The Pharisees gathered and one of them, a lawyer, asked Jesus a question to test him: “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” (22:34-36). The question puts Jesus in a difficult position. If he names one commandment, he will be accused of ignoring the others. If he says all the commandments are great, he looks weak for not answering the question.

Instead, Jesus gave a tweet-sized response: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (vv. 37-39). Jesus names the greatest commandment in just 74 characters. It’s the Greatest Tweet, ever! On this powerful formulation, he says, “hang all the law and the prophets” (v. 40). Case closed. Game over. Drop the mic.

Preaching professor David Lose claims that with this greatest of commandments, “our Lord names his center.” Jesus is tweeting “the center of his ministry, the center of his mission, the center of the kingdom he has been sent to proclaim and build.” That center is love, an even shorter tweet than the greatest of commandments. Just four characters: Love.

“By naming his center,” Lose explains, “Jesus reveals something not only about himself, but also about God.” Jesus is telling us that “God’s law, finally and forever, is the law of love. It is that simple…and that difficult, because loving others means putting them first. It means sacrificing. It means being vulnerable to the needs of those around us.” A tweet can say a lot about a person. It can reveal their center. For Jesus, along with God, the center is love.

The Pharisees scratched their heads and pondered this, wondering what to make of Jesus’ words. Their attempt to make Jesus stumble failed, but before they could come up with another question, Jesus asked them, “What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They answered, “The son of David.”

Jesus followed up with another question, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet?’ If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” (vv. 41-45, italics added). With this question Jesus completely stumped the Pharisees, and from that point on, no one dared to ask Jesus any more questions (v. 46). This tweetstorm was over.

Why would Jesus ask this question? Perhaps he wanted to silence his critics. Tired of their attacks, maybe Jesus wanted to shut their mouths. We can hardly blame him for that. Or, perhaps, Jesus wanted to establish himself as a divinely authorized leader. He did this by showing that he knew the Scriptures even better than the Pharisees knew them.

In the first verse of Psalm 110, David writes, “The Lord says to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’” In this case, the Lord God is saying to David’s Lord, “Sit at my right hand.” Since David’s Lord is the Messiah, it does not make sense for David to call his own son the Lord and Messiah. So, David’s Messiah must be Jesus, the one who is simultaneously the Son of David and the Son of God.

Jesus won this round with the Pharisees, but he was not interested in taking a victory lap. Since Jesus knew that God sent him to be the Lord of love, he used the last days of his earthly ministry to communicate what love looked like. He told the crowds and his disciples that “the greatest among you will be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). “All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). You Pharisees give your tithes, he said, but you “have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (Matthew 23:23). Come to think of it, those are some pretty good tweets! #Service. #Humility. #Justice-mercy-faith.

The problem with tweeting is that it is very easy to do. We can say anything on Twitter without any evidence to back it up; but if we are going to follow Jesus in a life of love, we are going to have to put our words into action.

Here is a story about putting our words into actions. At a mental hospital in Washington, D.C., a chaplain regularly visited a patient, telling her again and again how much God loved her. He thought she needed to hear this, since her mental illness caused great distress and her life as an inpatient proved difficult. The woman listened to the chaplain for some time, and then responded, “Chaplain, don’t tell me how much God loves me. First, *you* love me. Then I’ll know that God loves me.”

Our tweets about love are going to sound empty unless we back them up with action. Through the last days of his earthly life, Jesus remained committed to putting God’s love into action. Soon after offering the love commandment, he gathered his disciples, broke bread, and shared a cup. “Take, eat; this is my body,” he said. “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (26:26-28). He shared that meal, and himself, out of love. Then he was arrested, flogged, and nailed to a cross. He cried “with a loud voice and breathed his last” (27:50). Jesus gave his life, his body and blood, out of love.

When Jesus says, “You shall love the Lord your God. You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” he is not just tweeting. No, he is giving us the center of who he is, and he is backing it up with his own life. Jesus went to the cross filled with love; he loved the Lord his God with all his heart, soul, and mind, and he loved his neighbors as himself. He loved each of us enough to die for us.

Jesus did not just tell us that God loved us. He showed us. Which helps us to know that God loves us. When it comes to love, Jesus is not a tweeter. He is a doer, and he invites us to do the very same.

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**The Greatest Tweet**

Reformation Sunday, October 25, 2020 Matthew 22:34-46

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

“I keep a baseball bat under my bed in case someone tries to break in and pitch a no hitter.”

“Our scariest president was probably Rushmore, because he had four heads.”

“’Fill’er up, please,’ I say as I pull my van up to the cat shelter.”

“Wait, what do you mean Jesus loves me? Did he say something to you?”

Believe it or not, these ridiculous statements are actual tweets. A tweet is a post on the social media application Twitter. Tweets are usually about 33 characters in length. The challenge of a tweet is to say something funny or provocative or profound in just a few words.

* Funny: “Everyone says to follow your dreams, so I went back to bed.”
* Provocative: “Every saint has a past and every sinner has a future!”
* Profound: “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.”

According to an article in *Fast Company* magazine, in just a decade, the tweet has “eclipsed the essay, fiction, and poetry to become the dominant literary form of our era…The tweet turns out to be a perfect vehicle for such elemental forms of human communication: lamentations, angry shouts, and acerbic wisecracks” (“The Best American Tweets of 2019”). Tweets are contemporary literature’s most potent genre.

So, I wonder: What if social media existed in the first century? Would Jesus have had an online presence? Would he have posted selfies? What posts would Jesus “Like”? I think it likely that Jesus would have been the greatest master of the tweet, because in just a few words in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus answers a tough theological question.