

" What is the greatest rule of life?"**Reading 1:** Exodus 22:20-26**Responsorial Psalm:**

Psalms 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

Reading 2: First Thessalonians 1:5-10**Gospel**

: Matthew 22:34-40

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 22:34-40*

But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

Meditation: The Pharisees prided themselves in the knowledge of the law of Moses and the ritual requirements of the law. They made it a life-time practice to study the 613 precepts of the Torah - the books of the Old Testament containing the Law of Moses - along with the numerous rabbinic commentaries on the law. The religious authorities tested Jesus to see if he correctly understood the law as they did. Jesus startled them with his profound simplicity and mastery of the law of God and its purpose.

God's love rules all

Jesus summarized the whole of the law in two great commandments found in Deuteronomy 6:5 - "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" - and Leviticus 19:18 - "you shall love your neighbor as yourself". God's love directs all that he does - His love is holy, just, and pure because it seeks only what is good, beneficial, and life-giving - rather than what is destructive, evil, or deadly. That is why he commands us to love - to accept and to give only what is good, lovely, just, and pure and to reject whatever is contrary.

God puts us first in his thoughts

God is love and everything he does flows from his love for us (1 John 3:1, 4:7-8, 16). God loved us first (1 John 4:19) and our love for him is a response to his exceeding goodness and kindness towards us. The love of God comes first and the love of neighbor is firmly grounded in the love of God. The more we know of God's love, truth, and goodness, the more we love what he loves and reject whatever is hateful and contrary to his will. God commands us to love him first above all else - his love orients and directs our thoughts, intentions, and actions to what is wholly good and pleasing to him. He wants us to love him personally, wholeheartedly, and without any reservation or compromise.

The nature of love - giving to others for their sake

What is the nature of love? Love is the gift of giving oneself for the good of others - it is wholly other oriented and directed to the welfare and benefit of others. Love which is rooted in pleasing myself is self-centered and possessive - it is a selfish love that takes from others rather than gives to others. It is a stunted and disordered love which leads to many hurtful and sinful desires - such as jealousy, greed, envy, and lust. The root of all sin is disordered love and pride which is fundamentally putting myself above God and my neighbor - it is loving and serving self rather than God and neighbor. True love, which is wholly directed and oriented to what is good rather than evil, is rooted in God's truth and righteousness (moral goodness).

How God loves us

God loves us wholly, completely, and perfectly for our sake - there is no limit, no holding back, no compromising on his part. His love is not subject to changing moods or circumstances. When God gives, he gives generously, abundantly, freely, and without setting conditions to the gift of his love. His love does not waver, but is firm, consistent, and constant. He loves us in our weakness - in our fallen and sinful condition. That is why the Father sent his only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to redeem us from slavery to sin and its disordered cravings, desires, passions, and addictions. God the Father always seeks us out to draw us to his throne of mercy and help. God the Father corrects and disciplines us in love to free us from the error of our wrong ways of thinking and choosing what is harmful and evil rather than choosing what is good and wholesome for us. Do you freely accept God's love and do you willingly choose to obey his commandments?

We do not earn God's love - it is freely given

Paul the Apostle tells us that *"hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us"* (Romans 5:5). We do not earn God's love - it is freely given to those who open their heart to God and who freely accept the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Lord Jesus to flood your heart with his love through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Love grows with faith and hope

What makes our love for God and his commands grow in us? Faith in God and hope in his promises strengthens us in the love of God. They are essential for a good relationship with God, for being united with him. The more we know of God the more we love him and the more we love him the greater we believe and hope in his promises. The Lord Jesus, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, gives us a new freedom to love as he loves. Paul the Apostle writes, "For freedom Christ has set us free... only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh [sinful inclinations], but through love be servants of one another" (Galatians 5:1,13). Do you allow anything to keep you from the love of God and the joy of serving others with a generous heart?

Questions for Community Faith Sharing:

1. What is the purpose of God's law and commandments?
2. God puts us first in his thoughts and concerns - do you put him first in your thoughts? Please share How?
3. How can you possibly love God above all else and obey his commandments willingly and joyfully, and how can you love our neighbor and willing lay down your life (means scarifies) for their sake?

"Lord Jesus, your love surpasses all. Flood my heart with your love and increase my faith and hope in your promises. Help me to give myself in generous service to others as you have so generously given yourself to me."

Source: www.dailyscripture.net, author [Don Schwager](#)