**Introduction**

I have to say, having a high level politician who knows enough theology to invoke it competently is something that we haven’t seen in a long time. Vice President Vance invoked a theological idea old enough it has a latin name – Ordo Amoris. Roughly the order of love, although the phrase rightly ordered love might be better. Saint Augustine took this on in his City of God. That is the work that Augustine wrote trying to work through the dissolution and fall of Rome. How does one live as a citizen of the City of God while remaining in the City of Man? And part of that contemplation was the idea that all things are worthy of love or care. And in fact in the City of God we are called to love even our enemy. Our enemy is worthy of love. But to love all equally is beyond us. We are not God. And even God’s love is equal only on that cross. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son. We are all equally loved by God in that cross. For us humans there is a proper order.

One of the easier images that Augustine uses might be that of the miser. He uses gold and justice. Gold has its place, but to care about gold more than you care about justice is disordered. The miser caring about gold does not make the fault in the gold, it reveals the fault in the miser’s soul. Everything made by God is worthy of care, but when we get the order wrong is when things go wrong.

I want to add one more bit of prolog that I think might be the unique Lutheran bit. That Ordo Amoris is basically a function of the law. The fourth commandment is honor your father and mother. Rightly ordered love starts there is the family and it radiates outward. Jesus would chastise the Pharisees for neglecting mom and dad because they had declared something dedicated to God. He would say that we have lots of traditions of men that overwrite the word of God. And the apostle Paul would have to remind some of his churches that if they can’t provide for their family they have denied the faith (1 Timothy 5:8). In Galatians Paul would say do not weary of doing good to everyone, but especially those of the household of faith (Gal 6:10). Although in a fallen world that order can get shaken, that order for most people is somewhat natural. The Law is written on our hearts after all. The Gospel often flips the law. And this is one of those places. Everyone public this week ran to the parable of the Good Samaritan, but I don’t think that is the best place. Unless you realize that we are only the Samaritan in a 2nd order way. The Samaritan in Christ. We are the ones who have been left beaten and dead. The better place is when Jesus says to love your enemies. And his specific logic is if you only love those who love you “how are you better than the gentiles? Do they not do the same? (Matthew 5:47).” But God in Jesus has loved his enemies. He has loved us sinners. In that parable of the Good Samaritan, God has picked us up, dressed us and taken us to the in where he feeds us and makes us whole. We are only the Samaritan to the extent that we have been healed and are called to be Christ to the nations. To be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Right now we are always caught between the City of God and the City of Man. Hence Luther’s phrase, “Sin boldly.” Do what you think just and trust in the Grace of God. Or Luther’s recommendations in these areas. Our neighbor is most likely the one who is at our doorstep. Don’t be Dives stepping over Lazarus daily, caring for his dogs more than the poor man at his gate. Part of the trouble in our world, as compared to even say 60 years ago, is that my TV and Phone far away people in need of care are thrust in front of us in great numbers. News in World War 2 came by news reel at the theater and radio. In World War 1 by newspaper only. To what extent is something we see on our phones really skip to the front of the right order of caring?

**Text**

This is something that Jesus was working out in his own life on this earth. He would say that he had not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. And in Luke 4 – starting last week and continuing this week – we see Jesus moving along that Ordo Amoris. Where does he formally start his ministry? He does this in Nazareth, his hometown, the place of Joseph and Mary and his brothers and sister. He proclaims the year of the Lord’s favor, the forgiveness of God, to those closest to him first. Of course they don’t want that. They want the miracles. The miracles are what they think love would be. So they reject Jesus.

So where does Jesus go next? To the nearest city. To the Jews of the Synagogue of Capernaum. And to Simon’s house. They appeal to Jesus for Simon’s mother-in-law. You can see the order moving outward. Part of this order on this day was determined by the Sabbath duty which called to the Synagogue and home. But when the day is over, “when the sun was setting”, the order extends to the all the sick and demon possessed of the city. And he heals every one. Jesus doesn’t break the order and rush out on the Sabbath to those in the city, but Jesus does not neglect them either. He doesn’t say you aren’t my problem.

Now unlike Nazareth, Capernaum appreciates Jesus, but wishes to keep him. “Jesus, make us your new home.” And they would have “kept him from leaving them.” But that order of caring still extends outward. Jesus concludes that his mission of the Gospel compels him to “preach the good news of the Kingdom to the other towns as well.” So he “went to the synagogues of Judea.” Nazareth to Capernaum, to Galilee to Judea. All along the way to Jerusalem and the cross. And along the way that order of love grows. Does is include lepers? Yes. Does it include the lame? Yes. Does it include the tax collector? Yes. And then the big one. Does it include the Centurion? Yes. “Not even in Israel have I found such faith.” That’s tracing Luke from chapter 4 to chapter 7. It might be brought to a greater point in Matthew when he confronts the Canaanite woman. “It wouldn’t be right to give the children’s food to the dogs.” But the order of love for Jesus doesn’t stop. And the woman’s faith is that the love of God – even if he thinks it crumbs – will be enough.

**Christology**

Jesus fulfills the law. He follows that Ordo of Caring. He doesn’t abolish it, but shows how it grows outward. While Jesus is the Jewish messiah, this Jewish messiah finds faith in the far out rings of order. God has loved the world in Christ. And he has invited us all into his family. All of us who were far off. Who by the law would have been barely recognized as an object of love, have been brought near. We have been made God dear brothers and sister. Who are my mother and brothers? These. That would be Luke 8.

For God all things are possible. We have all been brought near in Christ. The order of caring fulfilled.

**Moral**

But that leaves us who are held between the City of God and the City of Man in an interesting situation. Yes, the gospel calls us to be like Christ. We are called to love our enemy.

But we cannot use that gospel call to neglect our duty. We are to “honor our parents, serve and obey, love and cherish them.” Even the gentiles do this. If we use the gospel call to love those far off, to neglect those that have been given to us, we are exactly those Pharisees declaring things “Corban.”

And we are not God. Remember, the ultimate fulfillment of the love of everyone is that cross. And we are called to carry our cross. But that cross is not ours. And if it is, you’ll know. More than likely, loving those given to us is going to be tough enough, that we don’t need to go looking for more.

**Eschatological**

The good news is that the City of God draws near. That day when we are no longer fighting our own flesh to order our loves rightly. But when we have put on the resurrection body. When all things have been fulfilled. And all things move at the impulse of the love of God.