



# DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

## Sunday, September 4-10 (A) – Romans 13:8-14

**Focus:** *Love Fulfills the Law*

### **word of life**

**“Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.”** (Romans 13:8 NRSV)

Read Romans 13:8-14

This lectionary text begins with a simple reminder: “Owe no one anything; except to love one another.” (Romans 13:8 NRSV)

1. *How does it feel to owe someone?*
2. *What does it mean to owe people only one thing—love?*

The commandment to love our neighbor is nothing new; but is also included in the book of Leviticus. “...but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:18b NRSV) It is one of many commandments. At the last supper Jesus had with his disciples, he made it simple by saying, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34-35 NRSV) It sounds simple, but we can only hope to love like Jesus by the grace of God.

3. *What does it mean to love like Jesus?*
4. *If you love your neighbor, would you be able to steal, kill, or hurt that person in any way?*
5. *Who is your neighbor?*

In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul emphasizes love as the sum of all the commandments taught in Judaism, “The commandments.... are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:9-20 NRSV)

6. *How does love fulfill the law?*
7. *How does love summarize all the commandments?*

Out of love, God changed the course of history by sending Jesus—not just for Jews, but for Gentiles as well. No longer is the law used to gain favor with God.

Thus, the Christian life is one of believing and doing. A believer does not simply confess faith in Christ, but lives a changed life—a life transformed by the Holy Spirit into a new creation in Christ, one created to love. (See Romans 12 for specific information about this transformation and the marks of a Christian.)

There is no room for procrastination in the life of a Christian. Paul offers an urgent request for Christians to wake up from sleep and engage in Christian ethical behavior—today. Dress for the day, putting on Christ. Paul offers two images: one from baptism and the other from the battlefield. Christians are urged to put on the armor of Christ and prepare for the battles of this world—those things which draw us away from Christ. Daily remember the promises of baptism. For it is in daily life, we live the faith and love.

8. *What morning rituals remind you to put on Christ and to love as Christ during your waking hours of that day?*

## **Word among us**

A local Muslim group invited Christian and Jewish friends for breakfast to mark the conclusion of Ramadan. (During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast daily from sunrise to sunset, eating only during the evening hours.) The occasion was quite festive with wonderful food and conversation. Visiting professors from Turkey were at the meal with translators interspersed at the tables.

At one table the Turkish professor said his teaching specialty was *Love*. That got the attention of the rabbi, pastor, and other Americans at the table. Through the translator, the group learned this professor specialized in French and Italian *love*. The course of study included four years of study at an independent institution with an internship.

The more the American group heard about this course on *love*, the more fascinated and curious they became. The pastor requested, “Please give examples of internships *in love*.” The response was quick, “Work with a judge, court of law...” Finally, it was clear. The professor taught *law* and not *love*. The group chuckled at the misunderstanding but seemed a bit disappointed to hear there was not a four-year degree in love. Certainly, our world needs specialists in love.

1. *What might a four-year curriculum on “love” include?*
2. *How does your congregation teach people to love?*
3. *How do you try to model love in your daily life?*

The diverse group of Muslims, Christians, and Jews described above had the rich experience of interfaith dialogue over breakfast. Since the group did not speak the same language, they worked harder than usual to hear and understand each other. But what a special opportunity when we pause to be in conversation with our neighbor—especially those who have differing beliefs. The professor may not have taught *love* at the university, but love was shared in the breaking of bread and sharing of conversation.

4. *How is dialogue an act of love?*
5. *How might dialogue tear down barriers and melt hatred?*

For the Christian, love sums it up and trumps the law. For if all could love as Christ, there would be no need for law and the enforcement of it. Each person would be able to control his or her own actions.

## **faith practice in daily life**

### **Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed**

The act of loving our neighbor—those who look and act like us, as well as others—is rooted in the command of Jesus to love one another. Paul understands love as the summary of our response to God’s love in Christ, “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” (Romans 13:8 NRSV) We are to put on Christ as we daily remember our baptism and move into the world to share the love of Christ.

### **Prayer**

Source of All Love, teach us to love our neighbor—both near and far. Fill us daily with the love of Christ. Amen

### ***last word***

Each morning make a commitment to love like Jesus all day long!

#### *Daily Faith Practices*

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