

Worship At Home

7th November 2021

Jesus said the greatest commandment is love. Christians should love God above all and our neighbours as we love ourselves. What is love? Do you love yourself? What does it mean to love oneself in the Christian context? How do we love our neighbours? Is being nice enough? And what about God? How are we supposed to love someone we can't even touch or see? Love is the heart of who we are as Christians. Let's open our hearts to God in worship. Let us write God's word onto our hearts as we share in worship together. Let us listen to Scripture with the child Jesus and like him grow strong in wisdom.



Generous God,

Praise be to you our God for the words written in Scripture throughout the ages. Praise is given to you our God for the good news written to tell us about Jesus. God you are good and we are one in our beliefs. Praise be to God for all words written in our hearts to inspire and guide us. God you are good and we are one with you. We are from love, of love, for love. Amen.

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 519 Love Divine

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| 1 | Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art.
Visit us with thy salvation; enter every trembling heart. | CCL 1160072 |
| 2 | Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast.
Let us all in thee inherit, let us find the promised rest.
Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be.
End of faith, as its beginning, set our hearts at liberty. | |
| 3 | Come, Almighty, to deliver, let us all thy life receive.
Suddenly return, and never, nevermore they temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love. | |
| 4 | Finish, then, thy new creation; true and spotless let us be.
Let us see thy great salvation perfectly restored in thee.
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love and praise. | |

<https://youtu.be/UUu76kd1LpA>

God of love,

you are so much more than anything we could ever imagine. Abundant love flows from your very being. We know your love is the greatest of all. We bask now in that love, making our small offering in return. We love you with all our heart, all our understanding, and all our strength - and always will.

O God we thank you for your command to love, for every opportunity you give to us to love someone and for every time we have received love. But Lord God, we confess that we struggle to love others. Sometimes we don't even recognise who our neighbour is, never mind knowing how to love them. we confess we're not always sure what love is. Sometimes we delude ourselves into thinking we're behaving in loving ways when, in fact, we're just serving our own egos.

Sometimes we cut ourselves off from love because we're frightened it might change us. If we truly loved someone, if we truly loved you, would we lose our sense of who we are? If we truly made ourselves vulnerable, would we get taken advantage of? So we hold back. We make half-hearted gestures. We make grand sacrifices to show off our moral superiority. And all the while we miss the love we long for. Forgive us and heal us. Teach us to love through your eyes so that we may care for our neighbours and for our world.

We speak the words known as the Shema together Help us to "Love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might." (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) May these words be upon our hearts each day. Amen

Reading: Deuteronomy 6: 1- 9; Mark 12: 28-34 (later take time to read Leviticus 19).

Reflection: Loving one another is key

As we read today's gospel lesson we see that Jesus is still in the temple after hours of debate. Just imagine him standing in the outer Temple courts where all the doves are fluttering and the goats bleating. All oblivious to the fact that they are penned ready for sacrifice. The five hundred year old temple is the golden symbol of the rebirth of the nation after the exile, and was deemed to be holy in the eyes of all the Jews.



Jesus is in the middle court where people congregate, where gentiles and women are not allowed, but he can pass up more steps and across the paved courts to reach the Holy of Holies, the seat of God. Jesus is not a priest and must never go there. He stays with the people and does not distance himself from them. He has been preaching and teaching all day, challenged by the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Take a moment to feel yourself in the groups of people there. As you do so hear the noise of bleating and chirping in the background. Hear the voices echo in the temple court. Feel the rising levels of holiness and the sense of anticipation in the air.



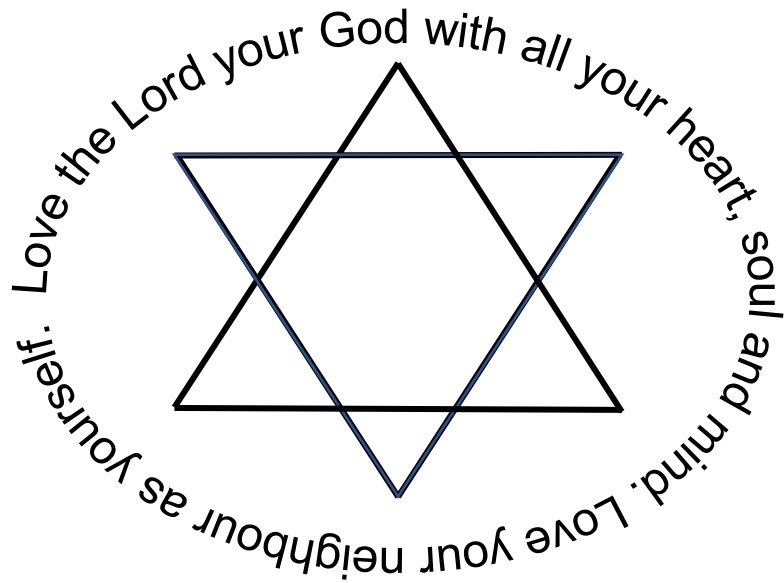
When the teacher of the law comes over to speak to Jesus, he listens carefully and replies courteously. It is remarkable that Jesus never hesitates for a moment when asked which is the greatest commandment - there are 613 Jewish commandments to choose from. But as he answers everyone is focusing on his words - He is definite and specific in his reply. He states the Shema, the statement of Jewish Identity from Deuteronomy, which declares to the world that 'the Lord is One'. But Jesus' teaching goes further and is evident through his teaching and healing ministry.

There is a second piece of law that Jesus draws on here. It is also already known to the Jews and comes from Leviticus 19:18) but we as Christians understand that it came to us through Jesus because Jesus became flesh and took the path to the cross despite having the power and the recourse to walk away. This is not some vague choice of love, it is a particular love. Jesus links the Shema to loving our neighbour as much as we love ourselves. After hours of talking, teaching, controversy. Jesus in just these few words summarises his mission and silences his opposition.

To love God with the totality of our being, and to love the one near us (whoever that may be at any given moment) summarizes the entire law. To give ourselves sacrificially and unconditionally to God and to one another is what the commandments are all about. So if we keep parts of the law, but don't love God or people, then we have missed the whole point!

This questioner had a different spirit than the others. He understood that relationships are more important than rules. He understood that his relationship with God and his relationship with people trumped everything else. All He needed to do was put His trust in Christ, and then he would be IN the Kingdom of God, not just NEAR it.

Spend some time considering the abundance of goodness and happiness that we want for ourselves, our neighbours, how we can live accordingly. Such love doesn't mean just doing the occasional good turn. It requires constant openness to others, take down any barriers and excuses. How can we feel as deeply as that for people we hardly know, people who are beyond our small communities. What difference will all this make to our living and to our praying?



Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - MP1350 Speak O Lord CCL 1160072

- ¹ Speak, O Lord, as we come to You to receive the food of Your holy word.
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us; shape and fashion us in Your likeness, that the light of Christ might be seen today in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us all Your purposes, for Your glory.
 - ² Teach us, Lord, full obedience, holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes in the radiance of Your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see Your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail; let their truth prevail over unbelief.
 - ³ Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds; help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time that will echo down through eternity. And by grace we'll stand on Your promises, and by faith we'll walk as You walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built and the earth is filled with Your glory.

<https://youtu.be/MGg40zKRvAg>

Let us pray together
Generous God you have created a home where all people can live in peace, our big blue planet so beautiful and yet so fragile.
Generous God, you give us the ground under our feet solid and strong fertile and full of things that jump, crawl, wriggle and walk bursting with plants that grow and trees for fruit and shade. Earth to shelter and protect us.
Generous God, you give us times and seasons; the sun to warm our days and the moon to light our night-time ways; stars that sing and planets that spin. Unknown reaches of time and space, full of mystery and dreams.

Generous God, you give us the air all around us blue and alive with birds and insects things that squawk and sing; that and buzz, flap and croak. Air invisible but essential to life fresh and full of movement wild wind and gentle breeze; air that speaks to us of the Holy Spirit's disturbing call. Air for us to breathe.

Generous God, you give us water flowing and free full of fish that swim and whales that roam in the deep seas, rivers, streams and lakes, water that quenches our thirst and gives life to the plants. Water that we cannot live without.

Generous God, you give us choice and responsibility where earth, air and water are matters of life and death.

May we be generous in sharing and open hearted to the needs of developing communities ready to limit what we have so that all may share fully in the fullness of life you give to all.

God of all creation, you ask us to care and not to destroy; to share and not to abuse what you have given to us. You ask us to cherish the earth not to abuse it and to use earth's resources fairly and not to waste them. Forgive our failures and renew our commitment.

Generous God, you have placed us in community in our churches, families, schools and neighbourhoods where we learn that we are stronger together. You created people in your image, so amazing and capable of so much that is good, yet also capable of going choosing the wrong thing.

May we also pay attention to the cry of our earth for healing, and the fears of the peoples in areas most at risk including: Lagos in Nigeria; Yemen; Haiti; United Arab Emirates; Manila in the Philippines; Kiribati; Japan; the Netherlands; India and Sri Lanka and so many more...

We hold the peoples of these areas in our hearts together with the hopes and dreams of children and young people. God of all creation, may we use your gifts wisely and care for the earth.

Give us ears to listen to one another, hearts to care for each other's pain, and hands ready to heal the hurts of our world. As world leaders meet to discuss climate change, may your Spirit of truth and justice lead the way to a more compassionate, a more equal and a simpler way of life. **Amen**

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - CH4 167 Guide me, O Thou great

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| <p>1 Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah, Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty, Hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me now and evermore; Feed me now and evermore.</p> <p>2 Open now the crystal fountain, Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar. Lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliv'rer, strong Deliv'rer,
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield; Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.</p> <p>3 When I tread the verge of Jordan, Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's Destruction, Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee; I will ever give to Thee.</p> | CCL 1160072 |
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<https://youtu.be/COaO1O61xIM>

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all evermore. **Amen.**

Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day.

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If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you. 4