Trinity 18 – October 19, 2025
Text: Deuteronomy 10:12-21
Theme: What Does Love Mean?

If you have read the things I have read, you have seen our Old Testament text for today from Deuteronomy 10 used to protest against ICE and the deportation of illegal immigrants. I hear people say that we are supposed to love the sojourner. That is true. It is what God commands. But I don't think everyone defines that word "love" the same way. As Inigo Montoya says in "The Princess Bride," "I do not think that word means what you think it means."

What does God command through Moses in Deuteronomy?

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?"

Before we ever talk about sojourners, we are commanded to get our relationship with God right. That is why the first three commandments of the 10 Commandments are about our relationship with God. If that is not right, nothing else will be right. So, Moses says, fear God, walk in all His ways, love Him and serve Him with everything you've got. When we're doing this, the treatment of sojourners is a no brainer. In fact, when we're doing this, the

treatment of everyone is a no brainer, because doing is the definition of love.

We are loving to each other when what we do demonstrates fear of God, walking in God's ways, loving God, and serving God. Using the sojourner, or for our modern-day purposes, immigrants, as a model, let's look at this text. If we understand that we are stewards of this nation, our goal is to preserve it and enlarge it to God's glory. Immigration is a necessary component of that stewardship, but we must have a method of immigration so that we do not destroy what God has already given us. For example, God has given us this church facility and He expects us to use it to the best of our ability to reach out into the world with His love and grace. However, He would not think it good stewardship to just remove the locks on the doors and allow anyone to come and go as they please in this sin filled world. Our church would soon be sacked and destroyed. So loving others is qualified by loving and serving God as His good stewards. If I treat you in a manner that does not love and serve God, it cannot possibly be love. Likewise, if I treat the resources that God has given me with poor stewardship, it cannot possibly be love towards God.

In the end, as with most things, it is simpler than we like to make it. Fear, love, and serve God first, and that defines all our love

for others. God loved us so much that He determined the moment we fell into sin that He would sacrifice His son to die and be damned in our place. That is the ultimate act of love, to die and be damned in the place of the ones you love. For that, He asks us to fear, serve, love, and obey Him. We do that by serving and loving each other in every way that glorifies Him.

So, before we use that Deuteronomy text to try to either defend or protest modern immigration laws, use that same text to defend or protest your own actions. How have you been striving to love and serve God by loving and serving each other? What have you done or failed to do to make someone feel loved and welcomed? Start with your own family and neighbors. See it's easy to be critical of or in favor of big broad policies over which we have almost no control, but God always brings it home for us. This text wasn't about national immigration reform. It was about God's people treating those who were not yet part of God's family as though they were diseased and unwelcome. It was about Israelites who had been given land that had been occupied by other people failing to love those people as God loved them, and forgetting that God was sending His son for all people, not just them.

Make it personal. Remember that if you had been the only sinner on this earth, Jesus still would have died for you. He loved

you, individually, that much. You are that important to Him. Knowing that, believing that, loving, serving, and obeying God is easy, and that makes loving and serving others that much easier. You remember the old Sunday School story of Jesus opening his arms and saying I love you this much?

So, what do we say about immigration reform and ICE and all the raids going on right here in our city? Is attacking officers and soldiers who have been called upon to enforce the law loving and serving them? Is speaking and posting disrespectfully of our elected officials who clearly have differing opinions on how best to enforce appropriate immigration, loving them and serving them? Love does not say, "my way is right and you are dispensable if you disagree with me." Love says, "Jesus died on the cross to provide eternal life for all of us, and I'm going to show you the same love He showed me no matter what you say or do."

However, I know we live in a broken world and there are no easy answers. As Christians, we are always caught in the middle of loving and serving God, but loving and serving others in a sinful, broken world. There is no one right way to do everything in a world where Satan rules. There is only our constant striving to love and serve everyone to the best of our ability and in so doing to

communicate the love of God to all who are suffering right now. God has a graphicly gruesome way of putting it.

"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn." That is a painful, bloody process. It is not easy and God does not sugarcoat it for us but it is what He expects from us. He does not leave us without resources however. He feeds us each week with His body and blood and He washes us continuously in our baptismal waters. It is tricky to navigate the world as a child of God, but it is possible, because He loves us and walks with us every step of the way. Always remember that before you climb onboard anyone's bandwagon. And always ask, am I fearing, loving, and serving God by doing this? Am I loving and serving God's other children by taking this stand? Am I doing everything I am able to do to reflect God's love to the broken world around me?