

The Two Greatest Commandments and the Good Samaritan

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity

Sermon on Luke 10:23-37

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Text

²³And turning to the disciples, he said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: ²⁴for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not: and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not.

²⁵And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ²⁶And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? ²⁷And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. ²⁸And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. ²⁹But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? ³⁰Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, ³⁴and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. ³⁶Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? ³⁷And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

(Luke 10:23-37)

Sermon

The Summary of this Gospel

¹ The disciples saw and heard with their eyes and ears, and also understood in their hearts all that the prophets had desired to see and hear; both of which the old sainted fathers did not experience, who desired to see and hear in the body, what they knew before in the spirit; but the Pharisees saw and heard it, but understood it not, as Isaiah 6:9-10 prophesied; and the Lord himself cites this passage of Isaiah in Matthew 13:14; John 12:40; Acts 28:26.

² The people of the law require works; but the law requires the love of the heart.

³ The law concerning love, both toward God and toward our neighbor, condemns us all.

⁴ Our neighbor is the one who needs our help and to him we can do favors.

⁵ From the passage in this Gospel: *“Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee,”* foolish interpreters wish to confirm human laws; but they will not succeed. The two pence or shillings are the wine and oil the Samaritan poured into the wounds of the unfortunate man, or the law and the Gospel. For what should he leave the servant by which to serve the rich but the very things he had himself used? One can also say that the two pence are faith and love, which are the only things one should preach and bear to the people. Our foolish bishops now wish to do more than is committed to and commanded them.

⁶ *“What is more”* does not mean to burden the sick with human commandments and institutions; for what would be more foolish. But it means to give him faithful counsel where there is no revealed and clear word of God, as St. Paul did when he said to the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 7:25: *“Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give my judgment.”* In like manner did Daniel 4:24, when he had no clear word nor commandment of God, he gave the king faithful counsel, etc.

A Sermon on the Law

¹ I hope you thoroughly understand this Gospel lesson, inasmuch as it recurs every year. And since it annually returns in the Pericopes we are required to consider it; and this we will now gladly and briefly do. In the first place, the Evangelist relates how Christ our Lord led his disciples aside, and being alone with them rejoiced in his spirit, and earnestly and directly said to them:

“Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things that ye see, and saw them not: and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not.”

² This hearing and seeing must be understood simply and plainly as external seeing and hearing, namely, that they saw Christ and his office, heard his preaching, and witnessed the miracles he performed among the Jews. The Jews also beheld these things with their natural eyes and some of them indeed experienced them in part in their hearts. But in fact they did not recognize him as the Christ, like the Apostles did, and like Peter, who representing all the others, confessed and said in Matthew 16:16: *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* We indeed admit, that even some of the Jews like the Apostles recognized him as the Christ; but since they were but few who did, Christ therefore takes his Apostles here to himself apart.

³ However, in spirit, many prophets and kings saw Christ, as Christ himself says to the Jews concerning Abraham in John 8:56: “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.*” Then the Jews thought he spoke of natural seeing, but Christ spoke of spiritual seeing, as all pious Christian hearts saw him before he was born, and still daily see him. For if Abraham saw him, without doubt many more prophets in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt saw him. And although this seeing made the holy fathers and prophets blessed, yet they had a real heartfelt longing and desire to behold Christ the Lord in the flesh, as is intimated time and again in the prophets.

⁴ Therefore the Lord here says to his disciples who saw both with their natural and their spiritual eyes: “*Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.*” As though he would say: This is a blessed time, an acceptable year, a special season of grace. That which is now at hand is so precious that the eyes which see it are truly called blessed. For in the past ages the Gospel was never preached so publicly and clearly unto all men as at present; the Holy Spirit was not yet publicly poured out: but was still concealed, and had as yet accomplished little. But Christ began the office of the Holy Spirit, and afterwards the Apostles continued it in full earnest.

Therefore he calls all those blessed, who see and hear such grace. Now when the Lord said this and was rejoicing in spirit, one presents himself, a lawyer, who acting as though he also amounted to something, tempted the Lord and said:

“Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

⁵ This lawyer was perhaps a wise man and well acquainted with the Scriptures, as his answer also suggests; yet here he becomes a fool, and must first begin to learn from the Lord, when he is put to shame and disgrace. For Christ teaches him a good lesson, and with one word takes out of him all his self-conceit. For he was in the delusion that he had kept the law wholly and perfectly, and was therefore something extra, above others, which undoubtedly he was, and imagined, because he was so pious and learned, that he was of course worthy to talk with the Lord. But now what does the Lord do to ensnare him in a masterly manner? He does this: he permits him to judge himself. For the Evangelist proceeds thus:

“And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.”

⁶ I think the Lord gave this pious man a good lecture. Alas, it was not right, he should have spared him a little, he puts him to shame before all the world. For what good does it do him? Christ shows him that he has as yet done nothing, when he allowed himself to think he had done everything.

He asks what he should do. I contend that he has enough to do now, if he is only able to do great things.

⁷ Now much might be said on these two commandments, and it is also really needed, had we the time, for these are the highest and greatest themes on which Moses wrote; yea, on these hang all the law and the prophets, as Christ himself says in Matthew 22:40. Nevertheless, we will briefly consider some phases of them.

⁸ When we examine the laws of Moses, we find they all treat of love. For the commandment: “*Thou shalt have no other Gods before me,*” I cannot explain or interpret otherwise than: Thou shalt love

God alone. Thus Moses himself interprets it in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, where he says: *“Hear, O Israel; Jehovah our God is one Jehovah; and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”* From this passage the lawyer has taken his answer. But the Jews understand this law to mean no more than that they should not set up idols and images to worship, and when they could say and confess with their lips that they have only one God and honor no other gods, they think they have kept this commandment. Thus this lawyer also understood it, but it was a false, erroneous knowledge of the law.

⁹ Now we must have high regard for the law. It says: *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”* Thou, thou, it says, thou, and everything thou art; and especially does it mean the heart, the soul and all thy powers. It does not speak of the tongue, or the hands, or the knees; but it speaks of the whole body, and of all thou hast and art. If I am to have no other God, then I must surely possess the only true God with my heart, that is, I must in my heart be affectionate to him, evermore cleave to him, depend upon him, trust him, have my desire, love and joy in him, and always think of him. Just as we say at other times when we delight in something, that it tastes good in our very heart. And when one speaks or laughs and is not in earnest, and does not mean it from his heart, we say: You laugh, and your heart is not in it. The heart is quite a different thing than the lips. Therefore in the Scriptures the heart signifies the great and ardent love we should have for God. Those who serve God only with their lips, with their hands or with their knees, are hypocrites, and God cares nothing for them. For God does not want only a part, on the contrary he wants the whole man.

¹⁰ The Jews abstained outwardly from idolatry, and served God only with their lips; but their hearts were far from him, full of mistrust and unbelief.

Outwardly they appeared beautiful, as though they meant it in all sincerity, but within they were full of idolatry. Therefore the Lord said unto them in Matthew 23:27-28: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith. For ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness. Even as ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”*

¹¹ They are really wicked people who become proud in external things, who desire to justify and make themselves pious by their works, as this lawyer here does. Behold, what a proud character he is, he presents himself in his own name, and thinks Christ will not rebuke him; yea, he allows himself to think that the Lord will extol and praise his life in the presence of all the people, and does not think of learning anything from the Lord, but only seeks his own praise. The ignorant pretender would have gladly heard a psalm of praise from the man whom the people esteemed, and at whom all men wondered. Thus all hypocrites do, who outwardly parade their excellent, great and noble works. They well say that they do not seek honor and praise, but inwardly in their hearts they are frill of ambition, and desire all the world to know of their holiness, and smile very nicely when they hear men speak of it.

¹² Yet the Lord does not serve this lawyer thus, but puts him to shame.

This Christ is an unfriendly, ungracious man, he tells the people the truth, and well deserves that they should hate him. The pious, holy lawyer still does his utmost, and knows nothing but how to harvest great honors and obtain high renown for his precious life; he thinks he has perfectly fulfilled this commandment, and hopes for a favorable answer, that the Lord will say: Dear Sir, you have done it all. But Christ goes to work and first tells him: *“Do this!”* That is to say in good German: You are a

rogue in the hide, you have not done this during your whole life; yea, you have not kept a single letter of the law; and thus shows him his wickedness. The poor fellow thinks he should sit in the first seat, that he is really pure and beautiful, and by rights should sit among the angels, rather than here among the people. What a wonderful Christ is this! The people regard this lawyer as pious and holy; but Christ says he shall first go and begin to fulfill the law. Be consistent with thyself!

¹³ Now these are the very fellows who most of all sin against the first commandment, and think no further than the words read: I must love God, and think they have fulfilled the law, while it remains hovering on their tongues and over their hearts, but never enters. This, however, is not enough, it must reach much farther, namely, that I so love God that for his sake I can forsake all creatures, and should he require it, also body and life; yea, that I should love him above all things. For God is a jealous God and cannot suffer us to love anything above himself. But to love anything beneath himself, he of course allows. Just as a husband can easily allow his wife to love the maid servants, the house and house utensils, cattle and other things; but to love with the love she should have for him, he will not suffer her to love anyone besides himself; yea, he desires her to forsake all things for his sake; and so again the wife also requires the same from her husband.

Thus God can also allow us to love his creatures; yea, they are created for this purpose and are good. The sun is an excellent creature; gold and silver and all things that are attractive and beautiful by nature cause us to love them. This God indeed permits us to do. But that I should cling to the creature and love it with the same love with which I love God the Creator, this he can and will not allow; yea, his will is that I should deny and forsake all things, should he desire and require it of me, and be satisfied should I nevermore behold the sun, my money and possessions. The love of the creature should stand far, far below our love to him; and as he is the chief good, his will is also to be loved in the highest degree, above all other good. If he will not allow me to love anything as much as I love him, much less will he allow me to love anything more than himself, though it be a creature of his own creation.

¹⁴ Now I think you understand what it is to love God with all the heart, with all the soul and with all the mind. To love God with all the heart is to love him above all creatures; that is, although many creatures are quite lovely, as they please me and I love them, nevertheless, I am to despise and forsake all these for God's sake, whenever God my Lord desires it.

¹⁵ To love God with all the soul is to devote your entire bodily life to him that you can say when the love of any creature, or any persecution threatens to overpower you: All this I will give up, before I will forsake my God; let men cast me away, murder or drown me, let what God's will is happen to me, I will gladly lose all, before I will forsake thee, O Lord! unto thee will I cling more than to all thy creatures, or to anything that is not thyself. I will risk all things together with what I have and am that I may not forsake thee. The soul in the Scriptures signifies the life of the body, which acts through the five senses, eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and everything that the soul does through the body.

¹⁶ To love God with all our strength is to devote all our members and whatever we may be able to do through our bodies to the love of God, and sacrifice all rather than do anything contrary to his will.

¹⁷ To love God with all the mind is to take to nothing except that which is pleasing to God. By which is meant the self-conceit which man has that the same be directed to God and that all things be pleasing to him.

¹⁸ Thus you see what the commandment requires: *“Thou shalt love God.”*

Thou, thou wholly and fully, not thy hands, not thy lips, not thy knees.

Those who do this, fulfill the commandment in the right sense. But there is not a man on earth who thus fulfills the law; yea, we all do just the opposite. Thus this law here makes us all sinners so that not the least letter of this commandment is fulfilled, even by the most holy persons in the world. For no one clings so firmly to God with all the heart, that he could forsake all things for God’s sake. We have, God be praised, become so competent that we can almost not suffer the least word, yea, we will not let go of a nickel for the sake of God.

How is it possible for us to love God, as long as his will displeases us? For if I love God I love also his will. Now, when God sends us sickness, poverty, shame and disgrace, that is his will. But what do we do under such circumstances? We thunder, scold and growl, and bear it with great impatience. And this is the least part, for what would we do if we had to forsake body and life for God and Christ’s sake? Then we would act quite differently. Yet in the meantime I act like this Pharisee and lawyer does, I lead a fine outward life, honor and serve God, fast, pray, and appear very pious and holy. But God does not want this. He wants us to accept his will with joy and love, and this we are too tardy in doing.

¹⁹ Therefore, what the Lord here says to this lawyer, he says to us all, namely, that we have not yet fulfilled the law, and still he requires us to do it. On this account all men are guilty of death, and are the devil’s own property. *“All men are liars,”* Psalm 116:11, vain and offensive. What they pretend does not avail before God. In our own affairs we are shrewd; how to scrape together money and goods, how to speak well of God before the people, and how to push ourselves ahead in a masterly manner.

But what does God care for this? His will is that we should love him with all our hearts. This no man can do, and the conclusion is that we are all sinners, and especially those who walk in a beautiful outward show.

Therefore it is safer that we go and confess that we all are sinners, than that we have respect to our works and cling to our beautiful, glittering lives.

A Sermon on the Gospel in a Parable

²⁰ The foregoing is the first part of our Gospel lesson, and it is a sermon on the law. The second part now follows, and it preaches the Gospel, how and whence we are to receive power to fulfill the Law. This the good Samaritan will teach us.

²¹ How does this lawyer act now after the Lord had thus turned him away? He goes ahead, the Evangelist says, and desires to justify himself and says to the Lord:

“And who is my neighbor?”

²² He does not ask: Who is my God? As though he would say: *“I owe God nothing, with God I am in good standing. I am also inclined to think that I am under obligations to no man; yet, I would like to know who my neighbor is?”* The Lord answers and tells him a very beautiful parable, by which he shows that we are all neighbors among one another, both he who does another a kindness, as well as he who is in need of a kindness.

Although the text reads as if Christ said that he is our neighbor who does another a kindness. In this, however, the Scriptures make no difference.

Here they call him neighbor who does a kindness, and at other places him who receives the kindness.

²³ By means of this parable the Lord concludes with the words, “*Go, and do thou likewise,*” so that this lawyer did not only sin against God, but also against his neighbor. He not only failed to love God, but he did not love his neighbor, and never did him a favor. By this the poor man falls into such a sweat that he is only deceived from head to foot. How could he be so mistaken, the highly learned and pious man? His mistake came in this way; he led a Pharisaical, feigned and hypocritical life. He did not look down to his neighbor to help him with his life, but only sought thereby his own vain glory and honor before the eyes of the people, and with this he stared piously toward heaven.

²⁴ Now you have often heard that a Christian life consists in acting before my God in faith and with a pure heart, but toward my neighbor in right living and good works; and not wait until my neighbor seeks a kindness of me, and asks me for something, but approach and meet him with kindness and freely offer it to him. Let us now see what the parable in itself teaches.

²⁵ This Samaritan of course is our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who has shown his love toward God and his neighbor. Toward God, in that he was obedient to him, came down from heaven and became man, and thus fulfilled the will of his Father; toward his neighbor, in that he immediately after his baptism began to preach, to do wonders, to heal the sick. And in short, he did no work that centered in himself alone, but all his acts centered in his neighbor. And this he did with all his powers, and thus he became our servant, who could have well remained in heaven and been equal to God, Philippians 2:6. But all this he did because he knew that this pleased God and was his Father’s will.

²⁶ When he entered upon that high mission to prove that he loved God with all his heart, he laid down his bodily life with all he had, and said:

Father, here you have all, my bodily life, my glory and honor, which I had among the people; all this I give as it is for thy sake, that the world may know how I love thee. My Father, let my wisdom perish, so that the world may look upon me as most foolish. Let me be the most despised, who was heretofore praised by all the world. Now I am the worst murderer, who before was friendly, useful and serviceable to the whole world. Dear Father, all this I despise, only that I may not be disobedient to thee.

²⁷ This is the Samaritan who came uninvited, and fulfilled the law with his whole heart. For only he fulfilled the law, and no one can deprive him of this honor. He alone merits it, and well maintains it all alone. Now this would be no special comfort for us; but that he has compassion on the poor wounded man, takes him under his care, binds his wounds, takes him into the inn and waits on him, this avails for us.

²⁸ The man who here lies half dead, wounded and stripped of his clothing, is Adam and all mankind. The murderers are the devils who robbed and wounded us, and left us lying prostrate half dead. We still struggle a little for life; but there lies horse and man, we cannot help ourselves to our feet, and if we were left thus lying we would have to die by reason of our great anguish and lack of nourishment; maggots would grow in our wounds, followed by great misery and distress.

²⁹ The parable stands in bold relief, and pictures us perfectly, what we are and can do with our boasted reason and free will. If the poor wounded man had desired to help himself, it would only

have been worse for him, he would only have done harm to himself and irritated his wounds, and only prepared more misery and distress for himself.

Had he remained lying quiet, he would have had as much suffering. Thus it is when we are left to ourselves. We are always lost, we may lay hold where we will. Hitherto man has always acted thus, he has thought out many ways and methods how we might reform our lives and get to heaven.

One found this way, another that, therefore so many kinds of orders arose: in like manner the letters of indulgence and crusades originated; but they have only made evil worse. Such is the world, and it is thus finely portrayed in this wounded man, it lies in sins over head and ears and cannot help itself.

³⁰ But the Samaritan who has fulfilled the law and is perfectly healthy and sound, comes and does more than both priest and Levite. He binds up the sores of the wounded man, pours in oil and wine, lifts him upon his own beast, and brings him into the inn, takes good care of him, and when he departs he carefully commends him to the host, and besides leaves him a sufficient supply of money, while neither the priest nor Levite would do one of these kind acts. The priest signifies the dear sainted fathers before Moses; the Levite the priesthood of the Old Testament. All these however have accomplished nothing by their works, and have passed by on the other side like this priest and Levite.

³¹ Therefore, if I had for example all the good works of Noah, Abraham and of all the dear fathers, they would still be of no benefit to me. They have indeed beheld the wounded man lying helpless and half dead, but they could not help it. He who lay there half dead, saw it too, but what of it, he could make it no better. The dear sainted fathers saw very well that the people lay in their sins over their ears, and also felt the anguish of sin, but what could they do to remedy it? They could make it only worse, but not better. These were the preachers of the law, and showed what the world was, namely, full of deadly sins, and it lay there half dead, and could not help itself, notwithstanding all its powers, reason and free will. Go then, thou beautifully painted rogue, and boast of thy free will, of thy merits and holiness!

³² But Christ, the true Samaritan, takes the poor man to himself as his own, goes to him and does not require the helpless one to come to him; for here is no merit, but pure grace and mercy; and he binds up his wounds, cares for him and pours in oil and wine, this is the whole Gospel from beginning to end. He pours in oil when grace is preached, as when one says: Behold thou poor man, here is your unbelief, here is your condemnation, here you are wounded and sore. Wait! All this I will cure with the Gospel. Behold, here cling firmly to this Samaritan, to Christ the Savior, he will help you, and nothing else in heaven or on earth will. You know very well that oil softens, thus also the sweet, loving preaching of the Gospel gives me a soft, mild heart toward God and my neighbor, so that I risk my bodily life for the sake of Christ my Lord and his Gospel, if God and necessity require it.

³³ But wine is sharp and signifies the holy cross that immediately follows.

A Christian need not look for his cross, it is always on his back. For he thinks as St. Paul says, 2 Timothy 3:12: "*All that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*" This is the court-color in this kingdom. Whoever is ashamed of the color, does not belong to this king.

³⁴ Then the Samaritan lifts the wounded man on his beast. This beast is Christ the Lord himself, he carries us, we lay upon his shoulders, neck and body. There is scarcely a more lovely picture in the entire Gospel, than where Christ the Lord compares himself to a shepherd, in Luke 15:1, who carries the lost sheep on his shoulders back to the fold. He still continually carries his lost sheep thus at the present day.

³⁵ The stable or inn is Christianity, here in this world, where we must remain for a short time. The host is the preacher of the Word of God and of the Gospel, who is to nurse and care for us.

³⁶ Now here we have the substance of the Gospel. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of mercy and grace, in which there is nothing but a continual carrying of the lost. Christ carries our infirmities and sicknesses, he takes our sins upon himself and has patience when we fail. We still always lay about his neck, and yet he does not become weary of carrying us, which should be the greatest comfort for us when we are in conflict with sin.

³⁷ Ministers in this kingdom are to comfort the consciences, deal gently with them and feed them with the Gospel, carry the weak, heal the sick, and know how to divide the Word rightly, and administer the same to every one according to his needs. This is the office of a true bishop and minister, and not to proceed with violence as our bishops do, who come threatening with stocks and the block, crying: "*Ho! up there, up there, who will not, must!*" This should not be, but a bishop or minister ought to resemble one who Waits upon the sick, who treats them very gently, gives kind words, speaks very friendly to them and exercises all diligence in their behalf. Thus a bishop or minister should also do, and remember that his bishopric or parish is nothing but a hospital and an infirmary, where he has very many and various kinds of sick people for treatment. When Christ is thus preached faith and life meet together and fulfill the commandment of love.

Of the Law and the Gospel

³⁸ I have often told you, dearly beloved, that the entire Scriptures consist of two parts, of the law and the Gospel. It is the law that teaches what we are required to do; the Gospel teaches where we shall receive what the law demands. For it is quite a different thing to know what we should have, and to know where to get it. Just as when I am given into the hands of the physicians, where it is quite a different art to tell what my disease is than to tell what medicine I must take so as to recover. Thus it is likewise here.

The law discovers the disease, the Gospel ministers the medicine. This you clearly see in today's Gospel. The lawyer comes desiring eternal life, 'and inquires what he shall do to secure it! The law tells him, and says: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy strength and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.*"

³⁹ He who reads this only superficially as this lawyer here does, will not understand it. One must enter into it and portray and even behold himself in it. For if I try to love God with all my heart, I will soon see how far I fail. So, with all the soul, that is, with the inner soul which I feel in the flesh, that I love and experience love in all my senses; for to love with the soul in the Scriptures means the love that a gallant youth feels towards his beloved. Again, with all thy strength, that is, with all thy members. Again, with all thy mind, that is, all thy senses, thoughts and delusions must be directed toward God. For if I am to love God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind, then my eyes dare not give one scornful glance, my tongue speak an angry word, my feet, hands, ears must all be one, and give forth no angry sign. That is to say: Thou shalt love God with all thy heart, so that thy whole body from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, inwardly and outwardly, goes forth in love, and rejoices in God and honors him.

⁴⁰ Now find me a man who is chaste or otherwise pious with a burning passion and love; there is none such on the earth. We find ourselves much more inclined to anger, hatred, envy, worldly pleasures, than to tender heartedness and other virtues. And when I find in my inclination such a

spark, it is all false, the law is not satisfied. But I find not only a spark in me, but a whole bakeoven full of the fire of evil inclinations, for there is no love in the heart, nor in any member of the body. Therefore I here see in the law as in a mirror, that everything I have is condemned and cursed; for not one jot of the law shall pass away but all must be fulfilled, as Christ says, Matthew 5:18: *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished.”*

⁴¹ Now you do not find in yourself, that you do with all your soul and with all your heart, with joy and pleasure, what the law requires of you; therefore you are condemned and the child of satan; then know by this how to govern yourself in the future. Behold, you must first come to the knowledge to confess that you are the devil’s own property. But if you would know no more than how you are to treat him to be freed from him, you would have to perish. To this end the law serveth, that we may learn that we are condemned, for this evil lust is found in us all, and yet we should not have a spark of it in us.

⁴² Our sophists failed to see this, and have taught, if a man does the best he can, God then gives him grace. They are blind guides, and themselves confess that man has little desire for the good; yet still, if he go and do it, even though disorderly, unwillingly, indolently, he is nevertheless in favor with God. Christ here teaches the contrary that we should go forth with a passion and love and do the law with a joyful and happy mind. Now, whom would you rather believe, Christ or the sophists? I leave this to you. From such false knowledge the cloisters later arose, into which men entered and contended that if a man were only in a cloister, and it matters not how unwillingly he was there, then he would be saved. So they taught. But now Christ’s will is that man should do good works willingly and joyfully.

Hence, if they are done with a troubled conscience and a heavy heart, it is sin. Therefore cease from all works that you do not perform with pleasure and love.

⁴³ They therefore should have said: Man, do you see, you poor condemned creature, you should have delight in God’s law, and you have no pleasure in it; hence show some delight and love, or you are God’s enemy and the devil’s friend. Thus the people would have bravely forsaken their own presumption and come to a knowledge of themselves and would have said: O God, now I am condemned. Yes, this is right. Here every one might soon know and conclude, that we all belong to satan, as long as we find within us displeasure in the law of God. Therefore, boldly cast away all works from you, then you will find delight in and love for God’s law in your heart. I experience indeed that God’s law is holy, right and good, but it is my death. And if it could be, I would prefer that it did not exist. And thus all people are disposed in their hearts, as St. Paul very beautifully writes in the seventh chapter of Romans.

⁴⁴ Had we now remained in this condemnation, we would have had to perish forever. Therefore another part is added, the Gospel, which speaks of consolation and teaches salvation, and whence we are to obtain it, so that the law may be satisfied. Now when I see by the law that I am condemned, lying even among murderers, half dead, the devil has stolen my soul and taken it captive in Adam and Eve, with all faith and righteousness, and has left nothing except my bodily life which will soon be extinguished; now here come the Levite and the priest, who render human satisfaction and teach this and that; but it does no good, they pass by.

⁴⁵ However when the Samaritan comes, he helps, that is, when Christ comes and offers us his mercy, and says: Behold, you are indebted to love God with all your heart, but you have not done it; now

believe in me, I will give you my sufferings: this will help me. Here he lifts me on his beast, that is, on himself, and takes me to the inn, that is, into the Christian Church. After this he comes and pours into me his grace, which is the oil, so that I feel I am lying on his shoulders, this gives me a very joyful conscience; moreover he pours into me wine, which is to devour and drown the old Adam. But even then I am not perfectly well. Health has indeed been poured into me and there is a turn for the better, but nevertheless I am not perfectly restored to health. Meantime Christ serves and purifies me by the grace he pours into me, so that day by day I become purer, chaster, milder, gentler and more believing until I die, when I shall be entirely perfect.

⁴⁶ Thus when we now come before God the Father and are asked: whether we have also believed and loved God, and have wholly fulfilled the law; then the Samaritan will step forth, Christ the Lord, who carries us lying on his beast, and say; Alas, Father! although they have not wholly fulfilled thy law, yet I have done so, let this be to their benefit because they believe in me. Thus all saints must do, however holy and pious they may be, they must lay on Christ's shoulders. If even the most holy people, as priests and Levites, could not satisfy the law, how shall we undertake to do so with our reigned works, bald pates and caps? O our wretched and corrupt nature! Let this be sufficient for the present, and let us call on God for grace.

History

The Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise (1463-1525), requested that Martin Luther write a collection of sermons for each Sunday of the year for the benefit of ministers and the common people—those that have the Spirit—to exhort them in sound doctrine but also to convict the gainsayers who oppose the Word and true faith.

This sermon originates from what is commonly called Luther's *Church Postil* collection. He wrote most of the sermons between 1521 and 1527, then supervised editorial assistance with Stephan Roth (1492-1546) until 1535 and Caspar Creuziger (1504-1548) until 1544. During that entire period over seventy-five editions of the collection were published. Many more editions were published after Luther's death in 1546. This sermon can be found in the Erlangen edition 14, 1; Walch edition 11, 2062; St. Louis edition 11, 1536. It was translated into English by John Humberger (1840-1906) and edited by John Nicholas Lenker (1858-1929) and published in 1905. Except for his catechisms, Luther's postils were his most influential writings for believers. |

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