

**We continue with a common theme**

**The Pharisees trying to trap Christ**

**They try to attack him from their own frame of reference**

**But he keeps opening their horizon**

**To ways of thinking they would never come to on their own**

**God gave Moses the 10 Commandments**

**The Pharisee, over time, expanded this to over 600 laws and rules**

**These governed every aspect of the daily life of a good Jew**

**With so many to choose from**

**They figure there must be a hierarchy to the law**

**Each Pharisee could select which one was most important**

**And there were many arguments at the time over this**

**So they come to Christ today**

**Tell us which of the laws is the most important**

**Christ gives them their answer**

**But not what they expect**

**He goes outside the box**

**He doesn't go to one of their rules or laws**

**He doesn't even select one of the ten**

**He gives them, and us, the heart of all the commandments**

**Something so simple to understand**

**But a challenge to live**

The entirety of the faith can be found in two commandments: first:

*Love the Lord your God*

*With all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind*

The second:

*Love your neighbor as yourself*

Anyone can grasp the meaning of these two commands

But it takes a hero to live them perfectly

They give us our benchmark, our goal

So we know when we miss the target

We cannot love God and ignore our neighbor

St John puts it this way:

*If anyone says 'I love God', but hates his brother is a liar:*

*For he who does not love his brother, whom he can see*

*Cannot love God whom he cannot see*

We need the love of God to become tangible in our lives

And we do that through love of neighbor

That is what our first reading was about

God gives specific instructions at the time

It is not an all-encompassing list

It is a lesson that to love isn't about words

It is about our actions and our inactions

Do not oppress an alien

**Do not take advantage of others**

**You were once an alien yourself**

**Do not oppress other human beings**

**We are all aliens**

**Alienated from God, from our true family**

**We become aliens through sin**

**Both original sin and our actual sins**

**We are all in need of God's mercy**

**We have received His mercy**

**And if we are not alienated from Him in serious sin**

**It is by his grace**

**It is by His grace we are here**

**And it is our call to walk with others**

**To bring them to experience God's mercy**

**We are called to treat others as we wish to be treated**

**Don't make demands we would not want demanded of us**

**Love them as we love our selves**

**This is what Christ is telling the Pharisee**

**The commandments are not about the law**

**They are about love**

**If it were about the law**

**You could make a good case for almost any of the laws**

If not, they would be dismissed

Kind of like all unnecessary personnel do not have to come in today

Also, if it was about the law as law

Then if one could fulfill it perfectly

You could earn your salvation

And as St James says: *'Whoever keeps the law but fails in one point*

*Has become guilty of all of it'*

If the law is your benchmark

There are no options but to keep them perfectly

At least exteriorly

But Jesus sees more than the law

He knows the heart

So he goes to the heart when asked

*The greatest Commandment is to love the Lord your God*

*With all your heart*

*All your soul*

*And all your mind*

*And love your neighbor as yourself*

None of us need to be told to love yourself

This is automatic

How we do it might be called into question

But all of us love ourselves

**At the most basic level**

**We seek food, shelter, clothing and protection**

**Love is the goal of our lives**

**Because we are made in the image and likeness of He whom is Love**

**The Commandments are not about being fulfilled as law**

**But we are called to fulfill them in love**

**They all hold an equal importance**

**Because they all come from the mouth of God**

**So why do we fulfill the law?**

**Is it to get a checklist for when we see Jesus face to face?**

**See Lord, my baptism, Eucharist**

**Confirmed, married**

**Every Sunday; check**

**I supported the Church and went to confession every year**

**On and on the list goes**

**But if that is the reason we do things**

**We are at risk of slipping up on one thing**

**And lose everything**

**We don't come to Mass to earn God's love**

**We are loved**

**So we come to Mass**

**We don't bring our children to baptism so God will love them**

**God loves them, so we bring them to this sacrament**

**To bring them into his family**

**We don't chase after anything in the law to earn something**

**We are loved**

**So we keep the law in response and in thanksgiving for being loved**

**We are so used to the law**

**In the United States the law is almost sacred**

**In a government, that is a good thing**

**Because it levels the playing field**

**We know where we stand**

**Other countries are not so fortunate**

**And in many cases we are starting to slide down another path as well**

**When the law can mean whatever the current office holders  
determine**

**It is difficult to get a firm footing**

**But our faith is not based on this law**

**It is based on relationship**

**A relationship with the One that is Love itself**

**In seminary, one of my professors had a plaque**

***Only God***

***Nothing more***

***Nothing less***

***Nothing else***

**Similar to the saying over the retreat house at Gethsemane Abby  
in Kentucky**

***God Alone***

**When we see these things, and we decide to live them**

**It can be frightening**

**Because we think it means that we will lose our freedom**

**This particular life or calling**

**I will HAVE to do this or that**

**But the opposite is true**

**When we live this**

**No matter what our calling**

**To be a married person**

**A priest**

**A single person in the world**

**We are free**

**Not free from anything**

**But free for something**

**Free to love God**

**With our whole heart, soul and mind**

**Free to love our neighbor as ourself**

**Free to become the son or daughter of God we are meant to be**