

Sunday Message

30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 29 October 2023 • Psalter Week 2

THE MEANING OF LOVE

MATTHEW 22:34-40



Most of us are very familiar with the words of Jesus in today's Gospel: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself."

The Law that the Pharisees liked to quote listed 613 commandments, and the Pharisees themselves were forever arguing as to which commandment was the greatest. When Jesus gave what he called the first and second commandments, he wasn't giving new commandments. Both were already found in the Old Testament. The commandment to love God (Deuteronomy 6:5) was part of the Shema, the basic creed of Judaism. Every Jewish service opens with this sentence. It's the first sentence every Jewish child learns by heart. It means that we must love God with a love that dominates our emotions, a love that directs our thoughts and decisions, a love that guides our every action. True religion begins with the love that is a total commitment of one's life to God.

The second commandment is from Leviticus 19:18. Our love of God, if it is real, must result in love of our fellow human beings. Each of us is made in the image of God, and the Bible tells us that God is love. If we claim to love God, then we must love those whom God loves. We must love everyone. St John put it very simply: "The command that Christ has given us is this: whoever loves God must love his brother (and sister) also" (1 John 4:21).

Love of God and neighbour go hand-in-hand. To love God means to love our neighbour also - no matter who our neighbour is or where our neighbour comes from. ■

LEARN

Love of God and neighbour is the mark of the Christian.

At the heart of our faith is the knowledge that God loves us without reservation.

PRAY

All our prayers mean little if we do not live lives of love. Pray for your parish, that all will know you are a Christian community by your love.

SAY

"Lord, help me to love you and my neighbour to the best of my ability. Amen."

DO

Show love of neighbour in a practical way this week. Visit someone in hospital or who lives alone.



REFLECT

In her book, *Dear Life*, NHS doctor Rachel Clarke describes meeting a man who taught her a lesson on love. Michael was sitting in a cubicle in A&E, arms folded around his chest. Aged well into his 80s, he looked miserable.

The problem, he explained, was his chest. Tentatively, Dr Clarke opened his gown. And there, to her horror, cradled in his hands, was his pacemaker, covered in blood and puss, dangling from a hole in his chest.

Her first instinct was to shove it back into his chest and stitch him up fast. How could he have neglected himself for so long? Why did he allow the infection to fester until it exploded like a rotten melon?

It transpired that, some weeks earlier, a new battery was placed in Michael's pacemaker. A minor procedure, but shortly afterwards, he noticed redness and pain around the stitches. He ignored them, hoping they'd go away. The more his chest throbbed, the more it swelled and reddened. Still, he wouldn't go to hospital.

Because something meant more to Michael than his own heart - his wife of 60 years. Ever since Mary had been diagnosed with dementia three years earlier, he had been her sole carer. He cooked for her, dressed her, washed her, soothed her. She depended on him. If he ended up in hospital, who would care for her?

Terrified she'd be put in a care home, he had endured the pain. Then, that morning, as he reached for a plate, he felt his skin rip.

Suddenly, his shirt was drenched in puss. The scar above his pacemaker had burst, exposing his ribs to daylight. Only then did Michael dial 999.

As he spoke, he began to cry. As he feared, Mary had been taken to a care home. Now, he knew she was alone, confused, frightened, while he, literally, was heartbroken.

Dr Clarke was overwhelmed by the exceptional love of that husband for his wife. She realised she had met a man who so loved his wife he sacrificed his heart for her. Such is the power of unconditional love. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice;
turn to the Lord and his strength;
constantly seek his face.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
increase our faith, hope and charity,
and make us love what you command,
so that we may merit what you promise.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Exodus 22:20-26

A reading from the book of Exodus.

The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell the sons of Israel this: "You must not molest the stranger or oppress him, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt. You must not be harsh with the widow, or with the orphan; if you are harsh with them, they will surely cry out to me, and be sure I shall hear their cry; my anger will flare and I shall kill you with the sword, your own wives will be widows, your own children orphans. "If you lend money to any of my people, to any poor man among you, you must not play the usurer with him: you must not demand interest from him. "If you take another's cloak as a pledge, you must give it back to him before sunset. It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else would he sleep in? If he cries to me, I will listen, for I am full of pity."'

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 17

Response:

I love you, Lord, my strength.

1. I love you, Lord, my strength,
my rock, my fortress, my saviour.
My God is the rock where I take refuge;
my shield, my mighty help, my
stronghold.
The Lord is worthy of all praise,
when I call, I am saved from my foes. (R.)

2. Long life to the Lord, my rock!
Praised be the God who saves me,
He has given great victories to his king
and shown his love for his anointed. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10

A reading from the first letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

You observed the sort of life we lived when we were with you, which was for your instruction, and you were led to become imitators of us, and of the Lord; and it was with the joy of the Holy Spirit that you took to the gospel, in spite of the great opposition all round you. This has made you the great example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia since it was from you that the word of the Lord started to spread – and not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, for the news of your faith in God has spread everywhere. We do not need to tell other people about it: other people tell us how we started the work among you, how you broke with idolatry when you were converted to God and became servants of the real, living God; and how you are now waiting for Jesus, his Son, whom he raised from the dead, to come from heaven to save us from the retribution which is coming.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Open our heart, O Lord,
to accept the words of your Son. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 22:34-40

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, 'Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' Jesus said, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,

begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look, we pray, O Lord,
on the offerings we make to your majesty,
that whatever is done by us in your service
may be directed above all to your glory.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

We will ring out our joy at your saving help
and exult in the name of our God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May your Sacraments, O Lord, we pray,
perfect in us what lies within them,
that what we now celebrate in signs
we may one day possess in truth.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

You say grace before meals. All right. But I say
grace before the concert and the opera, and
grace before the play and pantomime, and
grace before I open a book, and grace before
sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing,
walking, playing, dancing and grace before I dip
the pen in the ink.

GK Chesterton