

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 25, 2026

LIKE

connecting the second to the first

by Drew Downs

Jesus's most elegant teaching has to be the one that silences his critics. The critics who sought to trap him in legalistic riddles and gotcha tricks. And yet, he emerges with a beautiful teaching about the greatest commandment from God. To love God. But instead of stopping there, he says "and" oh, man! You know they're like, what comes next? He keeps going "And a second is like it". The Great Commandment has a second, a partner, and it is *like* it.

Being like the great commandment makes it more a reflection of than a companion to, because it is of the same kind. These inform each other. Connect and, if we follow our own theology, become one. The first is the first and the second is like the first. Love God *and* love your neighbor as yourself. Like one great command. Like this is what God has always intended. As God is. This is lovely theology because it isn't just a concept. It makes it all fit together.

ORDINARY TIME

2026

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Look But Don't Touch

The Hebrew Scripture for this week offers us the death of Moses, who, after leading the people in the wilderness for forty years, is able to see the land that was promised to the Patriarchs, but he won't be able to set foot onto it. This is a beautifully tragic moment. He's worked so hard to live up to God's expectations. But here he is, at the end, still unable to change God's mind about this one.

None of the people who set out from Egypt will make their final steps into this space. That work is for their children and their children's children. A work that resembles the promise to Abraham to make his offspring as plentiful as stars in the sky and then he has two sons, and only one rightful heir. An heir he almost murders. The promise to him was for him in the present, but that doesn't mean it is revealed in the present. It occurs after Abraham has died. That's when Isaac's son, Jacob, collects wives and twelve sons.

The truth of God's time, of God's connection to the bigger story, is something the modern mind struggles with. We want Moses to touch, not just see the land, because we want our own struggles to be realized in our own time. But in God, this is tragedy made beautiful. All that Moses works for us is not for himself, but for everyone that comes after. That's the vision he is given, the promise that the one he has been preparing, Joshua, would be ready to lead, that our job of leaving the safety of Egypt may not require the same talents as building a new life somewhere else. This, friends, is so embarrassingly obvious, isn't it? But it requires letting go of our fear of not being enough and our desire to have it all. In short, it requires our trust in God.

With love,
Drew+

ORDINARY TIME

2026

FOR SUNDAY

Proper 25A

October 25, 2026

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 22:34-46

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'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."

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
'Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet'?"

If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

ORDINARY TIME

Reflection

The Pharisees sent their disciples to trap Jesus but they were awed by him. Then the Sadducees tried to trap him in a question about resurrection. Neither of these is an honest question. This one, for what its worth, may be more honest. At least it's not a trick question anyway.

Jesus's answer seems to be novel, not because he goes to the central prayer of the Hebrew people, the Shema, which draws on the Decalogue to make the first commandment the first among equals, as it were, but because Jesus ties this to another that is like it. A teaching from Leviticus: love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus claims everything hangs from these two.

Jesus then takes the opportunity to offer a tricky question of his own. It's a riddle about the relationship between King David and the Messiah that, to be honest, is probably nonsense. Nonsense in that solving it is an impossibility and the point of the telling isn't to have it solved. Jesus is pushing a different priority than the Pharisees and Sadducees. He is forwarding the dream of God.

And what the riddle reveals is a *lesser* position of an earthly king to God-sent emissary or a divine offspring. At a time when Son of David and Son of God are almost interchangeable in their use, and in the thinking of many Hebrew leaders, it is a correction to remind everyone that David was not God. Nor was he the Son of God.

This isn't news of course. But perhaps Jesus is playing with their expectations about bloodlines and specialness. How tied these customs are to their own specialness. And perhaps Jesus is pushing against their assumptions: about God, the people, and their leaders. For he seems to be questioning their assumptions about power, how its used, and what they think our relationship to God is all about.

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