**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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