




ORIENTED TOWARD OTHERS

VARIOUS PASSAGES



May 3, 2020 PM Message



INTROUCTION

- Nautical Navigation
 - The North Star
 - A Compass
- Navigational Truth

LIVING WITH A GOD POSITIONING SYSTEM – ORIENTED TOWARD OTHERS

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Welcome to the Facebook stream of our Chapel evening service. Tonight, we continue our series on developing a spiritual GPS. Note that for this series we have repurposed GPS to stand for a “God Positioning System”. The driving theme of these messages is aimed at helping us orient our hearts to the heart of God as he has revealed it through His word and guides us by His Spirit. Much as a modern GPS system provides directions to a desired destination and provides corrective routes when we get off track, God’s word is self-described as a light, a path, and as instructions to reliably guide us in this life. Tonight, we will focus on how we God’s word directs and instructs us on how we are to live with others.

A few of you may know that I have a love for British naval fiction around the time of large sailing ships. I am fascinated by the tactics with which they engaged in battle, the manner in which they functioned as an isolated community for months and months at sea, and how they accurately navigated thousands of miles using just the sun and stars as their guide. In those days the celestial markers God created in the skies were their only guides as they crossed vast oceans; with only water as far as the eye could see. But as long as they had a clear sky, they had a system of nautical navigation that could accurately place them within a few miles of their intended destination.

There were two important navigational tools that greatly aided a ship’s captain as he sought to understand where he was located in the midst of a vast ocean. One of these was the North Star and the other was a compass. The first was useful because it was easy to find using the Big Dipper as a pointer. No matter where you are were the northern hemisphere, you knew that you were facing true north if you were looking at the North Star. And if you couldn’t see the stars, the second tool, a magnetic compass, would indicate the directions of North, South, East, West, and all points in between.

I highlight these two navigational tools, because like a GPS they helped orient and align navigators on land or at sea by providing directional truth. Knowing the direction to go and where we are, ensures we are on the right and often the safest path. Accurate and true navigation keeps us from being misled and getting off track. And in case we get lost, they help us find our way by directing us back to where we need to be.

In a similar way, God’s word provides truth for navigating this life in the spiritually best way. A way that orients our hearts toward righteousness, God-honoring relationships, and a passion for God’s glory. As Christ followers, we use the spiritual guides and instructions God has given us to lead and guide us in His path. To love God is to love what He loves and to love who He loves. The GPS of our hearts have been renewed and retuned to follow His direction both in terms of right living and in terms of right relationships.

[opening prayer]

SPIRITUAL NAVIGATION



- A Biblical North Star
- Love Your Neighbor
 - Mark 12:28-31
 - Luke 10:25-27

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So when it comes to living and interacting with others, what does our internal GPS point us to? Scripture warns us that our flesh is selfish and often prone to pursuing desires at the expense of others. Thankfully, God has given us a North Star, if you will, that points us in a different way. There is one overarching Godward guide that points us to a true north when it comes to living with others in a God-glorifying way. It is a foundational Biblical principle that reflects the heart of God for others. That spiritual North Star is to love our neighbors as we love ourselves.

God sums up our interaction with others into a single but profound command. Love your neighbor as you already love yourself. We should not miss that embedded into to the essence of this command is the truth that God loves others. And bound into this truth is that if God loves others and we are to reflect His love for others. Our living and interacting with others must then be guided by this command. Wherever we find ourselves in life with respect to others, we can look to the light of this true north principle. It is an essential direction by which we are to spiritually navigate our lives as we interact with others on a path to following and pleasing our glorious God.

Please open your bibles to the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 12. Please follow along as I read from God's word – Mark Chapter 12, verses 28 through 31. *“28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, ‘Which commandment is the most important of all?’ 29 Jesus answered, ‘The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ 31 The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

These verses contain two commands which embody what Christ did at the cross. First, He died because He loved the Father and willingly walked the hard and lonely path to death on the cross. And second, He died because He reflected the love of the Father for us. Even while we were rebellious and enemies of God, He loved us by dying for us.

It is in Christ's victory over sin that we are now free to love others as God commands us. A command that is second only to loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. The point of this second command is not for us to gain God's favor or earn salvation. But for us to love others because our hearts have been changed and oriented toward others. In Christ, our GPS has a new direction that points us to love others. The point here is not in creating a legalistic set of rules to follow, but in having a heart that genuinely puts others before self. It is a transformation of relationships that humbles self and places a priority on knowing and caring for others.

So the natural question then is, so who is my neighbor? If we are to navigate in this world with respect to others, it makes sense that we must know who God defines as our neighbor. **We find the answer to this question in a similar passage in Luke 10.** Please turn there as we look at verses 25 to 37. Follow along as I read Luke 10:25 to 1372. *"25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" 27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." 29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise.""*

There is an entire sermon here in this passage, and we don't have time tonight to do more than skim over a few key points. First, we see that the lawyer, much like us, is looking to **limit** the scope of those who are considered his neighbors. He is looking for the narrowest definition of neighbor so that he can justify himself as having followed the second greatest command. Isn't this just like us – to be more concerned about developing a set of rules defining about who it is we don't have to love? But the point of Jesus' answer in this parable is that it is not about rules, it is about relationships. What Jesus is saying is that if the unclean Samaritan is considered a neighbor to a stranger and a Jew. who at that time would have been considered his enemy, than anyone and everyone is our neighbor.

The picture here is that we are to interact with others with a humble heart of love and compassion; one that orients and directs to the needs of others. Just as following God leads us to follow His commands, it should lead us to follow Him into the mess of relationships with others. To love your neighbor as God intended is about living with your spouse with a deep and active affection for them. To love your neighbor is to nurture your children with sacrificial care and kindness. To love your neighbor is to serve your brothers and sisters in Christ with a humility that overflows in generosity and encouragement. To love your neighbor is to live out the gospel in a lost world with a genuine care for the eternal condition of their souls. Who is your neighbor? The one to whom you show kindness and mercy.

WHAT DOES LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR LOOK LIKE?

Preferring
Philippians 2:3-7

Suffering
1 Peter 2:20-21

Caring
Ephesians 4:29-5:2

Serving
1 Peter 4:7-10

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Just as we have a scriptural North Star pointing us to the great importance and priority of loving your neighbor, God's word provides additional direction and instruction. It gives us not only the command, but it defines what loving your neighbor looks like. Keeping with our GPS illustration, I would like to cover 4 points of the compass, if you will, that provide the basic instructions for what it means to love our neighbor. Each of these directional points helps us to align our hearts with the heart of God and follow the path to interacting with others that He desires for us. Moreover, each of these points is seen in the love of Christ for us. Through the sending of His Son, God provided the greatest example of loving your neighbor we will ever see.

The first of these points of the compass is preferring others. This is perhaps the most basic and foundational level of what it means to love your neighbor. Turn to Philippians Chapter 2 with me. Paul speaks of the selfless humility of Christ as the measure by which we are live with respect to others. Follow along as I read Philippians 2, verses 3 through 7. *“3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. 5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God,*

did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

This passage reminds us that as we interact with others, we are to humbly prefer them. We are to consider others as more significant and more important than ourselves. The Greek word used here for "significant" literally means to be superior; to be better or to surpass the significance we give to ourselves.

When we do this, it will yield the fruit of two godly characteristics. First, we will look beyond our own interests to see and value the interests of others. The idea here is that in our relationships with others, we will humbly diminish our own needs and desires and elevate the needs and desires of others. This is not natural to the flesh, and we must pray for and work at developing a heart that is humble and considers others as a priority over self.

The second characteristic of preferring is that we will be willing to empty ourselves of any claims to rights we may have for the sake of others. Paul commands us to have the same mind as Christ who gave up His divine rights to being treated as God's Son and took on the human form of a humble servant. He accepted mistreatment and lowered himself for our sakes.

In the midst of a culture that over-emphasizes rights and freedoms, God calls us to willingly give them up out of humility and love. Preferring others means to give up what may be rightfully ours, because of the eternal significance of the relationships we have with others. Such love for others will gladly overflow out of our love for God. And when we love and prefer others by giving up our rights and freedoms, the light of the Gospel shines brightly in contrast to a world that is quick to grumble and complain when those privileges are lost.

The second point of the compass is caring for others. Caring for your neighbor is natural result of humbly preferring others. As we look to the interests and needs of others, our hearts will be drawn to care and kindness toward them. We see this in Ephesians Chapter 4. In these verses, Paul is writing about what it means to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. We will pick up with the last four verses of Chapter 4 and continue with the first two verses of Chapter 5. Follow along as I read. *"4:29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."*

Paul begins here by describing what caring communications looks like. They are word that do not corrupt or destroy our relationships with others. Moreover, we are to care in a way that is aimed at building up and affecting good in the lives of others. It is filled with words that bring grace and encouragement. It is communication that is appropriate and helpful for the moment and time. We also see in verse 31 that caring is not present when we are filled with bitterness, anger, raging, and malice against others. Brothers and sisters, let me urge you to consider these verses carefully as you speak to one another as you communicate both in person and on

social media. I pray that God would fill our communications with others with a grace and unity that would allow the world to clearly see our deep love for God and others.

Note in verse 1 of Chapter 5 the directional aim and nature of our caring. We are to care for others as imitators of God. We are to walk in love for one another just as Christ loved us and gave of himself for us. If Christ, who though God, gave up His rights to die for us, how can we hold so tightly to ours. At the end of verse 2 Paul gives the purpose that underlies our caring for others. When we walk in this way, we offer up a sweet-smelling offering to our Lord. He is pleased when our hearts follow after His heart; and when our care for others imitates the care He has for us as His beloved children.

A third point of the compass is serving others. I believe there is a sense of progression in our level of engagement with each point here. As we prefer our neighbor, we will care for them. And as we care for them, we will serve them. Serving our neighbor is to put our love for them into action. We see this in 1 Peter Chapter 4. Peter is writing of the contrast the Gospel brings between the lives of unbelievers and believers. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 4. Follow along as I read verses 7 through 10. *“7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 10 As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace...”*

These verses start off with an admonition that as the time of Christ’s coming draws near, believers are to stay focused on living for Christ. We are also to be sober-minded or level headed, if you will, so that we may pray effectively. But even more, Peter notes, we are to keep on loving one another with eagerness and faithfulness. As we get to verse 9, there are two characteristics of serving that I would like us to see.

First, we are to show hospitality to others. And he adds a warning that we are to do so without grumbling. The sense here is that we are to be people who welcome others. I believe that welcoming others starts by inviting them into our homes and into our lives. The idea here is that we are to serve them by sharing with them. And we are to do this gladly and without whining or complaining about it. There are many around us in the world and many within the community of Chapel that are longing to be a part of your life. I think particularly of our singles and elderly who may not have as much access to fellowship with us in the midst of our busy lives.

The second characteristic is that we are to use the gifts God has given us to serve one another. We may think of this in terms of the time, talents, and treasures that God has supplied to us as good gifts to be used in serving others. To spend these gifts solely on ourselves is to selfishly squander what God has given us. As stewards of these gifts, we are to use them to serve our neighbors as we do life in the world, in the Chapel, and in our families. God has given us gifts and abilities to invest into our relationships with others by putting our love into real and meaningful action. If God has sovereignly placed someone in your life to care for, He has done so for you to take action and to serve them. Loving our neighbor is to serve others out of hearts grateful for the way Christ served us.

The fourth and last point of the compass is sacrificing for others. This is the greatest and perhaps hardest and most challenging aspect to our engagement with others. We prefer, we care, we serve, and then as needed, we sacrifice for them. As I look at scripture, I see sacrifice as the deepest form of preferring others because it requires that we give up or accept the loss of something we treasure, for the sake of others. There is a personal cost associated with sacrifice.

We see this earlier in 1 Peter Chapter 2. There several other passages we could look at, but I chose this passage because of its context. If we look back to verse 13, we can see that Peter is writing in the context of being in submission to those who are authority over us. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 2, verse 20. I will be reading just verses 20 and 21. *“20 For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.”*

If I were to paraphrase what Peter is saying in verse 20, it would go something like this. “Why should you be given any honor when you suffer the consequences of your sin? You are getting what you have earned. But if you suffer in doing good for others, that is honorable and pleasing to the Lord.” From a human perspective, suffering and sacrifice are not pleasant. But we are called to accept it for the good of others. The truth is that we are very rarely called to truly suffer for the sake of others. The recent coronavirus pandemic has created differing degrees of economic suffering for some. We hope and pray that this is only temporary, but in a real sense, those who have experienced loss of income and assets have done so to protect the life and health of others. They have sacrificed something lesser in God’s economy to give something greater for the sake of others. We have these pictures of the Gospel being lived out before our lives. And I believe that in doing so, God is pleased when we do so for the sake of Christ.

This passage ends with a very hard reminder. As Christ followers, we are called to suffer and sacrifice out of the example he set for us. We are to expect it and understand that is what we have been called to do out of His example. As I have considered the impact of the coronavirus, I consider us fortunate that the virus has not hit us harder. While there are people in financial need, both the government and the Chapel have been able to provide some level of assistance to others.

But what if we had been hit worse than we have? What if the virus were more deadly and death rates were even higher? What if we were being called on to sacrifice our life savings to feed others? What if we were called upon to give up food or share our homes with other families? Would we hoard our supplies, or would we gladly share of all that we had for the sake of our neighbor? Would we complain about the relatively minor inconveniences of toilet paper shortages and wearing masks? Would we question God’s goodness and chafe against His sovereignty? May God help us to focus on the eternal priorities and direct us to sacrificially love others as we walk through these troubling days.

REFLECT AND RESPOND



- Our GPS For Troubling Times
- Loving Others In the Midst of Hardship

The passages we have looked at tonight help us orient our hearts according to the way God would have us treat others. As we consider the times that we find ourselves in, our need to be guided by a spiritual GPS is greater. It is in the midst of a storm where we can more easily become lost as we are buffeted by unexpected winds and blinded by pounding rain. In the upheaval and uncertainty of troubled times a spiritual GPS provides clarity of direction and keeps us out of danger.

These last few months have challenged each of us in different ways. Fears and concerns rise up and expose heart idols. And as heart idols are exposed, we find it difficult to love our neighbors when we are busy distracted with our own struggles. Instead of considering how to love others, we get caught up in how the coronavirus impacts us. We can easily lose sight of God's sovereignty and goodness to His people as we take our eyes off Christ and try and find our own way.

May I plead with you tonight with the caring heart of a shepherd; that in the midst of these difficult days, you do not lose sight of loving others in the midst of this hardship. Care for the health and life of others with the same value that God places on life. Take action to help those in need, even if it means sacrifice. Whether in conversation or on social media, let your words encourage and bring hope to those who are fearful of life, health, or economic loss. And lastly, be careful and considerate that you are not being divisive, unhelpful, or unkind to those who disagree with you. In doing these things you will be light to a dark world that needs to see Christ in the way we humbly love others. Do this for the glory and honor of Christ's name. Do this so that your testimony of love for others will be evident to all you interact with. May these days draw us even nearer to one another and nearer, much nearer to Christ.

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