

Daily Devotional, January 7, 2021 Living Out God's Commandment of Love

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments. Matthew 22:35-40 (NIV)

In all four of our Gospels, Jesus teaches, in a variety of ways, the greatest of the commandments. We are told to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves. There are many things in our life of faith that we debate, analyze, and outright question, but it is ultimately our obligation to God to love without question. It may not always be easy to love God and love every neighbor, but love is the perfect nature of God who loves us in spite of ourselves, and we are created in God's very image. If we suppose ourselves to be Godly creatures, do we have any other choice?

In 1943, Copenhagen, Denmark, was under Nazi occupation. The Germans were planning a surprise, mass roundup of the Jewish population of Copenhagen and throughout villages of Denmark. The Nazi plan was to send the Danish Jews to concentration camps. This surprise roundup would have undoubtedly led to the death of thousands of Jews. The Jewish population was in serious trouble. Thankfully, one brave man considered the people of Copenhagen, *all* of the people of Copenhagen, to be his neighbors.

Just a few days before the roundup was to take place, George Duckwitz, a German Naval attaché, warned his friend Hans Hedtoft of the trouble that was to come. Hans warned the local Jewish population to hide and to leave. This small brave act by George Duckwitz led to a miracle.

When the Nazis began their search of homes, they only found about 300 of the people they were looking for. Over 7,000 Jews were hidden in homes, hospitals, and churches. Covertly they were brought out of hiding and taken by the Danish resistance to the coast where they were ferried by Danish fishermen, in the middle of the night, to neighboring Sweden. Duckwitz had previously petitioned the authorities in Sweden, and they agreed to take in these refugees with open arms.

The Jewish refugees lived in Sweden for just over 19 months until the Allies liberated Denmark. When they returned to Copenhagen, they found their homes, businesses, and belongings secured. Their neighbors had cared for their possessions as if they were their own.

This was possible because people understood the greatest of the commandments: Love God and love your neighbor. We are each called to care for one another. When we fulfill the commandment of love, we see life flourish and miracles happen. We may never be called to save another person's physical life, but we are called everyday to love our neighbor; to look out for their physical needs and to do what we can to help save their eternal life. Have you been doing your best to live up to God's commandment?

Prayer: Lord, you have said that to truly love you then I must also love my neighbor, which can be difficult when we disagree or our lifestyles clash. Yet in overcoming those difficulties it is possible to see the miracle that you love someone like me. Teach us to love, Lord, as you have loved us that this world might be a better neighborhood in which to live and share. May we look at others as if through your eyes, less judging, more loving, and seeing them, like us, as not perfect or finished but as a work in progress that will be completed in due time by your hands. In Your care I pray, Amen.