

Love the Lord with All Your Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength

SUNDAY 31 OCTOBER 2021

GOSPEL READING: Mark 12:28-34

28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; 30 and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." 32 And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; 33 and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any question.

Meditation: What is the purpose of God's law or commandments? The Pharisees prided themselves in the knowledge of the law and their ritual requirements. They made it a life-time practice to study the **613 precepts** of the Old Testament along with the numerous rabbinic commentaries. They tested Jesus to see if he correctly understood the law as they did. Jesus startled them with his profound simplicity and mastery of the law of God and its purpose.

Our love for God is a response to his exceeding grace and kindness towards us

What does God require of us? Simply that we love as he loves! God is love and everything he does flows from his love for us. God loved us first and our love for him is a response to his exceeding grace and kindness towards us. The love of God comes first and the love of neighbours is firmly grounded in the love of God. The more we know of God's love and truth the more we love what he loves and reject what is hateful and contrary to his will.

Faith and hope strengthen our love for God

What makes our love for God and his commands grow in us? Faith in God and hope in his promises strengthens us in the love of God. They are essential for a good relationship with God, for being united with him. The more we know of God the more we love him and the more we love him the greater we believe and hope in his promises. The Lord, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, gives us a new freedom to love as he loves. Do you allow anything to keep you from the love of God and the joy of serving others with a generous heart? Paul the Apostle says: *hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us* (Romans 5:5). Do you know the love which conquers all?

Psalm 25:4-4-5,8-10,14

4 Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.

5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

8 Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

9 He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

10 All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

14 The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.

Daily Quote from the Early Church Fathers: *Love God with one's whole self, Gregory of Nyssa, 330-395 AD*

"Human life consists in a threefold unity. We are taught similarly by the apostle in what he says to the Ephesians, praying for them that the complete grace of their 'body and soul and spirit' may be preserved at the coming of the Lord. We use the word 'body,' for the nutritive part, the word for the vital, 'soul,' and the word 'spirit' for the intellectual dimension. In just this way the Lord instructs the writer of the Gospel that he should set before every commandment that love to God which is exercised with all the heart and soul and mind (Mark 12:30; Matthew 22:37; Luke 10:27). This single phrase embraces the human whole: the corporeal heart, the mind as the higher intellectual and mental nature, and the soul as their mediator." (excerpt from *ON THE MAKING OF MAN 8.5.10*)

OPENING PRAYER O our God; we desire to love you more and more. Grant to us that we may love you as much as we desire, and as much as we ought. Come with Christ and dwell in our hearts; that you keep a watch over our lips, our steps, our deeds, and we shall not need to be anxious either for our souls or our bodies O dearest God, who has so loved and saved us. **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER:- Loving God, at this time of crisis when so many are suffering, we pray for our nation and our world. Give our leaders wisdom, our Health Service strength, our people hope. Lead us through these parched and difficult days to the fresh springs of joy and comfort that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**