

Lesson 12

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT



Just before His death on the cross Jesus celebrated the Pascal feast with His disciples. At the time of supper Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment. It was the commandment of love. The commandment of love is the sum and substance of what He taught in His public life. Jesus, who explained and completed the Ten Commandments given by the Lord our God in the Old Testament, gave the New Commandment of love as its fullness. "You Love one another just as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34).

The Substance of the Commandments

The substance or core of the commandments is love. Commandments make it clear that it is love that must lead/control human life. Jesus thought that the first and important commandment is to love God and the second commandment of fraternal charity is equally important. [Love of God and love of our brethren are the two sides of the same coin.](#)

Love of God

It is the right and duty of creatures to love God who is love Himself. God created us out of the fullness of love. It is the same God who saves us and protects us. Jesus enables us to love God and to call Him Abba, father.

Jesus has shown us how to love God. We must express our love for God by giving first place to God in our lives, obeying His commandments, praising, adoring and thanking Him and doing deeds of charity.

Love of Our Brethren

“Those who say, I love God; and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also” (1 Jn 4:20-21). The hallmarks of Christian life is fraternal charity. Jesus sacrificed His own life for man and thus revealed His love for God. Jesus taught the same through the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37).

A Christian cannot ignore a person who deserves love and compassion. Every Christian should remember that all men are God's children and it is our duty to love and help all. We must express our fraternal charity through deeds. Acts of charity have a significant place in the life of a Christian. On the day of the last judgment, Christ will judge us on the basis of fraternal charity. Hence we must practice charity from an early age. It must begin in families. Children should learn the primary lessons of love by loving their parents and brothers and sisters. In our schools, among our friends and in various circumstances of life, we must be models of love.

Love of Enemy: The Climax of Fraternal Love

By dying on the Cross at Golgotha Jesus gave us the great example of love of the enemy. People mocked Jesus while he suffered intensely on the cross Jesus who never committed a mistake and was yet wrongly accused prayed on the cross. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk. 23:34). Jesus Prayed for those who hurt Him. The words and actions of Jesus originated from love. He never considered anyone His enemy. He loved even those who considered Him as an enemy. Thus loving even enemies, He revealed to us that the climax of love is love of the enemy. This lesson of love of the enemy has never been taught by anyone else in the history of the world.

The Exhortation of Jesus

The nature of the world is to love only those who love us. But the exhortation of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour is contrary. He taught us: "You have heard that it was said. You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy, But I say to you; Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (Mt. 5:43-44).

Jesus explains how we can practise love of the enemy. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you; pray for those who abuse you, If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt" (Lk 6:27-29). Thus He taught various ways to express love of the enemy. The same message is given in the Lord's Prayer. "Forgive us as we forgive those who sin against us". It means that God will not forgive us if we do not forgive others. This condition convinces us of the necessity of loving our enemies. Hence let us accept our enemies as our friends by forgiving them, loving them and praying for them. **It is human to make mistakes. But to forgive is a divine action. When we forgive others, we share in the divine nature.**

The New Commandment of Jesus

On the occasion of the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and wiped them. After this action of humility and love, Jesus said to his disciples. "I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you (Jn 13:15). After that, Jesus gave them a commandment: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, You also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13:34-35). Jesus who explained and interpreted all commandments summed up all of them in the only commandment of love. He asked his disciples to love one another as He loved them. The means to show this love are deeds of mercy.

There are certain special features in the love of Jesus. It is a love without selfishness, it is a love that commits Himself for the service of others. It is a love that forgives even His enemies; it is a love without conditions; it is a sacrificial love, a love that leads everyone to God.

These features of the love of Jesus should be evident in our love too. Then only we would become His real disciples. We must be able to grow and persevere in love. If we can love like Jesus, we will be able to experience heaven here, on this earth.

14 deeds of mercy

Physical

1. Feed the hungry
2. Give a drink to the thirsty.
3. Cloth the naked.
4. Give shelter to the homeless.
5. Visit the sick and the prisoners.
6. Help the poor and the needy
7. Bury the dead.

Spiritual

1. Teach the ignorant
2. Counsel the doubtful.
3. Comfort the suffering.
4. Admonish the sinners.
5. Forgive offences.
6. Bear wrongs patiently.
7. Pray for the living and the dead.

Let us Pray

Jesus, who gave us the noble model of charity,
help us to love one
another as you have loved us.

Read the Word of God and Narrate

Jn. 13:1-20.

Word of God for our Guidance

“If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet” (Jn 13:14).

Let us Do

Write the names of 5 saints or who followed the model of love given by Jesus who lived as models of love after Jesus.

My Resolution

Each day I will do at least one deed of mercy.

Find out the Answer

1. What is the substance of all the commandments?
2. Why can't a Christian ignore those who deserve love and compassion?
3. What are the special features of the love of Jesus?
4. How many deeds of mercy are there? Which are they?
5. What must we do to experience heaven here, on earth?