

# ST. JOHN'S AT DIOCESAN CENTER IGLESIA EPISCOPAL DE SAN JUAN

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## JUST DO IT

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Text of a Sermon preached the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

October 31, 2021

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-9 | PSALM 119:1-8

HEBREWS 9:11-14 | MARK 12:28-34

A hinge in a door is a marvel of engineering. A hinge is so simple, so efficient. It is designed to swing both ways.

Like a hinge, Moses looks backwards and forward, to what he has just said and to what all he will say, standing there on the border of the Promised Land, one generation poised to enter, another generation one by one, with Moses being the last, to die in the wilderness....

Like a hinge that marks our passage, Moses demands our attention, activates all our senses, commands the moment when the movement from here to there mysteriously begins. His voice cannot be resisted. Shema, O Israel: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

Even though the door is open, and the tribes are in motion, and the frontier will be crossed - even though as we say these words, every generation passes through the gate that marks off the boundaries of the Promised Land - we would do well to pause. And treasure in our hearts, not just a truth, but an invitation.

After all, this is what Moses will do. He will pause. He has at least two more lengthy sermons in him before he will anoint Joshua to be his successor and he will step back up Mt. Nebo and pass from this life.

We should remember that even Moses, who though veiled, spoke with God face to face, and interceded for the survival of God’s people numerous times, even he would be numbered among the generation that rebelled in the wilderness, and because of their unfaithfulness, would not enter into the promised land.

Moses implores us, remember, even as we commit ourselves to love the Lord our God with an extravagant love that involves conscience (heart), essence (soul), and vitality (might), that none of it matters if we do not pass it on to the next generation. God says over and over again, I show mercy to the fourth or fifth generation of those who disobey me.

We do not matter so much. God’s jealousy and justice is for us – and we disappoint him. God’s mercy is for our children’s children. No matter what blessings or curses we have inherited, God honors the children born in the wilderness. God honors every innocent heart that is ready to obey his command. The one true God is a God that gives us the future.

The hinge of the door swings, we look backward and forward, there will be conquest and glory for the people of Israel. There will be promise and fulfillment, but there will continue to be sin and

unfaithfulness. It will lead to repeating past mistakes. It will lead to making idols for themselves. It will lead to forgetting the God that brought them here. Coming generations will be exiled, scattered, lost to themselves, lost to history.

We Christians, we children of Israel descended from the prophet that Moses promised would come, should wrap ourselves enthuse the words of the Shema, clasping them in our hands, tying them to our foreheads, nailing them on our doorposts, so that when we go in and out of our houses, we will not forget them. We will accomplish them.

After all, as we see in our lesson today, Jesus boiled down Moses' three long sermons in Deuteronomy, and clarified the entire Torah, by connecting the second great law - loving your neighbor as yourself - which is a command we find in Leviticus - to the first great law of loving God with our whole being.

When you children ask you, "who is Jesus?" You can say, "he is the Son of God." You can also say, "he is the prophet Moses promised who would come after and live out the meaning of the law." You can also say, "he is the one who, on the cross, invented forgiveness, and discovered eternal life, and breathes God's peace, God's Shalom, into us." That is what none other than Mahatma Ghandi, the great liberator of India said, Jesus was the one who discovered the power of forgiveness.

You may also say, Jesus gave again the Summary of the Law. He clarified Moses' teaching for all time. He explained in the presence of the scribe that he was not far from the kingdom of God if he understood that he should equally love God and love his neighbor.

"[The scribe] asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Jesus, the beloved of God. Jesus, the discoverer of forgiveness. Jesus, the giver of the complete and perfect law of love for God and neighbor.

Now, my friend, the issue is, activate the hinge, push open the door, start your journey with all you heart, your soul, your mind and your strength. Love the God who freed you from the debt and slavery of sin. Love your neighbor as one who demands every ounce of honor, respect, mercy and grace that you do.

On the Eve of All Saints, remember that this may be the best definition of who was a saint in your life, a hinge that opened spiritual doors for you, that taught you to love God and neighbor. Remember that this is what you can do for others.

For you are a blessed child, born in the wilderness, but invited to enter the land flowing with milk and honey. You are not far from the kingdom. Keep listening to Jesus. Just do it. Follow him.