

LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

The prophet Moses was given the Ten Commandments by God the Father on Mount Sinai. This happened around 1200 years before Christ, thirty-two hundred years ago. We know these commandments. Three have to do with our relationship with God. Worship only the Lord God; no strange gods. Revere his name; never use it in anger. Keep holy the Lord's Day.

Seven have to do with our interaction with others and our attitudes and deeds toward ourselves. Honor your parents. Don't kill—physically, verbally. Don't be unfaithful to your spouse. Don't take what does not belong to you. Do not lie or deceive or speak calumny toward anybody or about anyone. Don't lust after what others have in terms of their possessions or their relationships. These are baseline commandments. There can be no society, no relationship that will last with God or others unless we observe these things.

BUT. The message of Jesus presupposes all of this. Relies upon it. He tells us that we know the commandments. And we do. He presents us with the two great commandments. These are not limiting. These are expansive. Love God—with everything you have and are. Love your neighbor as yourself. These two commandments are already found in the Old Testament. Just not next to each other. Jesus puts them together. But he does more than that. For his great commandment is a little different. Love one another. Yes. But how? As I have loved you. As I have loved you. How has he loved you? I know and believe that you have thought about this question. How has Jesus loved you? What words would you use to describe his love for you?

For me, I would say that God loved me and sent Jesus into this world, God gave me a good home and family, a decent education, many opportunities, God called me to give him my life and my service. God has blessed me—more times than I can count, more times than I know. God has forgiven me. God has not given up on me. God has persisted in bestowing his graces upon me even when my life was very mixed up and I was confused. God has been firm with me at times and gentle with me when I needed that. All of this came to me in and through the person of Jesus. Jesus has loved me this way. And Jesus has loved me this way—first. Long before I was able to make the gift of my love to him or anyone else. Jesus loved me first.

Today I ask you to do some thinking on how Jesus has loved you first, before you loved him or anyone else, how he has interacted with you and what the Lord has done for you. Because you cannot love anyone else the way Jesus has loved you if you are unaware of the way he has loved you.

Yesterday I was reading a little meditation by this nun who was a Poor Clare living in Jerusalem about eighty years ago, during the Second World War. I was taken by some of the things she wrote back then. They seemed timely for today. For example: "We have many joys on earth. But they do not last. The one joy that lasts is to have made a sacrifice." I thought: That's true. The sacrifices we make for another, sacrifices that bring us and them a little taste of joy, they tend to be remembered. Hmmm.

She went on to talk about the storms of life. Some storms are happening in the world around you. Some storms erupt from within our own heart and soul. So what does she say? When you find yourself in one of these storms—outer or inner—give it to the Lord, offer it to Him, offer it up to Him. Especially any inner storm, any emotional storm, any personal storm, any relational storm.

She gives simple counsel: “Do not give up your inner serenity on account of others who are being tried, going through their own trials.” Jesus said to her “to pray for them, offer his own passion for them, make your own little acts of self-denial on their behalf—but do not surrender your serenity because they are being tried. Great wisdom.

Finally, she quotes Our Lord as saying: “I ask only for love. Give me your heart. Give me your whole heart. Your whole life. Give it to me! I have need of it!” Jesus has need of my heart? My life? Jesus has need of your heart? Your life? “To belong to me,” Jesus says, “is such a great thing. Be full of joy! Your cloister, your safe haven, is my own heart.” Do you desire to find a place of genuine safety? It is the Lord’s own heart.

My friends, this is new. No other great religious leader or persona, ever spoke like this or acted like this. Not the Buddha, not Mohammed, not any of the Hindu gods. Only Jesus. He says: “I am the way. I am the Truth. I am the Life. I am the Light.” This is new. This is real. We have heard this. We have even tasted some of it. Now the Lord invites us to step out in faith—and believe it. It matters not what others may think or say. It matters only what the Lord is doing. “See I make all things new. I make a new heaven and a new earth. I am making a new holy city, a new Jerusalem. You are all invited to belong there and live there with Me. You cannot see it yet. Trust me. Though. The day is coming. Yes, my friends, without seeing we believe. The day is coming!

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.