

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, October 25, 2020

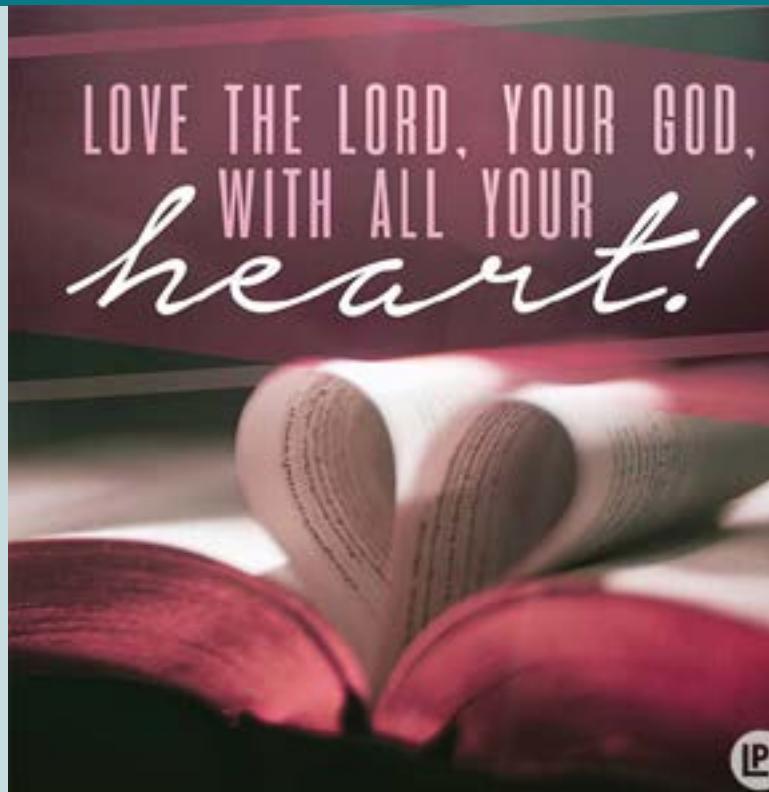
Growing in Love of God and Neighbor

Written by Allison Gingras

Exodus 22:20-26

1 Thessalonians 1:5C-10

Matthew 22:34-40



Jesus answers the Pharisees; the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, mind, and soul. What presently has your heart? What occupies your mind? And what are you trying to gain at perhaps the cost of your soul? Do you recognize that you are an eternal being?

God Himself is love, St. John tells us; we are created by Love to love. The Omnipotent God knows the intentions of our heart and whether it belongs to Him or not. Although called to love others, we must be careful not to put anyone before God. The First Commandment reminds us to put nothing before God; Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel provide direction to following this greatest commandment, all the more closely.

How can we love God with all our heart surrounded by so many others whom we love? The people in our home, extended family, community, even workplace, we know need our attention; are we not to love them? Has God not created us out of love and with enough love to give our hearts entirely to everyone? Any mother can tell you her love does not have a limit when it comes to her family. It does not deplete with each new child; it multiplies. How much more does our ability to love expand when we first extend it all to our Heavenly Father!

"Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me," ([Matthew 25:40](#)). The very people perceived as barriers to loving God are the exact pathway God provides to grow closer to Him. Loving God with all our heart is including Him in every relationship and not separating Him from our everyday life.

What occupies your mind? Is it work, bills, world affairs? Perhaps, you are planning a wedding, contemplating a vacation, or discussing a home remodel. All of these things can keep us from giving God all of our minds. Do you bring God into the planning of your life — into the mulling, discerning, worrying, troubleshooting, and strategizing all those things that occupy your thoughts? We have to put our minds to the things of the world, that is true, but they don't have to be separate from our life of faith. Pondering, thinking, contemplating are all tremendous gifts given by God, which we can use for the good of our family and our world and, most of all, for growing in understanding of our faith.

Much like your heart, you can feel torn as if there is not enough of your mind to go around. How can I spare anything for God when all of those around me need so much? We're overwhelmed with our to-do lists, and everyone seems to need a piece of us to the point we wonder if there will soon be no pieces left to give.

The secret to giving all to God while balancing the world's demands is prayer. In conversation with God, we witness love in action, and with the Spirit's guidance, we can prioritize and navigate the world He has put us in. Remember, He knows the plans and the purpose for which you were created. Most importantly, He knows how to protect your soul, so one day, you will be with Him in heaven forever.

The incredible thing is, when we live in a relationship with God and work to imitate Jesus, then giving all, including loving our neighbor like ourselves, becomes seamless. If we truly believe God is who He says He is, then we also believe He deserves the highest place in our heart, mind, and soul. If we give Him all, we will naturally love our neighbor; we'll see them with the eyes of God, recognizing they too are made in His likeness and image; wonderfully and fearfully made.

Allison Gingras

PRAYER

Lord, I long to love you
with all my heart, mind, and soul.
I invite you today into every aspect of my life,
recognizing each is a gift from you.
May my offering all I have to you
grow my Christian faith and understanding,
but most of all, may I grow in the love of neighbor.
Amen.