

Model for Praying - Part 4

by J. Glyn Owen

In this sermon, J. Glyn Owen emphasizes the importance of loving God and our neighbors, rooted in the command to listen to God's word and understand His eternal nature.

Duration: 52:04

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:4

Topics: "Praying"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher uses the story of the burning bush to convey a message of listening to God. He emphasizes the importance of being a listening people and loving God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. The preacher explains that God is a gracious God who wants all his creatures to share in the love of the saints. He urges the listeners to show devotion to God through their actions and highlights the main duty of man as loving the Lord our God.

Transcript

Well now, will you kindly turn with me in the scriptures to the gospel recorded by Mark. In chapter 12, we turn to the passage that begins with verse 28. May I say for the benefit of those who are visiting us that we are studying the gospel recorded by Mark.

We have been in it for some time, and this is the point where we have arrived at. So we ask you to join us today and see what the Lord has to say to us from this very significant instance or illustration of his teaching. I read in the early part, I read from the book of Deuteronomy because you will see in a moment how that is related to our Lord's reply to the question that was asked him at this point.

Let me read then from the New International Version from Mark chapter 12 beginning with verse 28. One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, Of all the commandments, which is the most important? The most important one answered Jesus is this, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this, Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

Well said, teacher, the man replied. You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart and with all your understanding and with all your strength and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God. And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions. Now you will remember, those of you who have been with us on Sunday mornings previously and others of you who are familiar with this part of Mark's gospel, that this is the third question that has been asked the Lord Jesus on the same morning.

And probably there were a number of others that have not been recorded. Most of them were asked because of a desire to trip him and to cause him to be upset somehow that he might say something that would incriminate himself and thus lead to his death. Probably the first question was asked by a Herodian.

You remember the question about paying taxes to Caesar. The second was certainly asked by a Sadduceon, as we saw last Lord's Day. And Mark tells us that this one was asked by a scribe, a teacher of the law.

But Matthew further qualifies him by saying that he was a Pharisee. Not all the scribes you see were Pharisees. Some of them were Sadduceon.

So this man was a scribe and he was a Pharisee. Now it throws some light upon the question raised when we realize that a considerable discussion went on among the Pharisees particularly, but many others joined in, as to how many of the alleged 613 commandments handed down by Moses were really designated heavy or important, and how many of them were designated light or of comparative significance. I don't want to go into this in any detail at all, save simply to indicate that this was really one of the main points of debate in the current theological scene.

What is absolutely essential according to these commands, and what among them may have a purely relative or passing significance. What's heavy, what's vital, what's necessary, what's not quite so important. So one of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating and he noticed that Jesus had given a very wise judicious reply to the man whose question is just answered.

And so he poses this vital question which was right at the heart of so much controversy. Here it is. Of all the commandments, which is the most important? What's the heaviest? What's the real commandment that we must obey? Is there one? And the first thing I want you to notice is Jesus' response to that question.

I'll read it again because I would like this to register not only on our minds but get through to our memories. The most important one, answered Jesus, is this. Here, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this. Love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no commandment greater than these. Now before we come to look at it in a little more detail, let's see what Jesus has done there. Jesus graciously answered the question posed to him, albeit in a manner that was totally unexpected I'm sure, because what he did was this.

He brought together and welded into one cohesive whole three commandments and he said the main commandment is one but it has three parts. In order to be able to answer your question, he says, I can't just say that one commandment stands alone, totally separate from all others, but there are three that I must bring together and weld them into one whole and here they are. The first is the command to listen and the second is the command to love, but the command to love is twofold.

It's to love God and it's to love your neighbor. Now so many commentators that I find gloss kindly or unkindly over the first as if they've never seen it, but the command begins by the words of our Lord, listen. And Jesus himself was not the initiator of that command.

He got it from the book of Deuteronomy which he quoted. Over and over and over again God had the children of Israel to repeat every morning and every evening. If they forgot somebody or other reminded them of it.

Every Jew, every good Jew, every practicing Jew would say every morning, hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one and you shall love the Lord your God in the way enunciated in Deuteronomy. And in the evening he would say exactly the same thing. Now let's come then and let's start with a command to listen.

The most important one, said Jesus, is this, hear O Israel, listen O Israel and take it in. The Lord our God, the Lord is one. I've already mentioned this but I want you to notice that there is here a very positive call to listen and I don't want us to miss it.

If there is anything that we tend to miss today it is this aspect of genuine biblical religion. It is to be attuned to God. We will listen to what men say, we will read what men have written and we will have our own say of course.

But there is one area in religion where we are terribly lacking. We feel that God has nothing much to say to us and even if he has anything very much to say to us it's not worth our waiting for it very long. I wonder my friends, I wonder how many of us gathered here this morning have a place in our own individual lives set apart for the listening of the soul to the voice and the Word of God from Scripture.

So that he take his Word again as it were and speak it to us and apply it to us so that it becomes the living Word of God in our daily experiences. Hear O Israel, hear O Israel. Are you listening? But now I'm over this.

I want you to notice the content of the revelation. Hear O Israel. What? Well one thing in particular.

One thing in particular because this is going to color everything that you believe and everything that you do. In the long run what you are and what you say and what you believe will be traced back to this source. This is going to influence the whole of your life.

What is it? Your view of God. I don't care what question you bring up of ethical, moral, significance or practical significance. I don't care what it is.

Ultimately, ultimately I say that question has a bearing upon the nature and the being and the will of God. And if you and I are not sure what kind of a God our God is, if we're not sure what he has said about himself, well the answer is that we simply must flounder. And we'll be at sixes and sevens among ourselves and we'll argue the tasks and we'll say my idea is as good as yours of course it is.

Unless there is a word that God has said about himself. If God has revealed certain things about himself then my friend I say to you what I say to myself, shut up friend. Listen.

It's not for me to argue and philosophize where God has revealed. The things that are made known are ours to obey and to receive and to live by. The things that God has not made known we are just to leave them there until he does.

And if he doesn't we are to be grateful for what we have. What then is the content of the revelation this much at this point? Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Now the Hebrew underlying that English translation may be variously translated and I don't want to stay with it.

I want to get on a little further. But we must be very careful that we don't dogmatize and argue with one another because it's quite legitimate to translate the words in English in this way. The Lord our God is one Lord.

Quite legitimate and it evidently means that anyway. The Lord our God is one Lord. There's only one God and that is the Lord who is our God, the God of Israel.

But it can be translated perhaps a little better grammatically like this. The Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Or again, the Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

Now I choose those three as unquestionably proper and no Hebrew linguist or grammarian would argue with those. You can translate either and some others too. We must therefore refrain from undue dogmatism.

But what really is the content? What's the meaning? What's it getting at? What's the practical significance of what God is saying? Well first of all, what he's saying is this. I, the Lord your God, am something. And he's using language concerning himself.

Language which is very significant. He's speaking of himself, for example, as Jehovah. Then using another word, your God.

Now that term Jehovah is a very significant one in the Bible. It means that God is, as we often speak of him or sing of him in some choruses or some hymns, the great I am. You remember how God revealed himself to Moses as saying, I am that I am.

Now I know that people can translate that quite legitimately by saying, I will be what I will be. As if to say, there is that in God which enables him to become whatever he will. It can equally well be translated, there is that in God which is and never ends.

But it can never be translated, I was or have in the past tense. Now I suggest to you that the real meaning, the real significance is in the present tense, and I'll tell you why. Because along with saying, I am that I am, as I believe it ought to be translated, God gave the children of Israel a visual aid.

And in this visual aid, he indicated to them what he was saying in these words, in giving this title to himself. Do you remember the story of the burning bush? Now let me compress it into a nutshell this morning. The story of the burning bush was this.

It was burning and it was, it was, it was burning all the time, but it was not being consumed. In other words, it was the same all through the day. Have you a fire like that in your great at home, if you have

fires? Do your logs go on burning like that? And the flames leap high and everybody rejoices to see them in wintertime, and yet there's no diminishing.

God says, I am that I am, an eternally self-existing God who never diminishes. So that I can say like this to you, Abraham, I'm your God. And when your son Isaac comes on the scene, I'll be able to say to Isaac, I'm your God.

And when his son comes on the scene, I'll be able to say to Jacob, I'm your God. And when their children come and their grandchildren and great-grandchildren and their seed to the end of the ages, I'll be able to say to them, I am your God. Never I was.

Oh, my friend, there's something precious in this. And you and I need it for our salvation. You see, God is our contemporary.

He's right here. He's the God of today as well as yesterday. He's the great I am.

In other words, He's eternal. And this concept of the eternity of God reflects the essential deity of God. He's different from all the creatures.

Everything that is creaturely and made deteriorates. These lovely flowers we have on our communion table, they're so beautiful. Oh, and I don't want to disappoint whoever is responsible for bringing them here.

But you know, in 10 days' time, there'll hardly be a petal there. They'll have gone. And it's true of our bodies, it's true of our homes, it's true of everything.

But God is the great, eternal, unchanging I am. I change not. Here, oh, Israel, He says, the Lord, you are God.

Jehovah, you are God. I am your God. I'm of this order.

And because of that, of course, I stand alone. There is no one else in this category. There is no other.

He is utterly alone. And that fact will have an inevitable impact upon the rest of this passage, as we shall see in a moment. Then, as the only and eternal God, He is one.

Now, some of the translations stress this. The King James doesn't. And apparently this is really involved in the Hebrew, the unity of God.

God is never divided in Himself. Strange to talk about God like that. I have to talk about myself like that.

Paul did. All the saints of God had to will this present with me. Remember Paul said, but how to perform that which is good, I don't know.

Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The things I would, I do not. And the things I would not. Those are the things I do.

You see, we are so often torn in ourselves and we're disintegrated and divided hopelessly inwardly. Are you like that? Sometimes. Listen, my friend, the Lord our God is one.

And though you believe utterly and completely in the doctrine of the Trinity, you must never forget the doctrine of the unity. Our Lord Jesus Christ said, I am come to do the Father's will. And before He went to the cross, He says, I have finished the work which the Father gave me to do.

Can you see the point? It's only an illustration for me this morning. The will of the Father was the will of the Son. There's unity between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit in all things.

They're never divided. You can never set them apart. They're indivisible.

This is marvelous. The first part of what constitutes the greatest commandment, then, is the divine summons to listen to what God has said about Himself. But now let's come to the command to love.

This is the person I am, says God. I'm a covenant-keeping God. I've entered into covenant with you as the unchanging one so that my covenant is as sure of being kept tomorrow and the next tomorrow and the next tomorrow and as long as there is a tomorrow, as today.

Now, He says, this is my command. Hear, O Israel, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strengths. Jesus, do you really mean that this is the first commandment? Did He really mean that? Well, this is what He said.

And the disciples were so sure of it that three of them recorded it. And others of them were so certain of it that they repeated it in other words to other people so that wherever the church emerged, the church was told this, the main duty of man is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Aye, how our values have become topsy-turvy and our sense of duty.

Now, this is most generally considered to be the first part of the great commandment. Will you notice in my reckoning it is the second. Hear first, listen, what God has said about Himself.

Then the second ingredient in the comprehensive one great commandment is this, love the Lord your God. Love the Lord your God. Have you noticed this is very significant? This is a law to love, which means that this kind of love stands all apart from the kind of love we hear so much singing and talking and chiming and rhyming about.

You know falling in love at first sight and simply love that is attracted on an erotic basis or all whatever. This is a love that we can will to exercise. You don't say about this love, I can't love God because I don't feel right.

Jesus doesn't say that. This is a law, this is a command, and you can't be commanded to like people. Liking people may come in process of time if you love them.

There are people that it'll take a long time to like, if I may use that word. But Jesus commands as the Old Testament commands that we should love God. Now, for my purposes this morning I'm not going to say much about that save this.

If you want to ask, if you mean to love God, I believe that our present short series in the Sunday evening answers the question. Do you want to hear the man who loves God? He comes to him in prayer and he says, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your name is more important than any name and every name that ever was, that is, that ever will be.

Your name must be heard before every other. Your name must be honored above every other. Hallowed be thy name.

Your kingdom come. I'm more concerned about your kingdom than the kingdoms of this world. Oh, they're important in their place.

And we ought to be concerned about the conditions of the kingdom of this very passing world because men and women are suffering and some of them are our brothers in Christ and they're all the creatures of our God and we should be concerned about. But the main, basic, underlying concern of a man who loves God is this, your kingdom before every other. And then he comes down to the one we've got tonight, your will be done.

Now you're touching raw here. See, it's all right to pray for God's kingdom to come, but what if I'm in the way? What if I'm too proud to bend? Or what if it's going to be so very hard for me that I lose the promotion that I'm in for? Am I prepared to be able to pray for God's sake because I love Him and His name and His honor first? Your will. All the Bible comes together, you see.

There's no difficulty. And once you see the Bible, the biblical truth, all of these things integrate and they come together and they come to a cohesive whole somehow, somewhere. It's the commandment to love.

Why the commandment to love God? You know, Paul stresses the importance of it in many ways. I wonder whether I can put it like this. There are some wheels in a mechanism.

They simply go around on themselves, by themselves. They don't drive any others. My old bicycle, which is pensioned by now, the front wheel didn't drive anything as far as I can remember, but it was very necessary for the bicycle.

It went around, of course, but it didn't drive anything. Very necessary. But the rear wheel drove a few things.

I had a light and, you know, it drove the, what's the gadget you put on? Never mind. You know what it is. You can read in there.

And it drove a few things, the rear wheel. And you know, there are wheels like that in all mechanisms. Some of them just, just move on their own.

They don't affect others. They're necessary for what they are. But some wheels are like the main mechanism that drives an automobile.

When they move, everything else moves. Until they move, the automobile is standstill. It doesn't budge.

But when they move, when this cog moves, when this wheel moves, when it begins to revolve, as I'm going, love is like that. It moves the whole automobile. When real love for God gets going in the soul, men and women begin to move.

Now, now, that's not my saying. That's Paul's. Paul puts it negatively and he puts it positively.

He puts it negatively like this. In 1 Corinthians 13, verses 1 to 3, he says, If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, this is the negative, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, what a clever man I am.

And can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge. And if I have a faith that can move mountains, what a great man I am. But have not love.

You remember his conclusion? You know, this is most humbling. I am nothing, nothing. Oh my, there are lots of people who make a noise about their faith, a noise about the sounds their mouths bring forth, a noise about this, that, and the other.

And you know, Paul says that without agape, the whole sum total comes to nothing. If I give all that I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing, nothing. But now Paul puts it positively.

You see, he wants us to get the point. Writing to the Romans in chapter 13 and verse 8, he says this, let no debt remain outstanding except the continuing debt to love one another. And then he explains why.

For he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. Now please notice, it, Paul doesn't say he who loves his fellow man will fulfill the law. He's done it.

It's in the past tense. Well, how do you explain that? My friend, it's as sure as done. That's the point.

Love does that. Love guarantees where genuine love generates. That love guarantees that you will do the right thing to the person sitting next to you this morning, or the person that has apparently grieved you, you're thinking about now.

You'll do the right thing. Love will do it. You can depend upon love, says Paul.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. Closer scrutiny of 1 Corinthians 13 will show how patience, kindness, humility are all generated by love. You can read it in verse 4. So also is unselfishness in verse 5. Faith and hope in verse 7. They all spring up apparently from this seed of love.

They're related to love. Love has the greatest capacity to please God and to honor Him, not simply because of what it is and does in itself, but because of the fact that it moves the whole mechanism of a man's soul in the right direction. But now look at the object here.

Love the Lord your God. Now here you see the continuity between the Christians of the New Testament age and the true Israel of the old. Don't let's miss this.

The people of God in every age are one by the Spirit of God and because we are related to God through a mediator. In the Old Testament the mediator was promised, but he was on the way. As the book of Revelation says, the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world.

I can easily hear somebody saying, no He wasn't and you're quite right, but I will thunder back at you. Yes He was and I am right. How can we both be right? For this reason, as sure as God ordained Him to be slain, He was surely slain.

Thou shalt love the Lord Jehovah, thyself's existing eternally existing God, who covenanted to do something for the children of Israel and did it to a point in time and has more to do. You can see how He's been faithful to this certain point in time. Now that same God is your God and mine, if we've received the revelation of God in Christ.

Love the Lord Jehovah, your God. But look how Paul puts it, how our Lord puts it. My time is going too quickly.

I must say a word about this. The devotion expressed in the action is absolutely vital. I find it so easy to escape or to try to escape this, but really we shouldn't.

You see, we said earlier on that the Hebrew underlying the statement in Deuteronomy 6 suggests that God is one and there is no other. Right. If that is true, now we have the complementary truth to that and you shall love the Lord your God, the only God with half your heart and let other gods have the other half.

Because there is only one God, only one Jehovah and He is your God. You've received Him, you've acclaimed Him, you believe in Him, you trust Him, you worship Him. Okay.

You must now love Him with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul and all your strength. There's nothing to spare. There's nothing to share with another deity.

Not a thing. You won't have it. You see, this is really where men and women of my generation have really let the gospel down.

We have all too often given the impression to our young people that we can serve other gods alongside of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers and sisters, you can't do it. The very unity and eternity of the Godhead requires that He gets it all and there must be no rival with all your heart.

Now, I think that the meaning of this here must be sincerity. It doesn't refer to the emotion. There's another term that refers to the emotion.

It doesn't refer to the inner man. There's another term that refers to the inner man. We must love Him sincerely, with sincerity, than with all our soul.

That means with our whole being, with feeling in our love. How can you contemplate a calvary? How can you contemplate the birth of a new day such as this? The rising of the sun on a new morning. But especially, how can you contemplate God sending forth the only begotten Son of His bosom without some warmth of gratitude? And I'm putting it very mildly.

And what Jesus says is this, it must be with all your soul. Your soul must be in it. It's not simply a matter of mouthing hymns that people wrote in the third or fourth century, as we've done this morning.

They must be our own sentiments. They must carry with them our heart's devotion, our heart's affection. With all your soul, with all your mind, the love Jesus commanded from His people must be governed by our intellectual nature, by our intelligence.

It must not be an unreasonable or unreasoning feeling. And with all your strength. This term demands intensity at each level of our being.

I find people, they're prepared to be intense and to put everything into everything else but this. They say it's not my nature. No, it isn't our nature.

But if we have a new nature and a Holy Spirit and a commandment such as this to go by, there ought to be something in the nature of feeling in our religion. I preached once in a university college, and I don't know that I did anything other than I'm doing here this morning. And the president took me around the side

afterwards, and he says, no, my friend, you mustn't preach like that here.

We need something a little bit quieter. My dear friend, I said, you have it. But you don't have me if I can't be myself.

I love my Lord. There is a kind of evangelicalism which is afraid of blushing before the eyes of men. My dear friend, let's get back to the truth.

You must love the Lord your God with a little bit of passion. Now I've mentioned that little word all, and then we turn to the next commandment, and I'll speak about it very, very briefly. Just this.

Jesus links up with a whole thing again, with a whole passage from Leviticus, another passage... I'm sorry, with a passage from Deuteronomy, yet another one from Leviticus 19, which speaks about our love for our neighbors. The commandment is the same as the previous one, to love God, in this sense that it is a commandment to love. But I want you to notice that it is different, and it is particularly different in this respect.

You can't love God too much. We can never be excessive in our love for God. That's what this says.

You must love the Lord your God with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your heart, with all your strength, with all in each case, so that there's nothing left. All right. How are we to love our neighbors? Well, as ourselves.

Now there's a world of difference. This is a very difficult thing, to love my neighbor as myself, because I find in experience that the real difficulty in my loving my neighbor is myself. I love myself so much I don't want to talk to him, or I love myself so much I don't want to share with him what I have.

It's myself that stands in the way. The real wall that intrudes when I want to love my neighbor is this self. Now I must crucify this self.

I must step over myself. But you see, this bears no comparison with the way I am to love God. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all heart, mind, soul, strength, and your neighbor as yourself.

You don't worship your neighbor. You don't worship your children. You don't worship your parents.

You don't worship any man. You don't worship a preacher. You don't worship a singer.

You don't worship a film star. You don't worship men, or do we? But we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Self normally stands in the way.

Now by the grace of God, those who love God shall be able to step over themselves into the arena of doing for one's neighbor what God requires. I'm through simply to come to the climactic point here where the Savior reveals to the man something about himself. The man asked Jesus a question.

Jesus answered the question, but that was not the end. Jesus was impressed by this man. He was impressed by him, though the Scriptures don't say so.

It's evident. His attitude towards him, and he was a Pharisee, and you remember the Pharisees generally had already come under our Lord's open condemnation by this time. May I dare put it like this? I would dare suggest that the very paucity of commendation and appreciation coming our Lord's way at this time

was a very real, or could have been a very real, temptation to him in the flesh.

Now Jesus has had constant bickering and opposition from the scribes and the Pharisees all along the way. Viewed as a body, they have been vehemently opposed to him, diametrically opposed, and they've been determined to kill him. They've got to get rid of him.

Now I don't want to go back over the facts. They stand self-evident in the Gospels. Here is a Pharisee.

Here is a scribe who is a Pharisee. He says to Jesus, Jesus says, you've answered well. What's more, he says, I agree.

I agree with what you say. It's morality that is important, not just the way we worship. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and your neighbor as yourself.

This is far more important than all the burnt sacrifices, etc., etc. This was the man's response. And Jesus looked him straight in the face.

And you remember what he said to him when Jesus saw that he answered wisely? He said to him, you are not far from the kingdom of God. There are two things I'm saying in closing. One, you can be moving in the general direction of the kingdom of God and yet not be in it.

Here was a man concerning whom Jesus said, you're not far from the kingdom of God. You're approximating. You're near, but you're not in.

You're apparently responding to the revelation that God has given, and you see the relevance of the old to the new, and so forth. And you accept his son, his prophet, priest, and king, duly sent. You go so far, yet nearly in, but you're not.

I was one day climbing in North Wales, and I came to the parting of the road. There was a signpost. One finger on the signpost pointed to the summit.

The other finger, only about 10, 11 degrees to the left, pointed to the blasting. I remember standing there, rather like a man hit between the eye, to the summit, to the blasting. The one path, the path I took, led to the summit of the mountain.

The other one took to a place where rocks were blasted to smithereens. And the two paths met, and they scarcely divided for about a quarter of a mile. And then the one turned round and went down somewhere.

I say to you, you can be near the kingdom of God. You can be moving in that direction, and yet you can miss it. Are you sure you're on the road this morning? And the last is this.

You can be very near the kingdom and yet be outside it. It's just a variant of the same thing. It was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, was it not, who said, there are many people who've mistaken the outside doorstep for the inside.

They live so near the people of God. They hear the singing, and they even join in it. Their parents, their loved ones, their ancestors, they all sang the songs of Zion, and they've been brought up on the language of Zion.

They know all about it. But they're still on the doorstep on the outside. They've never entered.

My dear people in Knox here this Sunday morning, I want to ask you whether you were really inside the door of the kingdom, because so much depends upon it. Have you entered by the door, by the grace of God in Christ, so that you know you're in? And if you've not, don't leave this place today without crying for His mercy and trusting His promises. I am the door.

No man comes unto the Father but by me. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. That's enough to go by.

What then is the message of this morning? It's the message to listen. Seven days a week, all the weeks of the year and all the years of our lives, to be a listening people here, O Israel. The Lord your God is one, Lord, and because He is the one and only Lord, love Him with all your heart, your mind, your soul, your strength.

But that's not everything. God wants your love, but He's a gracious God. That's why He's the God of the covenant.

And when you bring your love to Him, you know He doesn't take it all Himself. He doesn't drink all the love of the saints Himself. You know what He does? He says, I want all my creatures to share in the love of the saints.

And He tells you, if you love me, keep my commandments, love your brother, do this, go there. Remember the man in prison. Remember the man who's lonely.

Remember the person without a coat on his back. Love, love, love, love, love, and show your love for me by loving them. You and I have no right to choose loving men instead of loving God.

We are to love God with all our hearts and all our minds and all our souls and all our strength. But this is the mystery of divine grace, and it makes me dance. God says, you must love me, but I'm not going to drink it all.

I'm not going to take it all myself. I'm not going to luxuriate even upon the love of the saints. If you love me, keep my commandments.

And when at last the judgment day comes, there will be those who will be told, inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, my little ones. Listen, you did it to me. Let us pray.

Our God and our Father, hear our prayer, wherein we first of all acknowledge that we are unworthy of your gospel and of yourself, and follow that confession with the further one that we have been disobedient to the heavenly vision. Lord our God, forgive us our sins. And then we pray that should there be among us this morning any who are not yet in the kingdom, who know much about it and who believe a lot about it, which is true, but are not inside, bring them in.

Help them to take the right turning, that they may reach the summit and miss the blasting. Guide us throughout this day that we may honor you with all that we are and all that we do. In the thrice holy name of your Son, our Savior.

Amen.

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