**Romans 13:8-14   “Title Neighborly Thing to Do” by David Finney**

* I thank Pastor Amy for this chance to be with you
* Face-to-face has been slow to come back
* I’ve been on the road preaching each of the past 2 weeks, in each case filling in for a pastor facing a medical situation
* Prior to that I did a couple vacation fill-ins, like today, earlier in July and August
* I’ve been blessed to be able to do so.
* I filled in at The Gathering, and the presence of the Holy Spirit, among that congregation is so strong
	+ I really recommend worship over there, holler at me if so inclined
	+ Also, they feed whoever comes, every Sunday, so if you are looking for a mission opportunity, give us a shout
		- This can be your organization on site serving
		- Or it can be financial
* That is serving your neighbor
* I had the great privilege of preaching in Cincinnati on July 5.
	+ I so much enjoyed the sermon prep on that day as I considered the July 4 American holiday and tried to tie the famous United states documents Declaration of Independence and US constitution to some of the Epistle writing by Paul
	+ I learned a lot about the constitution during that study and about the constitution amendment process
		- And I get to share some of what I learned today
	+ Like… in the 230 years since the United States constitution was ratified, 27 constitution amendments have been ratified
	+ Of course, the first 10, the Bill of Rights were ratified in the first year
	+ So, 17 amendments ratified over the next 229 years
	+ Meaning amendments to the constitution rather rare
	+ Of course we are now celebrating 100 years, almost to the day, since the ratification of 19th amendment which guaranteed the right to vote for women
	+ And I chuckle that this important 19th amendment was ratified during prohibition
	+ Not sure what it says, but it tells me that men had to sober up before they gave women the right to vote.
	+ 4 other amendments help clarify citizen and voting rights of people, especially those who were emancipated from slavery following the American Civil War
	+ We hear some folks today advocating that the Electoral College be abolished as it applies to presidential elections.
		- Just takes a constitutional amendment to do so
		- For prior to 1912 and the 17th amendment to the constitution, US Senators were elected by state legislatures
			* 17th amendment instituted popular vote to elect US senators
* Now, to today’s scripture….
* Paul writes that all of the law can be summed up in Love your Neighbor as Yourself
* Jesus said very similar words in Mark chapter 12, Matthew 22 and of course in Luke 10
* Many have spoken on what it is to love your neighbor as yourself
	+ For we all are kinda fond of ourselves
* Since our founding, Americans have been open to each other
* I Like the Latin phrase E pluribus unum – Latin for "Out of many, one"
	+ E pluribus unum appears on the Great Seal of the United States
	+ And was considered the nation’s motto until Congress named an official, and different motto in 1956
	+ Or course, can’t complain about the 1956 motto
		- In God, we Trust
* Out of many, one -- certainly contains the concept that we, as Americans, are one
	+ Perhaps even we are all neighbors??
* But, are we all neighbors?
* Can we say, Out of many, one?
* Consider the opening line of the Preamble to the US Constitution
	+ The constitution, that document that specifies citizen rights, government responsibilities and limits, begins with poetry
	+ And this beautiful line,
	+ We, the people of the United States
	+ We, the people of the United States
	+ In order to form a more perfect union,
	+ Establish Justice,
	+ Insure domestic tranquility,
	+ Provide for the Common Defense,
	+ Promote the General Welfare,
	+ And secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and posterity,
	+ Do order and establish this constitution of the United States of America
* Wish I could write like that
* I read opening line in the Constitution Preamble and wonder, why do Democrats and Republicans fight so much
	+ Why are we so partisan?
* We, the people of the United States
* Now, I am not an expert on grammar
	+ In fact, I’m a lousy user of grammar
	+ And my spelling is even worse
* but I am struck, and learned just a few days ago, that there is a comma between WE and the People in the opening line
* WE stands alone
	+ Then the WE is explained as The People of the United States
* I see that WE comma and ask
* Just who is my neighbor?
	+ Does my neighbor have to live like me?
	+ Does my neighbor have to look like me?
	+ Why should anyone care for a neighbor?
* And the answer is clear…
	+ Because Jesus and Paul told us to
* So Paul wrote to the Romans
	+ Love is the fulfillment of the Law
* That simple sentence is so complex
* That Paul, to write
	+ Love is the fulfillment of the Law
* How is the Law fulfilled?
* What does fulfill mean in this context?
	+ You may have a different understanding than me, and that’s ok
	+ But what do you think Paul meant when he wrote
		- Love is the fulfillment of the law?
* I looked around on uses of the word Fulfill or fulfilled or fulfillment
	+ First hits in my online search were in regard to Amazon and their many fulfillment centers
	+ And that got me thinking
	+ These search results were first because amazon paid the most to the internet search engines, and thereby were first in the answer set sequence
		- Gotta tell ya, at LexisNexis we took great pains in ordering the hits in our answer sets, to always show the most important hit first
			* Not so with google and the others
	+ No doubt, that is true
	+ But perhaps this says a lot about our society today
	+ Fulfillment today, is getting our online order completed and sent on its way to our front door
	+ We are fulfilled, when our online order is fulfilled
* My sense is word fulfill means to be filled up, to receive in great quantity or volume
* Not a lot about giving
* And whole big bunch about getting
* That is striking
* For it seems to me that Paul’s usage of fulfillment does indicate receiving
	+ Receiving God’s love
	+ Receiving blessings of Christian life
* But our lives are really fulfilled when we give
	+ When we serve others
	+ When we serve the Least of these
	+ Whenever we serve, we are fulfilled
* Anyway, society can differ from Christians on what it is to be fulfilled
* Back to Paul and Love is the fulfillment of the Law
* For now I ask, What is the Law?
* We can Consider the Law specified in the Jewish Torah – the law listed in Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Numbers books of the Bible
* You can count them and may find a slightly different number, but one accepted number of laws listed in the Torah, or first books of the Bible is 613
* 613 laws specified in the Old Testament
* Gonna sound radical, some of these are God’s laws and are above human reproach
	+ 10 commandments
	+ Great laws from Deuteronomy 6 – Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and might
* But some of the 613 laws are kinda out there
	+ Maybe they served a purpose at one time
	+ Not too many people prefer the reverse mohawk look. However, in Leviticus 19:27 the prescribed holy haircut involved not cutting the hair on the sides of the head
	+ Thinking is this distinctive look would help the Israelites stand out from the people of the other nations.
		- See Larry Fine, a wise guy, eh?
* So one of the 613 Old Testament Laws is the 3 Stooges Larry Fine haircut
* Then consider laws written by Americans
* US Constitution
	+ And United States Code
	+ And Ohio Revised Code
	+ And local rules and laws
		- These laws are intended to protect people
		- These laws are intended to protect property
		- These laws are intended to maintain order
		- These laws are intended preserve our society
		- Laws were well intentioned
* The United States Code contains 53 Titles
	+ There are certainly more than 53 Federal laws, but our basic rule book, USC, contains 53 titles
	+ These Titles are then broken down into subtitles, parts, subparts, chapters, and subchapters.
	+ Lots of laws with lots of details
* Ohio Revised Code contains 31 General Titles, which are broken down into chapters, which are broken down into sections dealing with individual laws
	+ Lots more laws, lots more details
* We got some laws
* A big bunch of laws
* A very big bunch of laws
* Yet these can be distilled into Love your neighbor as yourself
* It comes down to Love your neighbor
* I’d like to suggest an exercise at this point
* I asked the Certified Lay Ministry Academy folks to do this on August 22
* That is to take a Prayer Walk
* Talk a walk around your neighborhood, praying for those you encounter as you walk
	+ Praying for the people that occupy the houses that you pass
	+ Praying for the people in the cars that pass
	+ Then tell me how it went
	+ Sent a txt, send an email, call me or tell me through a mask
		- What did you find when you were on your Prayer Walk
* If it is not practical to walk around your neighborhood, take a walk through your residence
	+ Praying for your family members as you walk
	+ Pray for the family members not present
	+ Thank God for those who have passed
	+ Thank God for our loved ones
* We’ve done Prayer Walks here before
* When we did it for CLMA, I came here, and beginning with front door, prayed for those who walk through those doors
	+ Prayed for the people who work or worship inside each room
	+ Prayed for those who study in each room
	+ Prayed for those who made music
	+ And as I walked, I encountered Jack Hott, who as part of the CLMA class,
		- Jack did his prayer walk from their home in Sycamore Creek to here.
		- Praying especially hard as he crossed Central Avenue in the traffic
	+ And as I walked, I encountered Harry Ingalls who was here doing trustee cabinet installation
	+ Harry and the Trustees have worked very hard on this building
* Prayer Walk, with a mind on neighbors
* Which brings to mind the haunting question of Luke 10
	+ For it was the lawyer asked Jesus
		- Just who is my neighbor?
* So while I advocate each of us taking a prayer walk in our neighborhood, I ask, like the lawyer
	+ Who is my neighbor?
	+ Does my neighbor always live next door?
	+ Does my neighbor look like me?
	+ Does my neighbor live like me?
* Now the lawyer was trying to get out of helping people, looking for a loophole or looking to trip up Jesus
* But how did Jesus answer the question
	+ Just who is my neighbor?
* Jesus answered that question by telling the parable of the Good Samaritan
* The Good Samaritan parable tells us that our neighbor is anyone in need, that we can reach
	+ If someone is hurting and we can help
		- That person is our neighbor
* Love your neighbor as you love yourself
* Scholars think Paul wrote his letter to the Romans while he was in Corinth
	+ That in itself is kinda cool, for we cherish what Paul wrote to the Corinthians, both the first and second letters
	+ Ask my 10 year old grandson to say something about 1 Corinthians, he quickly responds
		- Love is patient, love is kind, love does not keep score
		- Atta boy, Caden
	+ And in that letter to the Romans, which contains so much of Paul’s theology, which contains the famous chapters 12 and 8, contains today’s lesson from chapter 13
		- Gotta say, I opened my Wesley study Bible after I wrote above sentence, just to see what Romans 8 and 12 pages look like
		- Pages are filled with pencil and ink pen markings, underlining, highlighting
		- Chapters 8 and 12 are profound
		- Then there is chapter 13 which Tells us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves
			* Don’t love your neighbors when it is convenient
			* Don’t love your neighbors from a distance
			* Don’t love your neighbors just to be nice
	+ But love our neighbors as we love ourselves!
	+ As we love ourselves!
	+ Since most of us have a rather high opinion of ourselves, that is a lot of love to share with our neighbors
* So in this season of recovery for those in the path of hurricane Laura, I offer a second challenge
	+ Consider showing your love for neighbors by making a gift to United Methodist Committee on Relief
	+ For UMCOR was on the scene early and will stay late
	+ Send your gift through this church
	+ Or send a check directly to UMCOR
	+ Or give to UMCOR through West Ohio website
	+ Or give through Advance.UMCOR.ORG
	+ There are many easy ways to give
	+ But we need to take that step
		- Love our neighbors, even our neighbors in Louisiana, by supporting UMCOR
* Now I need to tell one more story about the United States Constitution
* The words of the presidential Oath of Office are specified in the constitution, Article II, Section 1, clause 8 and have been repeated by each president, whether first or second term, or in the case of Franklin Roosevelt, 3rd and 4th terms
	+ And each president has included an adlib in the oath of office, which is not in the constitution, first said by George Washington
		- Washington added these words at the end of the oath office, as has every president since
		- So Help Me God
		- So Help Me God
* Love is the fulfillment of the law
* May I love my neighbors as myself, so Help Me God

**Neighborly Thing**

**to Do**

**FUMC Springboro**

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