

*34When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” 37He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38This is the greatest and first commandment. 39And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*

*41Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: 42“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” 43He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, 44‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet”’? 45If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” 46No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.*

Have you ever noticed how instruction manuals omit the most important part? They tell you how to put something together, but not how to take it apart once you have ignore the instructions.

Like the time I was putting together the big wheel tricycle when my son Matt was three. The instructions told me to put the pedal on the metal shaft, Then to pound one of those caps that fit tightly over the metal rod. I was done in an instant. In fact putting on one pedal went so well I quickly grabbed the other and pounded it on, also - only to discover that I forgot the wheel. The shaft was to be put through the wheel before the second pedal was fixed in place.

Suddenly that was a Christmas I'll never forget. Pliers and screwdrivers came out of the tool box - a hammer for pounding. I used all of my strength - all of my wife, Sue's, strength, but not a single instruction how to undo what I had done.

“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” A holy person, a holy people, that is what God is constructing.

How does one construct a holy people? The instructions follow.

“You shall each revere your mother and father, and you shall keep my sabbath: I am the Lord you God. Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves: I am the Lord your God.”

The Lord gave instructions for offering sacrifices: “When you offer a sacrifice of wellbeing to the Lord, offer it in such a way that it is acceptable on your behalf. It shall be eaten on the same day you offer it, or on the next day; and anything left over until the third day shall be consumed in fire.”

Instructions for harvesting: “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God.”

Instructions for relationships: “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”

Hundreds of instructions - all of them given so that God might make a holy people for God.

“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”

Last Monday was All Saints Day (the word “saint” means “holy”) - the day for all the holy ones.

I'm no saint we might be heard to say. By that we mean that we aren't following the instruction manual. But God says to all God's people: “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”

Holiness is God's plan for you. When God decided there would be a person that is just the person you are, God planned to dress that person in holiness - dressed in holiness; not just here as we pray and sing, but dressed in holiness in your home and at work, and as you drive along in your car - dressed in holiness as you watch the Browns this afternoon.

“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”

A long time ago when God wrote out the instructions for holiness, there were instructions for how to deal with those who didn't follow the instructions. They shall be cut off from the people.

If you don't follow the rules, you are out.

Still God wasn't satisfied with God's people. For no matter how seriously they followed the rules, they were more like a copy rather than the real thing.

So God sent holiness among God's people, God's own Son, Jesus. Jesus was not copying holiness, Jesus was holiness, is holiness for Jesus is God.

When asked for the instruction manual for holiness Jesus gave a brief answer: First, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And second, you shall love your neighbor as yourself - hardly an instruction manual at

all, more like an artist's vision - a creator's vision - a work of beauty, full of love for God, of love for others.

But I'm afraid it's too late for me.

I'm no saint. O, I've been trying to put the parts together, but I seem to have them all on wrong. Anger where there might better be compassion, fear where there should be faith, greed installed in the very place designed for generosity - too late for me.

I am imbedded and entangled in relationships that aren't right - nursing grudges - my failures remembered, or covered over. If I could clear my whole life away, get a fresh start with every one of you that I have offended maybe there would be a chance, but for me it is too late for holiness - wholeness.

Still God is saying, "You shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy."

And Christ says: "Open your ears, and put out your hands. It is not too late. It is not too late for God to make of you God's beautiful creation, God's masterpiece. Open your ears, put out your hands. Receive."

Christ will fill you with the love of God - his own body and blood. Christ will fill you with faith that will make you new - with forgiveness that will clear away all the debris. Open your ears, put out your hands - whoever you are - whatever you have done and been.

Christ will make you holy. You are a saint. Christ makes a saint out of you, for he is pouring all his holiness into you.

You are his beautiful creation - loving God and your neighbor.