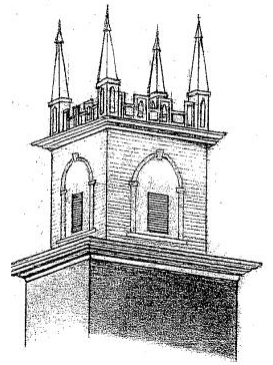


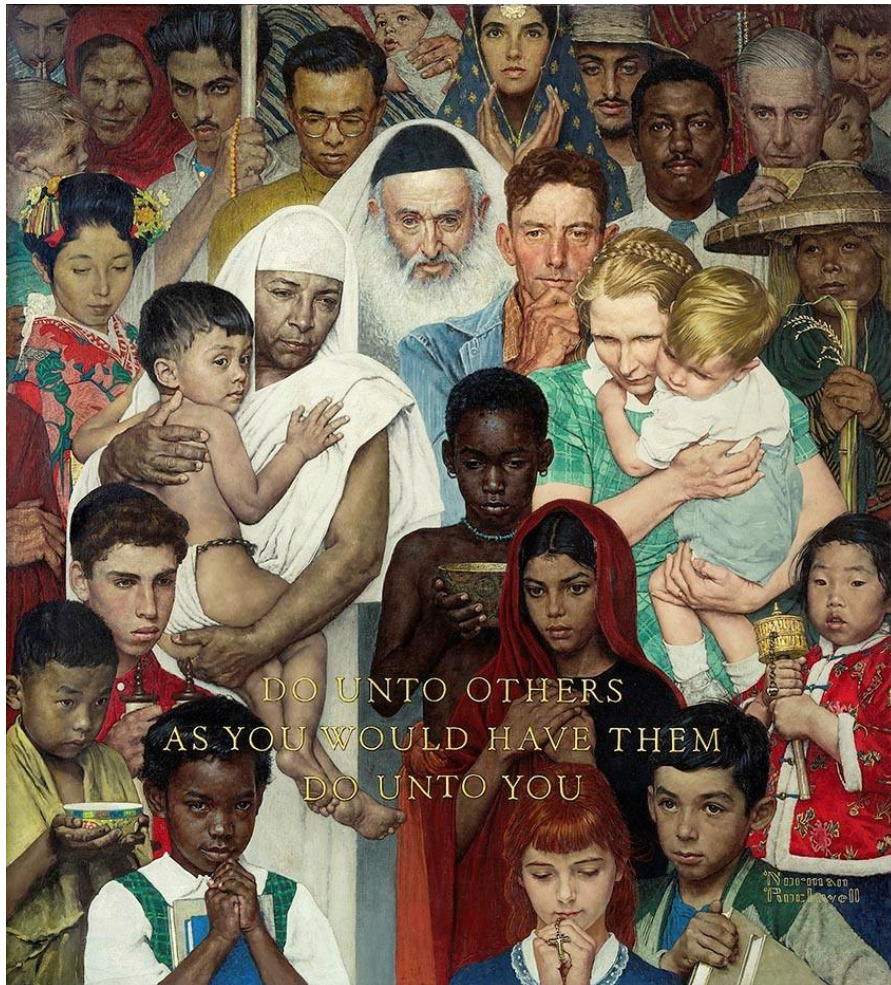
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Message from the Pastor



During a recent conversation with a church member, we wondered whether “The Golden Rule” was readily understood to younger generations. I asked this person if she were familiar with Norman Rockwell’s 1961 painting, “Golden Rule,” which appeared on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*. Her answer, in the negative, thus became my inspiration for this message.

First, a few thoughts on Norman Rockwell (1894–1978). Over three decades in my American Studies classes, students had an opportunity to study Rockwell among other 20th century artists. Some art critics denigrated

Rockwell, calling him a “mere illustrator.” I disagreed! Rockwell arranged his compositions in creative and complex ways from color to shape and unusual points of view. My favorite image from his *Four Freedoms* series in the early days of World War II, “Freedom from Fear,” shows two worried parents watching over their children as they sleep.

Some artists’ reputations shift with time. Today, there is a much broader consensus about Rockwell’s stature as an artist. His popularity has soared, and that is validated by the prices his original works fetch at auction.

Rockwell’s later works, like the one above, reveal a broader array of his social concerns. In preparation for “Golden Rule,” he wrote “I’d been reading up on comparative religion. The thing is that all major religions have the Golden Rule in Common. ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’ Not always the same words but the same meaning.” One can see how in this painting he organized different religions, ethnicities, and cultures around this central theme.

Rockwell had in mind these different expressions of The Golden Rule from world religions:

Buddhism: *Hurt not others with that which pains yourself.*

Hinduism: *Do naught to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain.*

Taoism: *Regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain and regard your neighbor’s loss as your own loss.*

Judaism: *What is hurtful to yourself do not to your fellow man.*

Islam: *No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.*

Christianity: *So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.*

Would not the world be a better place if everyone, everywhere, put this rule into practice?

In these weeks leading up to Christmas, let us be inspired once again in recalling the magnificent story of how Christ came into this world. It is a season wherein we are called to be generous and giving. We can show our gratitude by going one step beyond what The Golden Rule states: To give more to those who have less with no expectation of reward except through the joy and inner peace that comes with putting our faith into action.

With shared blessings,

Michael F. Dwyer, Pastor

For more on this painting see

[Norman Rockwell Museum Golden Rule painting information sheet.pdf \(nrm.org\)](http://normanrockwellmuseum.org/golden-rule-painting-information-sheet.pdf)