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You have heard it was said, *Charity begins at home.*

Your care confined by what you know.

But I say to you, "Love is not bound."

It stretches your will, enlarging your soul,

Confining constraint and making you bleed.

For if you care alone for those near,

What have you learned but to subsist.

-- This is the first verse (of 10) in a poem by Christopher Burkett, a former religious brother and an artist. In this poem he's trying to capture the essence of our gospel by using modern sayings.

-- Some people look at these gospel pronouncements as if they're the 10 commandments on steroids. They picture Jesus placing ever greater demands on us, trying to make us feel guilty for more things. Some people get scrupulous reading these sayings.

-- I don't think Jesus is trying to ratchet up our guilt factor (though a bit of healthy guilt can do some good). Rather, he's getting to the heart of what these commandments are all about.

-- "Don't murder" calls us to get to root out rage and anger, then to cultivate attitudes of peace and reconciliation.

-- "Don't commit adultery" calls us to respect people, not to use them merely as object of our pleasure or manipulation.

-- "Don't swear false oaths" calls us to integrity of life, to be honest in all we do and say so that our word is true.

-- That is the wisdom of the Spirit Jesus imparts to us in this part of the Sermon on the Mount. Sometimes it challenges human wisdom, as Chris Burkett's poem tries to demonstrate.

-- And God's wisdom continues to challenge some aspects of the prevailing wisdom of the day even now. Some examples of this:

-- *We can't expect young people to refrain from sex before marriage. So we should just make sure they use protection.*

-- God's wisdom, however, calls us to a higher standard. With God's grace, young people can remain chaste, especially if we support and encourage them in their efforts. Another:

-- *We have to clamp down on foreigners coming into our country. They are a drain on our economy and our social services.*

-- God's wisdom and the facts on the ground challenge us to welcome the stranger. While we must have an orderly process to receive immigrants, we cannot shut them out completely. Again:

-- *Companies should not be required to pay a minimum wage. Let them pay what the market will bear.*

-- God's wisdom tells us that workers deserve a just wage for their work, just as they must do an honest day's work for that wage. Companies should not pay a wage that requires full time workers to seek public assistance—that is not just.

-- You can go on and on contrasting the wisdom of God with human wisdom, of our own day or of any age.

-- Yes, Jesus does call us to a higher standard, a standard of true integrity of life. But he also gives us the grace to work toward that standard, for we cannot do it on our own.

-- After all, he went to the cross for us. The power of the cross is our life. The power of the cross forms us in the values of the kingdom of God. And that is the true wisdom we seek.