we providing means for them to connect with the local congregation? Are we thinking of follow-up after the pandemic has passed? Are we planning ahead for ways to connect with those in our neighborhoods? Do we provide a link to a Facebook page, an invitation to write a message, a means for them to reach out and connect or to be prayed for? We want to use wisdom and discernment in the ways we connect, instead of posting our private phone numbers—perhaps we can reach out through private groups and messaging applications. There are many safe, useful platforms.

The Lord is providing opportunities during the stay-in-place and social-distancing orders we might not have considered. We have included several examples of what GCI congregations are doing. In addition, our Media Team recently started a special Facebook group called the "**GCI Creative Community.**" This is a great place to share your best ideas and then single-out ideas from others that can also benefit your circumstance.

The Hope Avenue of our GCI ministry has been reworked in a major way with our demand for online services. And now the Love Avenue is being challenged and molded into its emerging form as well. May the risen Lord have his way with the church!
Greg Williams

A theological ethic, part 4

By Ted Johnston - April 16, 2020

This is the fourth in a series of posts adapted from "What is a Theological Ethic?," a lecture given by GCS President Dr. Gary Deddo. For the other posts in the series, click a number: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#).

<http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2020/04/theological-ethic>

Worship only God



The Adoration of the Golden Calf (public domain via Wikimedia Commons)

Last time, we noted the danger of collapsing the first great command (to love God) into the second (to love neighbor). Though doing so is common in our modern/post-modern world, as followers of Jesus we must understand that it is a form of *idolatry*, which God strictly forbids. We are to worship only God, and no other -- a command Israel, sadly, never fully obeyed (as pictured below), despite years of being chastened by wilderness wandering and exile in Babylon.

Though the two great commands go together, they are radically different in that the two objects of love (God and neighbor) are very different and so cannot be interchanged and must not be confused. Why is this so important? Because God is not a human being (even though the eternal Son of God, without ceasing to be divine, assumed to himself our human nature). The first command calls for the kind of love for God that

is *worship* and we, as Christians, are to worship God alone. Worship of a created being (a creature) is, by definition, *idolatry*. No creature is worthy of our worship.

Getting the commands in the right order

The first command thus puts love for God in its rightful place, demanding first and foremost the devotion of all we are and have. It calls for a *worship relationship*. And such a relationship cannot, for any reason, be demoted to a position equal to another, or eliminated. It cannot be interchanged with any other command any more than God can be interchanged with the neighbor or one's self.

If that is the case, we might wonder, *how can there be any love left for anyone else?* An all-consuming love for God seems to make it impossible to love anyone else. We might reason that there's only so much love to go around, so it certainly needs to be divided up, proportioned. If we're going to love people at all, then, we must love God at least a little less. Such an all-consuming love for God seems unreasonable. It takes away love for others.

Clearly, Jesus does not reason in that way. His life demonstrates that love for God does not work that way. When we love God with all we are and have, there shines forth a reflection of it towards those who are not God. We love God because God first loved us. (**1 John 4:19**). Our love for God is a response, the right and appropriate response, to God's love for us. We first receive God's love as we first love God. When we love the neighbor in the way God would have us, like Jesus, we are passing on to others what we have received from God. Think of the offering of the Lord's Supper and Paul's words: **"For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you"** (**1 Cor. 11:23**). In God's economy, we can only pass on what we have first received. First things must remain first, otherwise, as C.S. Lewis reminds us, we will lose both the first and the second things.

The second command thus depends upon the first. It is not identical to it, and it is not interchangeable with it. We see this not only in the fact of the difference between God and neighbor, but in the designation of the second command as not identical with, but "like" the first -- comparable to it and having a certain similarity to it, but not the same. The two commands are related, yet distinct. Love for neighbor reflects something of what takes place in love for God (a response to God's love for us). The love we receive from God, then give back to God, is mirrored (reflected or imaged) towards others. Note, however, that in this there is strict recognition that the neighbor is not God. Our neighbor is not to be loved with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. That sort of love is reserved for God, and no other. The neighbor is not to be worshiped, for that would surely destroy them or the worshiper, or both.

Our neighbor can be loved with the love that we receive from God as we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. But we love our neighbors not as God, but as neighbor. We love them in a way that mirrors God's own love for them -- and that is not a worship relationship. God does not worship his creatures, but he does love them as his creatures. That is why I believe a true rendering of the last part of the commandment can be stated this way: *Love your neighbor as you yourself are loved by God*. The word "as" is important as is the word "like." It means in a similar or comparable way. We cannot love others in exactly the way God loves them even as creatures. But by the grace of God,

we can share in Jesus' love for our neighbor. Jesus lays the whole thing out in a few words. He tells us **first "As the Father has Loved me, so I have loved you."** Note the comparative word "as." Then he goes on to say, **"As I have loved you, so you ought to love one another."**

A three-fold love

Thus in the biblical testimony we find a three-fold love, where (as shown in the diagram below) each subsequent love mirrors or reflects the originating love.

The Father → loves₁ → the Son → loves₂ →
Us (We) → love₃ → one another

Love is thus imaged in three comparable or analogous relationships:

- ▶ Love₁ (the intra-trinitarian love)
is comparable to
- ▶ Love₂ (the Christological love)
is comparable to
- ▶ Love₃ (the intra-human love)

We thus understand that love for neighbor is constrained by love for God as God. Our definition and source for love comes from and is maintained from above by God and God's word. We do not define what is loving towards neighbor (and neither does the neighbor). God's agape love designates, directs and defines what is loving towards neighbor, who is not God but who has a God, a creator, a redeemer. They have a God-given purpose and a God-given nature and a God-intended destiny. The neighbor is not autonomous. The neighbor is not a dictator to us. This, by no means, means that we cannot listen to the neighbor and even sympathize. But what is good and right will ultimately come from the command of God in accordance with the moral order of love,

even while taking into account what we hear from the neighbor and grasping their plight.

We serve others not in their own names, but in the name of Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior. We serve others by doing the loving and good will of God towards them as a representative of Jesus himself (the whole true Jesus, not merely our idea of him). Such serving of neighbor might include giving a word of warning, a word of forgiveness that implies their need for forgiveness and their need to receive it by repentance. We do not serve the neighbor as our master. We serve them as servants of Jesus, and of no other. We serve others on the basis of our worship relationship with the living God. We become the slaves of no person, yet we freely serve others—in Christ's name, in his place, and on his behalf.

When we seek to fulfill the first command, we are resourced and freed to pursue the second. The first orders and generates how we fulfill the second. Our worship relationship to God overflows into the secondary relationships with others. Fulfilling the first command fully, Jesus was free to violate the expectations of many and rather to love them and serve them in the way the Father loved and served him and not be enslaved to the (fallen, self-serving) wills of those he came to serve and transform.

The example of Jesus

When unbelief prevailed, Jesus refused to do any miracles and many took offense (**John 6**). Even his immediate family was offended at times. He sternly warned the Pharisees and Sadducees regarding their false teachings that misrepresented God and relationship with God, even calling them **"whited (limed) graves."** He pronounced forgiveness of sins to those who were not looking for it. He delayed coming to heal Lazarus and was chastised by all for doing so. He refused to stay in a town to do more healing, but went on to others in order to preach, **"for that is why I came out."** He refused to give signs to those who rejected the Reality standing in front of them to which the signs pointed (**Luke 11: 29**). He did not feed all or heal all. Jesus chided the man sitting at the pool who wanted to complain and give excuses when his Healer stood before him and addressed him in person. He offended the Pharisees by receiving a repentant sinner who sought fellowship with him. He scandalized religious leaders and some of his own followers when he allowed a repentant and believing woman of ill repute to anoint him with very costly oil, which they charged could have been used to benefit the poor (**Mark 14**).

Jesus shamed the elders who tried to trap him and get him to condemn a woman caught in adultery. He would not answer Pilate who threatened him but rather rebuked him for thinking that he had power over him. The sufferings imposed upon him did not stop him from accomplishing his atoning purposes. Rather, he scorned the shame heaped upon him. He offended some of his listeners when he compared God to one who gave unequal wages to persons, being more generous to some than they deserved. He told Peter to stifle his heroics and put away his sword. He let Peter know that Satan was using him when he declared that Jesus, God's Messiah, should never suffer and die. But then, Jesus assured Peter of his restoration.

Jesus refused to follow the demands of the Zealots to overthrow Rome and paid for his resistance with the betrayal of Judas into the hands of those whom Judas despised. Jesus **"did not entrust himself to anyone, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man"** (**John 2:24-25**). He recognized rejection and unbelief towards him and in his Father, and he grieved over it. Jesus prepared his own disciples to deal with the rejection they would experience when serving others in his name and in his way, for the sake of the gospel.

Jesus was not crucified for being nice and kind, and doing good things. He was crucified because of his absolute loyalty, love and worship of God, and how that exposed human hypocrisy, deceit and captivity to evil. True to God, Jesus uncovered the works of darkness, he confronted deceit and evil. He exorcised demons. He forgave sin because sin required a costly forgiveness to be defeated, undone, brought to a complete end. Jesus took every excuse away from those who refused to repent and to worship God and no other.

Jesus became a rock of stumbling and an offence to many, that is to anyone, Jew or Gentile, who would not repent and believe in the Son whom God the Father had sent in the power of the Spirit (**1 Peter 2:8; Romans 9:33**). He did all of this because of his holy love for all and his desire for all to come to the point of repentance and receive their forgiveness and be reconciled to the one who was already reconciled to them (**2 Cor. 5:20**).

The example of the apostles

It was no different in the early church. The apostles preached Jesus crucified by evil and resurrected from the dead by God, who was absolute Lord and Savior over all. They preached the absolute need for reconciliation that can only come from God, and they pronounced the forgiveness of sins that was available through the cross of Christ and received by repentance and faith/belief in him. Peter and Paul were beaten by fellow Jews, jailed by Roman authorities and eventually put to death for disobeying the authorities commands, continuing to preach the Lordship of Jesus Christ over and against the lordship of Caesar.

The apostles did not dispense what everyone "naturally" wanted. Peter told a beggar: **"I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk"** (**Acts 3:6**). According to the hierarchy of human need (actually a hierarchy of human hedonism) defined by psychologist Abraham Maslow, the beggar should have rejected (or could not have received) what Peter gave, since it ignored his more fundamental material "need." Apparently, Jesus did not recognize this hierarchy of need since he sent out his apostles with nothing of earthly value (bread or money -- see **Matt 10:9; Mark 6:8**) to offer those to whom they were sent the proclamation of Jesus Christ incarnate, crucified and resurrected; and to call them to repentance and belief in Jesus, including trust in his coming kingdom.

The apostles maintained these priorities in leading the church, **"preaching the word of God"** instead of **"serving tables."** They then arranged for others (deacons) to address those needs (**Acts 6:2**). They did not change the message concerning Jesus when hearers were put off or offended, even to the point of wanting to stone them. They realized that the gospel always offends human pride: **"For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"** (**1 Cor. 1:18**). **"For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:22-24)**. The Gospel always fulfills and offends. There is no way to avoid this. So, this is how they viewed their ministry and why they stayed true to the message of the gospel and to their Lord. They remained faithful and would not be compromised.

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ. (**2 Cor. 2:16**)

Our calling

We seek to follow Jesus and his apostles in fearlessly proclaiming the gospel. But a word of caution is in order -- we must never pronounce the ethical commands (instruction, teaching) of God detached from their gospel context. The gospel message (the apostolic word) addresses our deepest and primary need, which is to be reconciled to the God who already, in Christ, has reconciled us to himself and provided all we need for responding back to God. Any ethical command must be proclaimed in this context -- the context of who God is and what he has done, is doing, and will do for us, and who we are, in and through Christ, in relationship to the triune God. In short, we must first proclaim the first command, and then show how obedience to the second command flows out from a worship relationship with the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ.

The second command should never be proclaimed apart from the first. The second can only be understood in light of the first regarding the triune God who first loved us so that we can then love him with all we are as expressed in our worship of him. Then, out of that worship relationship with the triune God, we are prepared to serve (love) others in his name and in his way -- the way that directs others to the One who we are to worship, and no other. In that way, we join Jesus in his primary mission of bringing others into a worship relationship with the one true Triune God.

GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—www.gci.org, www.worshipim.ca, www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton;
For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website.

Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email— evautour47@outlook.com

Cell: 506.874.6765