

Last Wednesday we had the lenten lunch here, and it was a great turnout. We had about 48 people, which is more than we have at the other ones and was fantastic because not only did we have St Paul's there, we had a lot of people from the other churches in town. We had people from the Church of Christ from St Malachy, St Johns, obviously the E Free church since Damian was the one who was speaking. But we had all of this and everybody was there together. We had people from the home as well. But we also had people that don't go to church here in town. We have people that go to church in Ankeny, and people that go to church in Des Moines. So it's not just about us and the local churches, it's about us as a community about how we all come together and how we support all these causes. How we set aside our differences at least for one meal, and that's big. It's huge because we're doing so much good in just this one meal. We're setting aside our preconceptions of what each one of us is and who each one of us is, who we are by faith, who we are by people. We're setting aside the stereotype, so we have all of these different churches and all these different people in the community. And we're taking that time to actually get to know each other.

Most of you know that every other week I have breakfast with preacher Sam at the Church of Christ and it's always a great time cuz we both have these two ideas that we are so different in. I mean we are different in so many ways, he knows it, I know it. But this week we found something out. We found out that neither one of us agreed with what Damian said on Wednesday. He thought I was going to agree with the majority of what he said, and I did agree with most of what he said. There are a couple of key points that I didn't agree with but in my mind, I thought that Sam would agree with everything that he said. You know they are much closer than we are. And so while we're having this breakfast, we're realizing we let our stereotypes get to us again. We let what we thought the other person was going to say start the conversation before we even took the time to do it ourselves. And we do that so many times, don't we? Of what's going to happen, or who we're dealing with, or who we're talking to, and what they're going to say.

In today's scripture reading, this has already happened after Palm Sunday. Jesus has already had his entry into Jerusalem. So this is that little window of time between his entrance and his last supper and he is trying to get in as much teaching as he can. He is trying to teach to everyone who will listen because he knows that his time is coming. He knows it is going to be very soon and what comes up again is the 10 commandments. Which one is the most important? You know a couple weeks ago, we talked about the rich man who told Jesus that he lives all of the Commandments. He does everything he can, but he doesn't feel that he's going to get into heaven. We talked about the ten commandments but Deuteronomy. We talked about them with Exodus. We talked about it a great deal this time.

In my meetings with Sam, we talked about it and he asked me, Which is the most important, which does your church follow? And I told him the most important is loving your neighbor as yourself as Jesus did. We love God. We love our neighbor. Those are the two most important things. If you do those two things you're leading a righteous life; you're finding your way to heaven. If you treat others as you want to be treated, if you love God with all your heart, you don't have to worry about the rest of it.

The Jews had to remember 636 different laws. If you remember those two, you don't have to worry about the rest. You aren't going to steal from anybody; you're not going to kill anybody because you sure don't want to be killed. You're going to be doing everything right. It

is easy if we just stick with those two. But so many times we don't, we just stick with what is easiest. Like these preconceived conceptions, like these stereotypes. It is easier to have these ideas before you get to know somebody.

You know Jesus is talking about the scribes and he is telling us to be leary of the scribes. But it isn't all of them. It isn't all the scribes. It isn't all the Pharisees that are against Jesus, it's only certain ones. But we need to keep an idea, we need to be mindful that we don't treat all of them, that we need to hide from them, that we need to be against them, but we don't. We need to find out, to figure out who somebody is. When he is talking about the widow, we see who he is. Remember at this time, widows do not have a very strong position in their customs, in their culture. It is a very male dominated culture. So having a widow is very. I know every word I don't want to say so we will go with that for now. When they see a widow come up in the temple and do these offerings, it's not as grand as some of the others. Some of those people have a lot of money and they are showing their greatness, because they can afford to give all of this money away. But does it mean as much that they can do these grand acts or does it mean more that she is doing this one little act. You know with a stereotype, we would see that she is there. She really isn't that important, but in God's eyes she is more important because she is giving what she can. She is giving what is available. She doesn't need it to be this grand effect. She is simply there. She is simply sharing her love with God. She isn't acting any better than anyone else. She doesn't want to be treated better than anybody else. She's being who she is. She's being true to herself. She's being true to God and God sees that. God knows how important this is for her. How important it is for all of us to make whatever offerings we can.

When the time comes, Jesus will separate us into goats and sheep. we'll be goats if we do more because we're visibly seen doing these things then if we just simply do them because we are all God's children. We all do things because we love God because we love everyone else. We love the people in this room. We love the people that go to those Lenten lunches whether we agree with them wholeheartedly or not. We love everybody because it's the right thing to do. It's so much easier going through life knowing that we love God and knowing that we love each other. That we treat others as we want to be treated, the way we want to be loved, we don't have to worry about the rest of it. If we simply treat people who we truly are then we will know. We will know that God has a place for us. We will know that we will live forever by his side. And that is very important though Easter especially. We think about the sacrifices that we make. We think about the sacrifices everybody else makes. And sometimes we get wrapped up in the season and we forget about all the love that is there too.