

# Beaminster Area Team Ministry

## Holy Week Reflections 2025

### Love the Lord Your God

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## **Holy Week Reflections Monday – Love the Lord Your God**

### **Charlie Merivale**

This encounter between Jesus and one of the teachers of the law occurs at the time when Jesus' life is drawing rapidly toward the confrontation between the Jewish authorities and the Roman occupiers, that will result in his execution by crucifixion. He has entered into Jerusalem seated on a colt that **has** never been ridden. Many people went ahead of him, crying, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' The following day **Jesus** went to the temple, the seat of religious power for the Jewish nation, and drove out the money changers and the sellers of doves. There he taught, 'Is it not written: 'My house shall be a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of robbers'.

The educated and ruling elite amongst the Jews sought through various arguments to undermine him, but to no avail. In this passage a teacher of the law, admiring the answers Jesus has given, asks him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?'. To which Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 6 verse 4, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one'.

We are called to love the Lord our God as the one Lord. Scripture is littered with examples where the Israelites adopt the gods of neighbouring tribes, to their detriment. In our day and age we can look about us and observe the worship of small 'g' gods, from the love and desire for power and money, through to the adulation of celebrities and influencers. The list is long and the road is paved with failure and disappointment.

Our challenge then is to realise for ourselves the love of God in and around our lives now. Through the saving power of Christ we are invited in to a relationship with God as parent. To the Israelites of the Old Testament, God is a mysterious figure, beyond definition in how he calls himself, 'I am who I am'. A figure encountered in the burning bush, in fire upon the mountain, in the 'still small voice'. In and through Christ, we are drawn into an ever deepening relationship with God. We are invited to address the Lord in the language of the parent-child relationship. And because it is a relationship, we are called to understand our divine parent in the reading of his Word, the scriptures; in the doing of his will, applying the Word of God to our lives; and in prayer. It is not simply about feeling, it is the determination to orientate our lives to His love, through all the ups and downs of this life, reflecting daily upon our lived life and giving thanks for it. And it doesn't happen all at once. It is a life time's pilgrimage into the heart of God. And as Robert Frost writes in his poem, The Road Not Taken:

'I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence;  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference'.

**Holy Week Reflections Tuesday *With All Your Heart***  
**Jennie Evans**

In scripture the word *heart* is the seat of life or strength, hence it means mind, soul and spirit, one's entire emotional nature and understanding.

Jesus says the greatest commandment,

'Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and all thy strength.'

Psalms 139 says 'Search me thoroughly O God and know my heart'

In I Samuel 16 v 7, 'man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart.' This was said to Samuel when he went to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, king.

There are many references to the heart in the bible. In Proverbs there are at least 45 references to the heart. The writings of Solomon, the Wisdom he received as a gift from God.

Here are a few:

Proverbs 13 v 12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but longing fulfilled is the tree of life.

Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no-one else can share its joy

Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief

A happy heart makes the face cheerful

A cheerful heart is good medicine

The words of gossip are like choice morsels, they go down to man's innermost parts.

Are you still so dull? Whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach, but the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart.

The heart is most deceptive.

We have followed the devices and desires of our own hearts, and the truth is not in us.

Often when we have experienced much hurt and pain we let our hearts become hard.

Today if you hear his voice harden not your hearts.

Sin hardens our hearts.

If I am honest with myself I know what my feelings and reactions are. Sometimes they are not very good.

I have a choice.

If we say we have no sin the truth is not in us.

But if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I John 1 v9

Holy Spirit leads us all to truth.

Let us ask him to show us.

## Holy Week Reflections Wednesday Soul

### Jo Neary

<sup>28</sup> One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; <sup>30</sup> 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 strength.’ <sup>31</sup> The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” <sup>32</sup> Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; <sup>33</sup> and ‘to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength’ and ‘to love one’s neighbour as oneself’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” <sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question. Mark 12:28-34

What is our soul? The Greek word for soul used here in Mark’s Gospel is *psuché*. We remember that the commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength comes from Deuteronomy 6:5. Here the Hebrew word translated as soul is *nephesh*.

Both the Greek and Hebrew word for soul have their origins in a word meaning breath. But there are subtle differences. In Hebrew culture the idea of “nephesh” was the whole totality of being, everything that brings us life. It encompassed both the physical and emotional. Therefore, our soul, our “nephesh” was our whole life, everything. Thus, to love God with our soul means to love him with our whole life, everything we think, are, experience, do.

Greek culture, heavily influenced by Plato and Aristotle described the soul as the essence of a person, but something separate to the physical body. Jewish culture added an eternal relationship to this, seeing “*psuché*” as the life relationship to God. Therefore, New Testament writers were influenced by both Greek and Jewish cultures, relating soul to our relationship with God and something about our human existence.

- What does the word soul mean to you? How might you define it?
- What does it mean to love God with all your soul?
- Do you imagine the breath of God in you?
- Is praying, loving and seeking God as natural as breathing to you? How might relationship with the divine be strengthened or enlivened in you?
- What does the eternal love of God look like for you? Might you love God forever?

Reflect on this hymn verse

Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
To His feet thy tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Who like me His praise should sing?  
Praise Him, praise Him,  
praise Him, praise Him,  
Praise the everlasting King.

*Henry F Lyte.*

## **Holy Week Reflections Maundy Thursday Mind**

**Patrick Evans**

*'Be still..silent ..aware..for there in our own heart and mind the spirit is at prayer. Listen and learn and find the wisdom, heart and mind of God in Christ'*

'Loving God with all your mind' is about our way of thinking, our willingness to explore our understanding of God and how that has changed over the centuries. Evolution, and a world of discovery in almost every sphere of life. To study the Bible with insights of Christians past and present. To see in Jesus the human face of God and to understand his vision for humanity. Searching his ways and truths. Praying and willing our minds that we might better understand that as we love one another so we enrich our love for God.

*'Put on the garments of compassion, kindness, humility gentleness, forgiveness, love, peace, thankfulness' Col v12-17*

*'Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right , whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable---if anything is excellent or praiseworthy ---think about such things' Philippians 4 v8*

On our journey as members of the Body of Christ we are already learning to live with questions, insights, experiences, with 'open' ears and eyes. To love is often a tough call.

Often we just need to welcome the reminder that 'Emmanuel' God with us through 'thick and thin' with a love that will never let us go. We need to receive as well as giving and in a wonderful way the receiving is the seed bed for the loving.

'Those who believe in God but without passion in their heart, without anguish of mind, without uncertainty, without doubt, and even at times without despair, believe only in the idea of God, not in God himself' [Miguel Unamuno]

The hymn 'Beauty for Brokenness'[Kendrick 1993] speaks of the work of God as bringing redemption and renewal out of the ruins of despair, injustice and sin. It touches hearts but calls us to be mindful and resilient in loving God's values and vision for humanity...Gods scope of salvation extends from human society to the natural world, challenging injustice, and recognizing human need. Some words from the hymn:

<i>'Beauty for brokenness,</i>	<i>Refuge from cruel wars</i>	<i>Rest for the ravaged earth</i>
<i>Hope for despair</i>	<i>Havens from fear</i>	<i>Oceans and streams</i>
<i>Lord in the suffering</i>	<i>Peace to the killing fields</i>	<i>Plundered and poisoned</i>
<i>this is our prayer</i>	<i>Scorched earth to green</i>	<i>Our future ,our dreams</i>
<i>Bread for the children</i>	<i>Christ for the bitterness</i>	<i>Lord end our madness</i>
<i>Justice, joy, peace</i>	<i>His Cross for the pain</i>	<i>Carelessness ,greed</i>

*Come change our love from a spark to a flame Lighten our darkness Breathe on this flame .*

*'Be still..silent ..aware..for there in our own heart and mind the spirit is at prayer. Listen and learn and find the wisdom, heart and mind of God in Christ'*

**Holy Week Reflections Good Friday *Strength***  
**David Campbell**

There are many who would say that the claim made by some that to love God is an impossibility. For those people it is just too difficult a concept to conceive of let alone put into practice in daily life and living. There are of course good and many reasons for such scepticism. After all, apart from the pious visionaries of every age there is no one who has ever actually seen God and those who claim to have done so are usually treated with varying degrees of human suspicion. It is indeed hard to love something, someone, which or whom, has never been glimpsed. It is, most would say, easier to love the visible, the concrete, the present, the real.

How much harder is it then to comprehend, let alone follow the divine command that we should love God with all our strength? Surely this is a super-human task. A challenge well beyond even the many who cling to faith, let alone those for whom the task of believing has long ago been given up.

I am afraid to say that the answer to this particular challenge is unfortunately no easier than the challenge itself, and this can be daunting indeed. The answer is that it is in fact impossible to love God with all our strength unless we can truly say that we love our neighbours. The term our neighbours is used here to refer not to those who live near us, but is a reference to the demand for universal love of those who share in our common humanity. And this is where the going gets even tougher. One of the realities of human life is that we encounter those whom we love, but also those whom we choose to ignore, those whom we vaguely dislike and those whom we, if we are honest about it, cannot stand and would cross the road to avoid. And yet the persistent call to those who would seek to follow the way of the cross of Jesus of Nazareth is that we must love even our enemies as well as pray for those who persecute us.

This is a truly hard saying, but if the measurement of the strength which we are to expend in the life of loving God is the degree to which we can say we love our neighbours, then it is perhaps no wonder that many reject this way of the cross with all its brokenness and pain and seek instead an easier and indeed more palatable and even potentially safer alternative.

For the Christian believer however, this is in fact the very upward call to which we are asked to respond. And yet, knowing ourselves to be frail in this regard rather than strong, there is only one path which we can follow and that is to try even though we may well fail. In the trying to love God with our strength and might, with perseverance and courage, we may in fact discover that it is actually in our weakness that God receives us, that it is in the very frailty of our attempts to love God that God's power to transform that weakness may be experienced.

Why is this? I think it is because it was in two moments of divine weakness that God showed to humanity transforming power. The first was in the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ and the second was in the crucifixion of the Son of God. In our reflection on those two moments of divine weakness we may know that it was by becoming weak just like us that God's power was made perfect and, to those who believe, a door for gratitude and reciprocal love was opened. It is when we stare at the cradle and the cross straight on, as we do this day, that we may come to understand that our only response to such meekness and majesty is indeed an outpouring of love like no other.

By such an outpouring of grateful love for the high points of the life of the incarnate God we may truly know that it is because God loved us first that we may, in some way and with some strength love in return.

## Holy Week Reflections Easter Eve And Your Neighbour

Barbara Simmonds

Love for our neighbour should be a consequence of our love for God; 1 John 4 v20 reminds us that '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.'

In Luke's gospel, we read that when a lawyer asked Jesus 'Who is my neighbour?' Jesus responded with the story of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan showed compassion to the injured man, responding to his needs, using his own resources to help him, and going out of his way to do so. He involved others, leaving the man in the care of the innkeeper, and promising to return – his care was ongoing.

How are we showing love to our neighbours in our churches and communities?

Across the Team, we have groups that pray for our communities and any known needs, we support the Food Bank, we reach out to young families through the Baby and Toddler group, we support the bereaved, we have ministries of coffee and cake and chat, we try to make our worship accessible and welcoming to all.....what would you add to this list? What do you do yourself?

The Samaritan is someone Jesus' listeners looked down on, and had been brought up to avoid. Stephen Cottrell says 'It is a powerful story. It speaks across the centuries. It is as relevant today as it was yesterday. It will carry on being relevant tomorrow. Jesus shines a light on the limitations of our love, on our tribalism and racism, our imagined superiority, our unwillingness to get involved, and the many different ways that we walk by on the other side and so collude with injustice.'

Does that challenge you? Are there people we find difficult and try to avoid? Are we impatient at times? Do we sometime gossip about others? Do we expect everything in church to be the way we like it to be? Is everyone really included and able to make a contribution? Where is there injustice in our communities?

Do we show love to all our neighbours?

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow,  
till we've seen this journey through.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

When we sing to God in heaven,  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

I will hold the Christlight for you  
in the nighttime of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

*Richard Gillard*

## **Holy Week Reflections Easter Day As Yourself**

Alastair Wheeler

“... and love your neighbour **as yourself**”

Jesus of course is quoting from the two greatest commandments from centuries before him, and we have looked earlier in the week about love for God and for neighbour. But so often over the years I have found people having the greatest difficulty in this bit of the wording of the two greatest Commandments.

God takes as read that we will love ourselves, yet so often in modern society this is far from the case. And for many people, the very idea that they should love themselves seems a step too far – very un-British as someone once said to me!

Wrong gender, wrong body shape, wrong life choices, not as good a partner / parent as we would like, not as clever / not as good as X ... the list is almost endless of the ways we are encouraged by society to put ourselves down and live regretfully. But God tells us we can love ourselves as the person we are!

It sadly spills over into the spiritual life also – I don't pray as much as so and so, I don't understand the Bible as well as ... , he has an hour's quiet time at 6am each morning and I can't, ...

All of which dislike of ourselves, negative comparisons with others, builds into stress and depression, can result in problems in relationships with people and with God.

Have a bit of time to reflect on whether any of this might apply to you.

Are there aspects of yourself, bits of you that you don't like, or can't love?

Perhaps reflect before God on his knowledge of you, even better than you know yourself – and accept that he holds you in his love. The real you. Even those bits that you cannot love in yourself, God knows, and holds and heals. And Easter will celebrate the triumph of God's love and joy in Christ and the empty tomb over all that is dark and sorrowful.

What has helped you in the past, or helps you now, to affirm the goodness that is in you, that is you?

If this is touching things you find painful how can you find help to change, to grow, live differently? Sharing with a compassionate mature friend or a counsellor can bring some people freedom in ways they never thought possible.

Your experience of life, with its good bits and bad bits, is known by God, held by God. Jesus died and rose for you, for the real you, the person you really are.

You are unique – and God loves you.

So yes, love yourself! For Christ's sake!

