

The Virtues



Path to the Good Life
Part II - The Cardinal Virtues

Pastor's Class — Cary Presbyterian Church

The course

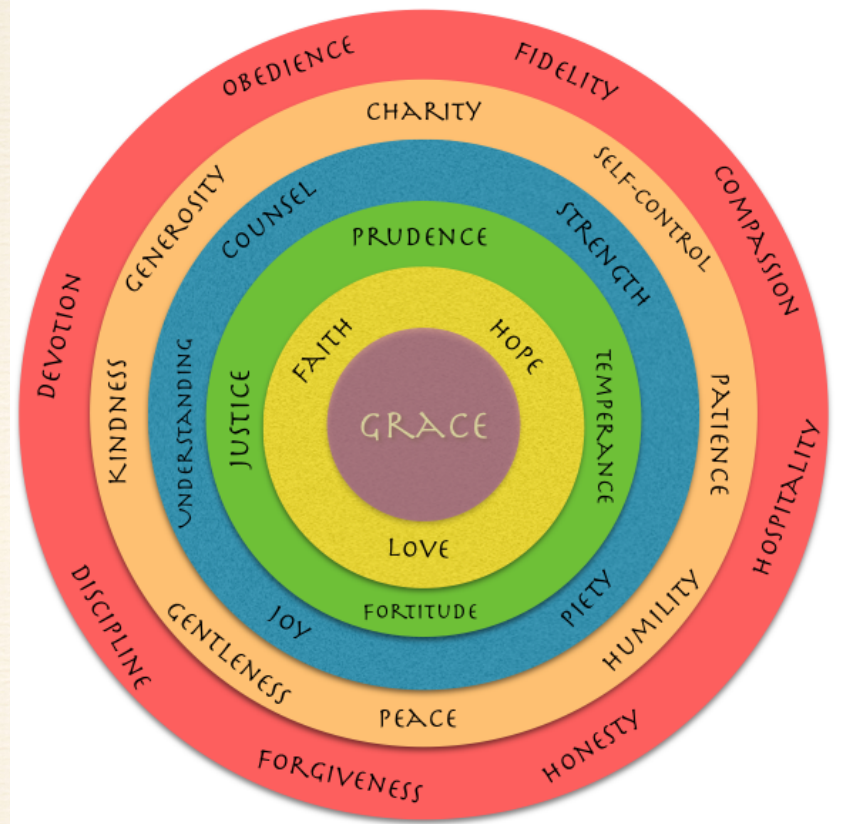
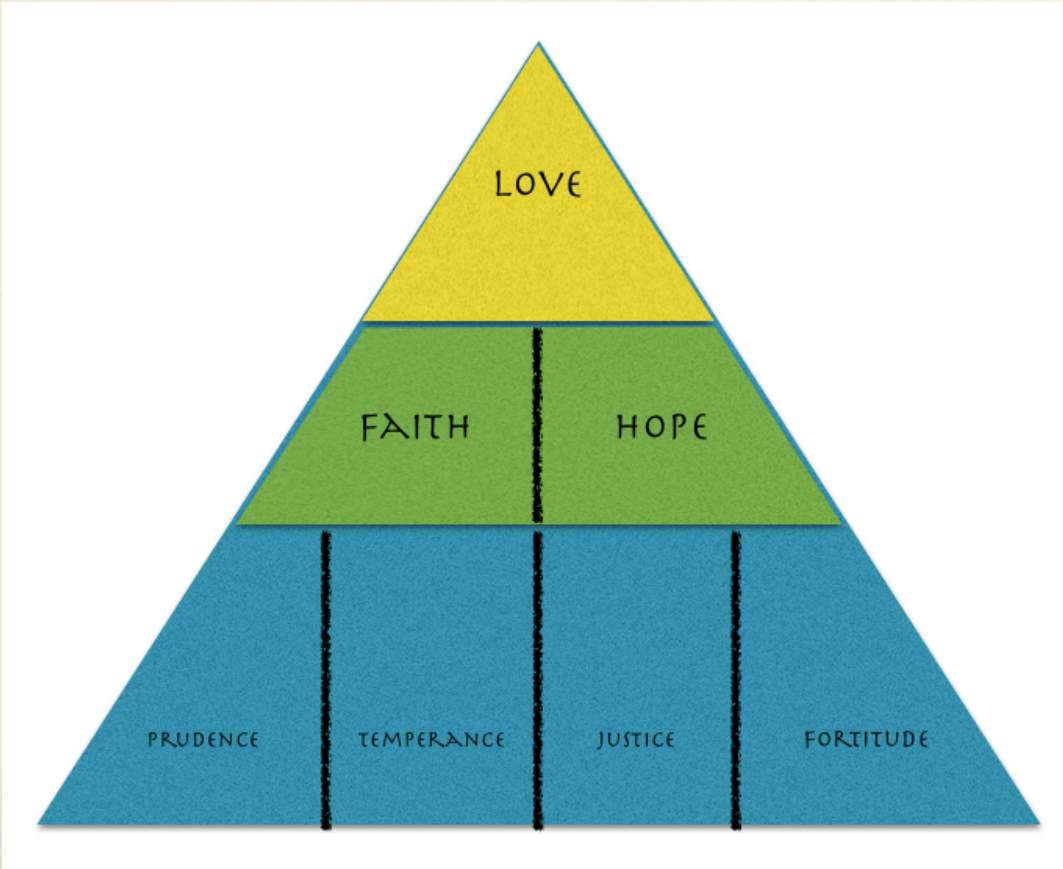
Sunday 9:15 - 10:15 AM

- † Virtues & Moral Theology - An Introduction
- † ***The Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Temperance, Justice, Fortitude***
- † *The Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, Love*
- † Virtues & Vices

A Quick Recapitulation of Last Week

- † People are all seeking what they perceive to be the “good life.”
 - * Glaucon and the *Ring of Gyges* story —
morality of obligation vs. morality of happiness
- † The discipline of making certain actions and intuitions *habitual*,
so that we slowly reshape ourselves by becoming what we pursue.
- † The distinctions within any given action which derive from
the *intention* behind the action and which make it either more or less virtuous.

For the Visual Learners



The Heart of Everything Worth Having	Theological Virtues	Cardinal Virtues
"Gifts" of the Holy Spirit	Fruits of the Holy Spirit <i>a la Galatians 5:22</i>	More & More Expressions of the "Good Life"

The Apostle Paul's Confession

Roman's 7:15 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Rom. 7:21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The Irony of Exodus

The Moses delivers the good news that we do not have to remain enslaved to “half-lives” but are offered an alternative . . . BUT . . . to receive the gifts of the Promised Land *requires* a departure from Egypt with all its enticements.

Many of us struggle with being double-minded

(as did the Isrealites departing Egypt):

† We yearn with our whole being for something new and more life-giving.

† We remember the flesh-pots of Egypt and long to return.

The Cardinal Virtues

- ❖ **Prudence** — wisdom. (icons = book or scroll)
- ❖ **Temperance** — moderation. (icons = wheel, bridle & reins, vegetables and fish, cup)
- ❖ **Justice** — right human relationships. (icons = sword, balance and scales)
- ❖ **Fortitude** — patience, perseverance. (icons = armor, club, a lion, palm, tower, yoke, broken column)

Prudence



Prudence

- ❖ **Prudence** — In modern usage, we think of “prudence” as being “cautious,” and perhaps wisdom is sometimes cautious, but in the ancient context in which the virtue was named, “prudence” meant something like: *rightly knowing one’s place in the world, and developing the capacity to know/perceive things as they really are so that we act rightly.*
 - ❖ Both *knowing* & *living* the truth.
 - ❖ The truth will set us free. Living in falsehood ultimately imprisons us.
 - ❖ “The Woman in the Mirror,” my therapist, corrective lenses.

Prudence

- ❖ **Prudence** — Is gained by living and experiencing *and reflecting on the experiences*. This is *both* formal learning *and* simply paying attention to life.
- ❖ “*The unexamined life is a life not worth living.*” - Socrates in Plato’s *Apology*
- ❖ You don’t become wise simply by surviving to old-age. You have to reflect on the experiences of your life in order for them to yield their wisdom to you.
- ❖ David Steindle-Rast — we can attend to the “meaning of the moment.”

Prudence

❖ Education and Common Sense

- ❖ On the one hand prudence is not reserved for the smart and well-educated. Clearly we all know of highly educated people who lack *wisdom*.
- ❖ On the other hand because prudence is about seeing correctly the truth of things - those who have a good education *do* have leg up on those who remain pig-headed & bigoted. These are derived from fundamentally false perceptions of reality.
 - ❖ You are *not* always right (pig-headedness), people of other races/classes are *not* inferior to you (bigoted). To the degree that an education teaches you not to be pig-headed and bigoted, you are more likely to be prudent if you are well-educated.

Prudence's sub virtues

- ❖ **memoria** (memory) — maintaining a clear-eyed and faithful memory of what has happened. A memory devoid of self-serving tweaks. Remembering correctly what really transpired. Those who do not know their history are doomed to repeat it.
- ❖ **docilitas** (docility) — open-minded ability to accept guidance from others. It is to have the “beginner’s mind.” This includes the capacity to determine who might helpfully inform us.
- ❖ **solertia** (nimble decisiveness) — the ability to quickly size-up an unexpected situation and act well.