

Embodied  
Mark 12:28-34  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
February 18, 2024  
Rev. Jill Cameron Michel

In the opening words of the devotional we are using this during this season, The Sanctified Art Creative Team writes, "This Lent, we long for a faith that engages all of who we are - mind, body, heart and soul - and invites us to be present in our bodies and in the present moment. We remember the ways Jesus integrated his humanity and divinity to fulfill his radical ministry. Similarly, we too are invited to bring all of who we are to God, to live out the love that chooses to be embodied in us" (*Embodied - Mind, Body, Heart, Soul*, Year B Advent Devotional by A Sanctified Art, [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)).

Friends, we are filled with so many messages that minimize or are dismissive of our human experience. We say things like, "I'm only human after all" to excuse our sins or describe our failings. We seem to spend more time agonizing over the ways our bodies don't work right or don't look right rather than marveling at all our physical bodies allow us to do and experience. We have many messages, especially messages of faith, that seem to communicate that this life is not a valuable gift, but rather something to be endured until we get to some heavenly reward.

And yet, we also claim a faith that is centered on the person of Jesus, one who, even across a great variety of theological perspectives, has been understood to show us more about God, not in spite of Jesus' humanity but in the midst of it. Jesus, who loved and laughed, who hungered and grieved, who hoped and dreamed, who knew joy and anger, who experienced pain and death...this is the one who we follow.

So, perhaps our humanity does, in fact, matter. Perhaps the many facets of who we are human beings, aren't barriers to living from God's love, but in fact help us to live and love more fully.

Jesus had been in conflict with some of the religious leaders, when another one, a scribe, came and asked, "Which commandment is the first of all?" (Mark 12:28b, NRSV). Calling upon their Jewish heritage, Jesus pointed to two: love God and love neighbor. And we know those two commandments, right? If we were to sum up the essence of Jesus' being, of his ministry, it is often those very words that we go to.

But let us not miss that Mark doesn't tell us Jesus simply said, "Love God, love neighbor." Rather these verses read, "Jesus answered, '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'" (Mark 12:29-31a, NRSV).

Jesus, again drawing upon Jewish tradition, points not only to love, but to love that grows out of and is a product of our whole human experience.

So, what if we embrace that?

I wonder how our faith is deepened not in spite of but because of our humanity?

I wonder how the love of God chooses to be embodied in us?

I wonder what it looks like for us to love God and to love our neighbors with our whole selves: mind, body, heart, and soul?

I wonder what would change in our lives if we were committed to live an embodied faith? I wonder what that would look like?

Over the coming weeks we are going to continue to explore this idea. I suspect we may even keep redefining the word, "embodied." We are going to wonder together about these different aspects of our being - mind, body, heart, and soul - and discover together how they help us grow and deepen our faith.

There are two other things you will want to be aware of that will happen throughout the season of Lent.

The first of those is that you will find strips of paper in the pews each week. Over the course of this season, we encourage you to write down ways you have or ways you will, embody your faith, embody the love that we know through Jesus. There will be a container on the communion table throughout the season and you are invited to place these commitments in that container as an offering. This is something you can do anytime across this season and when you come forward to receive communion, you can bring those papers with you. One practical ask...we plan to use these for a community art project, so we would encourage you not to fold your strips of paper, but just to place them in the container.

The other thing I'm excited to share is that each Sunday during Lent we will have a storyteller as part of our worship service. These folks have been asked to share a story of faith: mind, body, heart, and soul. I am confident you will be

delighted to hear their stories as we explore this theme together. The first of those, which you will hear shortly, comes from Vern Duba, a native Nebraskan who you will hear was formed by his surroundings.

Friends, we follow Jesus who scripture tells us “became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood” (John 1:14a, The Message). We, too, are flesh and blood, and we are invited to “live out the love that chooses to be embodied in us” (*Embodied - Mind, Body, Heart, Soul*, Year B Advent Devotional by A Sanctified Art, [sanctifiedart.org](http://sanctifiedart.org)).

That is our calling. In the fullness of who we are, may it be our reality. Amen.