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**MY SON GIVE ME YOUR HEART**

*In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.*

One who vows a life of consecration to God hears Him say, “*My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe My ways*.” [[1]](#footnote-2) Most importantly, the heart should belong to God and none other: “‘*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself*.’”[[2]](#footnote-3) The first and prime commandment is to love the Lord your God. To love God with all your heart means that no one partakes in this love for God; He must be above all considerations.

The second commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. The Ten Commandments were on two tablets. The first four concerning God were on the first tablet, while the other six concerning your neighbor were on the second tablet. They complete each other, as the number ten is complete. Although they complete each other, each set was on a separate tablet, signifying that God’s love has to be unique — nothing should be allowed to intrude. The Lord Christ said, “*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*.”[[3]](#footnote-4) This type of love is what liberates a person from all cares. Through it, one dissolves into God’s love to the extent that nothing becomes an obstacle to unity with Christ.

Through your love for God (as “*God is love*,”[[4]](#footnote-5) loves creation, and is the Lover of Mankind), after catapulting into this love (with no one partaking in this love), you begin to love others correctly. Strangely, love for your neighbor (love for people) is evidence that your love for God is true love, because St. John says, “*If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*”[[5]](#footnote-6) Loving your neighbor is a sign that you love God, yet the opposite would be wrong: loving your neighbor more than God. Here, one is not walking uprightly. You must love God immensely. Then, the sign of your love for God becomes your love for your neighbor.

A sign of loving your neighbors can be by praying for them. Loving people does not mean sitting side-by-side to chat. This love can make you love the whole world and hope for its salvation. Praying for the salvation of the world is a monastic’s primary means of expressing love for creation. Generally, interactions with people reveal the truth inside – a pure fervent heart. St. Peter says, “*Love one another fervently with a pure heart*.”[[6]](#footnote-7) There is no contradiction between loving God and loving your neighbor; simultaneously, despite the absence of this contradiction, and although the second gives evidence of the first, no one could share in the first. Therefore, God gave the commandments to Moses on two tablets, the commandments specific to God on one tablet, and the commandments specific to the neighbor on the other tablet.

Likewise, the Lord Christ said, “‘*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself*.’”[[7]](#footnote-8) Note that He made them two separate commandments, not one. He did this to help us understand that no one can partake in the love in our heart towards God. An example of this is the love of the Son to the Father and of the Father to the Son. This is a unique eternal love, yet this does not prevent Him from saying, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*.”[[8]](#footnote-9) Yet, the Father’s love for the Son, and that of the Son for the Father, is beyond conception, imagination, or description. It is a unique love which the creation could not possibly imagine or describe. This does not prevent the love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit from extending mightily to the world and creation, in a way that the Lord Christ described as: “*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*.”[[9]](#footnote-10)

The Lord Christ told the Father in His farewell prayer, *“[You] have loved them as You have loved Me*.”[[10]](#footnote-11) The phrase, “*As You have loved Me*” means that “as You loved Me, You do also love them”; it does not mean that this love is equivalent, because it is impossible for Him to love a limited being with the same degree that He loves the infinite Son. It is impossible for them to be equal. How could they equate? Likewise, our love for our Lord will never be equal to our love for our neighbor. Love for the illimitable God is limitless, while love for our neighbor is limited.

Although it is limited, the limit is not to the extent that a person’s love becomes miserly, because He says, “*Love your neighbor as yourself*.” Firstly, minimally, you should love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. Secondly, the Lord Christ said, “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends*.”[[11]](#footnote-12) He also said, “*Love one another; as I have loved you*.”[[12]](#footnote-13) To sum up, our love for God must surpass all other love, yet, this does not prevent that this selfsame love for God is what makes us love people, serve them, pray for them, take an active role in their lives, and spread love everywhere. This is why our teacher St. John said, “*By this we know that we have been born of God, because we love the brethren*.”[[13]](#footnote-14)

It is very natural for the person who unites with God (as God is love) to have a capacity to love others. This capacity to love is unstoppable, as the Bible says, “*[love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things*.”[[14]](#footnote-15) No one can say, “I have loved enough. I have no more love. I have used up all my capacity to love.” When we say that our love for God should be unlimited, this is not to say that our love for our neighbor is limited. It does not come to a halt; it must continue. It is limited by the fact that this neighbor’s existence and circumstances are limited. Even if you gave him all your funds, are they infinite? Are they anything? They also are limited. The limitability is not in a lack of love, but in the limitability of humans. Meanwhile, God is unlimited. This is why God’s love remains, as St. Gregory the Theologian described, “No manner of speech can measure the depth of Your love towards mankind.”[[15]](#footnote-16)

In church, the souls beloved to God must react toward this love, primarily to God and secondly to their guides. The presence of a bishop or priest in the church represents the presence of Christ in the church, a delegate of God.

*All glory and honor is due to our God forevermore. Amen.*

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1. (The New King James Version 1982), Pro 23:26. All Biblical References are from the New King James Version (NKJV), unless otherwise stated. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Mt 22:37-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Mt 10:37. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. 1 Jn 4:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. 1 Jn 4:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. 1 Pt 1:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Mt 22:37-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Jn 3:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Jn 17:23. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Jn 15:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Jn 13:34. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Cf. 1 Jn 5:2, 18; 3:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. 1 Cor 13:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. (H and H 2007), 271. This is taken from the Trisagion of the Divine Liturgy of Saint Gregory. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)