

Monday, October 18 “Loving All People”

Jesus said, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

Jesus showed His tremendous love for us by going to the cross for us to reconcile us with our Heavenly Father. As Christ loved all people, He calls us to love all people whether or not they love us back or even like us.

Former President Abraham Lincoln exemplified what it means to love an enemy. His staff often criticized him for his positive treatment of his sworn enemies. One of his enemies once stated in print that Lincoln was an obvious incompetent in the White House. The critic also compared Lincoln’s physical features to those of a gorilla. Later, when war broke out between the States, Lincoln asked that critic to serve as his Secretary of War.

Lincoln’s advisors were appalled. When they asked Lincoln why he chose his critic for such an important post, he said that he thought Stanton was the best man for the job. When they advised him to try to destroy his enemies (like Stanton) rather than treat them like friends, Lincoln reminded them that He was destroying his enemies when he made them his friends. When Lincoln died some years later, Stanton stood his bedside. As Stanton watched Lincoln breathe his last breath, he uttered, *“There dies the greatest ruler of mankind the world has ever seen.”*

How we respond to those who have treated us wrongfully shows our spiritual maturity. It is easy to show kindness to friends or people who treat us with kindness. But God’s love in us is most evident when we show our love to those who dislike or mistreat us.

Prayer: Lord, You love me so much that You sent Your one and only Son to the cross to atone for my sinful ways. Thank you for Your love. Help me, Lord, to love others as You love me. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Tuesday, October 19 “Love Makes Us Do It”

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7)

A young girl was dying. Her only hope was a complete blood transfusion, but she had a very rare blood type. Only her younger brother had the same blood type. His parents and doctors explained the situation to him, giving him time to ask questions. He agreed and, without delay, he laid on a bed; the needle was pushed into his tiny vein and slowly his blood seeped from his body into the bag hanging from his bed. He lay quietly as the nurse stood next to him. "How do you feel?" she asked. "Ok," he answered, "but, Nurse, when do I die?"

What love this little boy had for his sister! Love made him do it.

The boy's love for his sister can help us see how much Jesus loves us. Jesus suffered abuse, torture, persecution, and death for all of us. Jesus has such a tremendous love for us, not because we deserve it, but rather because love is His nature. Only God's love for us in Christ enables us to love. *"We love because He first loved us"* (1 John 4:19).

Jesus' love changes us from people giving what is necessary to supply a need, to people responding generously, even sacrificially. Certainly we give to needs such as our church ministry plan, Christian charities and people. When needs arise, Jesus opens our eyes and hearts so that we respond to those needs. However, our primary reason for giving is gratitude to our Lord for the love He shows every day. Love changes our giving from an obligation to a privilege.

Prayer: Lord, You fill me with love to share with my family, neighbors and co-workers. Because You first loved me, I can love. Help me to seek out opportunities to share. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Wednesday, October 20 "Stewardship Is a Matter of the Heart"

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).

God gives us the privilege and opportunity to be His stewards. Even though God gives us all things He still allows us the freedom to choose whom or what we will serve. Whether we are stewards for the Lord, for ourselves, or for some other master depends on what controls our hearts. What or whom we love, serve, and follow is dictated by what our hearts value as most important. The choices we make reflect what is in our hearts. Satan is doing everything possible to take the love, compassion and peace from our hearts that only Jesus can place there.

Jesus said, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew

6:21). What we treasure the most receives our time, energy, money, and heart. Each of us determines where his or her treasures lie. Some make their homes, careers, cars, hobbies or investments their treasures. God invites us to make Him our treasure.

Jesus said in Matthew 12:33 *"...the tree is known by its fruit"*. Just as the condition of the tree determines its fruit, so will the treasures of our hearts dictate our words and actions (Matthew 12:34-35). When our hearts are filled with God's presence, we reflect God's love, goodness, and kindness. When God controls our hearts, we willingly use our time, abilities and money in ways that glorify Him.

Prayer: Lord, I thank You that You give me the privilege and the opportunity to be Your steward. Help me to be a God-pleasing steward. Help me to see stewardship as a free and joyous activity. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, October 21 "Giving From the Heart"

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the people of Israel that they take for Me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for Me'" (Exodus 25:1-2).

God's Word gives us many examples of people who gave in loving and generous ways. In 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 Paul speaks of the Macedonians who, in their extreme poverty, gave beyond their ability. Because of the famine in Macedonia at the time, they didn't have a surplus to give from; however, they put God first and trusted Him to provide. Out of overflowing joy they gave from their hearts.

Another example of one who gave from the heart is the story of the widow's offering in Luke 21:1-4. Jesus told of a very poor widow who quietly dropped two small copper coins into the collection box, which was all she had. She gave from the heart; she put her total trust in God, relying on Him for her future care.

God looks for our giving to come from hearts filled with gratitude for who He is and for all that He has done and is doing for us. May God fill our hearts so we can experience the joy of giving.

Prayer: Lord, You are a loving and giving God. I pray that the Holy Spirit will transform me into a loving and giving person. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, October 22 “Loving Our Neighbors”

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, we read that the Good Samaritan not only helped an injured person, he took him to an inn where he paid for his room and care. He sacrificed time, inconvenience, money, and possessions and risked his own health and safety for the wounded stranger. In putting no limits on how far he was willing to help this stranger, the Samaritan demonstrated the love we are to have for others. Helping others may mean more than calling 911. We may need to get more involved, get our hands dirty, and go the extra mile.

Maybe we don't get more involved in helping others because we are blind to the opportunities to reach out to others who are starving in body or soul. Like the priest and Levite in Jesus' parable we “look the other way” and ignore their needs.

God has placed in each of us a heart that can be trained to be caring and unselfish. Through our Savior's sacrifice for us the Holy Spirit is training us to be more loving, caring, and sharing. Come, Holy Spirit, enlighten me with Your gifts of love!

Prayer: Lord, the Parable of the Good Samaritan gives us a wonderful example of how we can share the love that You have given us. Help us to be ready and willing to come to the aid of others. In Jesus' name. Amen.