

Love Your Neighbor

First Series – Sermon Ten

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I find it interesting that loving our neighbor is a reflection of the Sermon, *The Higher Faith*. The way to come to know the Father Himself is to understand what He thinks and feels towards His neighbors and know His Love for them all!

Pulling on this thread of Divine Love unravels all our selfishness and self-seeking. Interestingly, as I have come to know My Father a little, it has revealed my lifelong tendency to fashion my view of God after myself. When I am hurt and angry, I like the idea of a God of Justice. The one who rights the wrongs. When I think I know the “truth”, I love the God of dualism, the black-white, either-or kind of thing. What little change that has come into my life has come from abandoning these simple forms of idolatry. The Divine Heart of the Trinity finds its perfection in love’s expression and this Love is quite a different heartbeat than my own!

Outline

Love Fulfills the Law – We are not made for law, but love.

Purpose of Law – Law, is the tutor that leads us to Christ!

Good Samaritan – Keeping the law this way, not in the letter, but in the Spirit, with your actions.

Universal Neighborhood – Recognizing the universal neighborhood.

Loving God – Only when we love God with all our hearts can we love our neighbor.

The Maker's Design – Our actions are our response to our Maker's design, doing our part, participating in the creating of our true selves.

Loving Your Brother – A love that resembles the Divine's, rushing forward in utter self-giving to live in consideration of his brother.

One in God – We are seeing the human face as the face of the Divine!

Freedom! Prison of Self - This love of neighbor is the only door out of the prison of self! The prison that is ourselves.

Oneness – Oneness is not the loss of our consciousness or well-being, but the one that is far deeper and complete. God and our neighbor will return it to us as pure Life.

Matthew 22:37-39 GNT

Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

Romans 13:10 NASB

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

Love Fulfills the Law

Moses received these words from God, Leviticus 19:18. *"Do not take revenge on others or continue to hate them, but love your neighbors as you love yourself. I am the Lord."* Jesus had no thoughts of being original. He quoted the Old Testament often whenever it said what He wanted to say. When He mentions it, it becomes the Truth! The Word had become flesh. In the extraordinary meeting of extremes, mere words spoken by Him are now conveyed as Spirit and Life!

These same words are spoken twice by Paul and once by James. They are always saying the same thing. Love is the fulfillment of the law.

Is the reverse then also true? Is the fulfilling of the law love? Paul says, *"Love does no wrong to a neighbor: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."* Does it follow then, not to harm is love? Love fulfills the law. Does the law fulfill love? No, but in keeping the law, we will love our neighbor. The following of the law does not make him a lover, but he will keep it because he is a lover. No heart will be satisfied with rules rather than love. Law cannot fulfill love.

But, at least, the law can fulfill itself even though it never reaches to love, right? **I do not believe it! Without love, it's impossible to keep the law towards your neighbor. The code is infinite, touching the simplest details of our lives. The one who tries the hardest will be most aware of his inability to keep it. We were not created for law, but for love! Love restrains us because it is infinitely more than law. It is so much higher a motivation than rules; it is the creator of the rule's boundaries.** Love gave the "shall-nots" of the commandments. True, once given, they reveal themselves in the forms of justice — even the inferior and worldly ways of selfishness and self-protection. Love gave them. **If love was not already in us, what sense of justice would there be? Without love, we would be consumed with our desires and looking out only for ourselves!**

I am not saying we are always mindful of this love that produces justice, but I am saying that justice could never be born without love in our essential nature. For truth does not consist only in the pursuit of one's rights. Even now, corrupt and weak forms of love exist far beneath true justice, but they are not worth mentioning. They will one day evolve into their replacement as God's love and demand justice.

The Purpose of the Law

What is the value of the law? It is the tutor to lead us to Christ! The truth of our mind and heart as revealing our deepest character. The presence of God transforms our lives. He educates us, in part, through failure. He is showing us what we are capable of through the most significant efforts of our

will. This effort cannot even stop us from doing what is wrong towards our neighbor. Who of us, for instance, does not claim to love his neighbor but wishes to keep the law? Who could be confident that he never in thought, word, or deed, whether overt or subtle, would not misrepresent or harm his neighbor? **Who can judge his neighbor correctly, except he whose love refuses to judge him at all! That is why we are told to love and not judge. For love is the sole justice we are capable of, and that love perfected will contain all truth.**

Even more, to refuse to love our neighbor is to do him great harm. But concerning this, to be able to fulfill even the easiest law, I repeat. We must rise to a higher place, a place far above the rules to the position of Spirit and Life that created it. Therefore, to keep the law concerning our neighbor, we must love him. Man was created for grace, not law. We were made on too grand a scale altogether to have any complete relationship with mere justice. **Justice is but a theory, an ideal, which can never be realized. The law comes to cause us to long for grace. Grace for the divine Life, which bears love for all, for God is Love!**

Good Samaritan

What Jesus meant by loving our neighbor is not the fulfilling of the law concerning him. Instead, it is the condition of the heart which results in its fulfillment. This love is made plain in His parable of the Good Samaritan. "Who is my neighbor?" asks the lawyer wanting to escape the command. **But Jesus makes it clear that everyone whom he meets or to whom he could help was his neighbor. Therefore, all of humanity is His neighbor!**

In this parable, are any of the restraints of the law shown? No. Love is higher than the rules and makes the breaking of them impossible. So in this timeless story, love is expressed in its fullness. Love flows from active kindness. The Samaritan was seeing his neighbor as near and in need of compassion and tender loving care. The Samaritan's heart is the same as the Jewish heart. His heart reaches its' full expression in the Samaritan's hands. His ministering as a neighbor to the wounds of the Jew.

Jesus' parable is so direct and complete that I am almost ashamed to feel or talk about it further. Suppose that someone from the crowd had asked the same question we have been considering. Can I keep the law and not love my neighbor? **Would not Jesus have responded, "Keeping the law in this way, not in the letter, but in the Spirit, and with your actions you will soon find that you love your Samaritan more!"**

So, when thoughts and questions arise in your mind, God wants you to ask them. He will not correct us with heavenly wisdom spoken with disrespect. Jesus knows that His written words cannot answer every question. All the questions the willing person needs to ask we can ask with confidence that He will give a reply. When we are looking for more, that more will be there for us. In asking, we are open to more guidance from the Spirit, who is the Lord.

Universal Neighborhood

"But how?" asks the one who is willing to recognize the universal neighborhood but finds himself unable to fulfill the law's basic rules with the ones he loves most. "How am I to rise to this higher place, the heavenly domain of love?" The beginning is to set your heart to try and love your neighbor. He will find

that this love he seeks is no more within his reach than the law. He can't keep the commandment without first entering into the love of his neighbor, and he can't truly love his neighbor without rising still higher.

The whole operation of the universe rests upon this principle. The truth is, everything moves towards its center. We cannot love our neighbor by a simple exercise of will. It's only the one centered in God, in whom God is his origin, and by whom he exists, that can love. Who alone, as himself, can love his neighbor whose source is God as well? The mystery of individuality and the resulting relationships are as profound as the beginnings of humanity. The questions arising can only be solved by Him, who has known them from the start and has resolved them from their origin.

Loving God

In God alone, we can connect. In Him, the lines of life touch but don't cross. When the mind of Christ flows through us, our body is infused with life, lives in Christ. Then the love of our brothers and sisters is there as divine Life. From Christ through our neighbor comes the life that makes us a part of the body.

Is it possible to love our neighbor as ourselves? Jesus never makes wild and impossible demands. However, that is how many, unconsciously, interpret them to justify themselves that He did not mean what He said. We must come to understand His words before we can live them. No one can see anything clearly until he has lived it. However, he must see it first and know that he does not love his neighbor, but believe that it is possible. **He will see that, other than love, there is no other goal for human perfection. That is the only place the universe is heading, and the Father's will is propelling it there. Let us keep going, laboring towards this end, not fainting, at the thought that God's day is as a thousand years. His millennium just a day; for today, we have Him in us working, even now, towards this end.**

It is true that only when we love God with all our hearts can we love our neighbor. However, different processes are leading to the reaching of this goal. We can assist with this process by learning more. Let's suppose that Jesus both meant what He said, and that it is true. We can then proceed toward obeying in loving our neighbor. First, we begin thinking about them generally. Then, we try to feel love towards them. We find, at once, that they start sorting themselves. With some, we have no difficulty, for we love them already. They are not difficult because of what they are in themselves, but because they have, through kindness, shown themselves lovable. That is loving us already, with no effort on our part. He rightly understands that his feelings have nothing to do with loving his neighbor, so he is no closer to his desired end. He remembers the words of Jesus, *"If you love those who love you, what reward have you?"* He then moves on to the next group and tries to love them. This group is not his enemy; we have not come to them yet. This group is a dull and annoying people, the unlovables. What is he to do with them? With all of his efforts, he finds the goal is as far away as ever.

Why should I love my neighbor as myself? The answer is not, "Because the Lord says so." We only ask because that is what He has told us to do. We are looking for help in obeying. No one loves his neighbor just because the Lord says so. God's aims are natural, proper, and necessary. We need to participate in this understanding knowingly. However, obeying for any reason is always right.

But I can't know my neighbor's mind like I know my own. Be aware of his feelings as I do mine. His life is his own, not mine. I want to love him but don't see how? We are different and not close to one another.

Our bodies create distance, and my feelings isolate me from him. **Here, we finally come to the fatal mistake in our thinking. We suppose a duality that does not exist, individuality being judged as separation!**

On the contrary, it is the only hope and bond of love. The distinction is the essential ground of love. This difference is required for unity. This distinction is the very heart of our concern for relations with others. Wherever a distance exists between ourselves, others, or God, we assume separation - the appearance of some grand gulf! This separation seems reasonable and rational to us. However, no desire for a relationship comes because we are the same, but because of love.

But let us feel love just once, and the walls which appeared opposed to love will only be reasons for loving. Let us find someone who has fallen among thieves and be their neighbor—pouring oil and wine into his wounds and binding them and taking him to the end and paying for it. Let him do all this from duty, and there will still be a virtue in obeying the truth. Truth is still found in the weakest of motives, even if he receives only the lowest of insight than before. For he will go on his way loving his Samaritan neighbor a little more than his Jewish dignity can justify.

The Maker's Design

He will not question his reasons nor spend time supporting it either. If he is someone who would love his neighbor if he could, he would find a higher place, unsought for, in his actions. For we are a whole. As soon as we unite ourselves with obedience, the truth in us reveals itself, shining out. **Our actions are our response to our Maker's design. We are doing our part, participating in the creating our true selves, yielding to the All in all. We are flowing with the tides whose harmonious life is our being. Our future is, from this point forward, lying open. Once we begin to aspire to our Maker's design, we will soon find that our actions must precede our feelings. We must understand the foundation of our emotions.**

As it relates to men, the whole program of divine education has, for its end, loving our neighbor as ourselves. Man cannot learn this lesson on his own, by obligation, or a position acquired by argument; any more than we can find the difference between right and wrong without experience. Many of us do not see loving our neighbor as a central truth. So far from it, many who hope for an eternal blessing through Him do not consider it essential. They think, on the contrary, that the important thing is to take care of yourself, even when your neighbor is at risk of neglect. The understanding of this truth is evident only after years of learning and submission. The whole system of human society exists to teach truths by which to live, that is the Love of God and the Love of Man! I will not say more about the mysteries of parental relationships because it belongs to another lesson. Still, let me say, we come into this world as we do, looking up into a love caring for us.

Even though it is small and weak, we are seeing in the caregiver the best image we receive of the divine love from others. Family is our best opportunity to know this love. Parents and family, seen through the eyes of relationships, are the best means for learning God's love for us and our neighbor. (Footnote: God created human relationships after His own thoughts, and they are therefore the best teachers of love. A relationship of Love with God and neighbor is infinitely higher and a more reliable means of gaining this education. Relationships are the arrangements and lessons invented by the divine intellect.) Thousands more would find it easier to love God if they did not have such miserable shadows of Him in their

parents. Their parents being self-seeking, impulse-driven, purposeless, and faithless beings. Those who are all they have for fathers and mothers. Their children being no dearer to them than a litter is to an unthinking dog.

Loving Your Brother

What I want to show now is the second commandment, loving your brother. Why do I have blood brothers and sisters? Why do I see trust and helplessness in their infancy? Is it not to feel for him that which there are no words to express? **It is a love that mirrors the Divine's, rushing forward in utter self-giving to live in consideration of my brother.** This sibling is my first neighbor. We become close to each other, as close as we can, whether we want to or not. We love while our hearts are tender and can learn the meaning of brotherhood. Our love for each other is but the heartthrob of universal brotherhood. We being as brothers and sisters, born of the eternal Father's love and become a beautiful family.

Then my second neighbor appears, and who is he? It is anyone with whom I come in contact. It is anyone that I have any transactions with, any human dealings with at all. Not just the person I dine with, or the friend with whom I share my thoughts or the person with whom my compassion would lift from a depression. It includes all those who make my clothes, prints my books, drive my cab, or the one who begs me from the streets, to whom for brotherhood's sake I must not give. Yes, even the one who looks down on me.

With each of these, it is an opportunity to do my part as a neighbor. A neighbor in no other way than to speak genuinely, act honestly, do justly and think kindly. These acts will foster a love that is born of virtue. Right actions clear the springs of good feelings and let their waters rise and overflow. **We cannot choose our neighbor; we must take the neighbor God sends us.** In him, whoever he is, lies hidden or revealed as a beautiful brother. Your neighbor is just the one next to you at the moment, the one you are encountering.

One in God

In this way love will spread, spread with ever more sweeping and more powerful rhythms, until everyone will be lovely to us! Even our profoundly flawed brothers and sisters are still our God-born neighbors. Any rough-hewn excuse for humanity, over time, will move us to reverence and affection. This love is more challenging for some of us to learn than others. There are those whose first reaction is to push away and not to receive. But learn we will and learn we must. Even these must grow in grace until a presence unknown to them awakens them to deep feelings of affection. These feelings feel very much like pain because there is no other way to describe them; this one can only be given to God and wait.

When we see the human face as the face of the Divine, and the hands of our neighbor as the hands of our brother, then will we understand what Paul meant when he said, *"...for my people, my own flesh and blood! For their sake I could wish that I myself were under God's curse and separated from Christ."* Then we will no longer understand those who are so far from these feelings of love for their neighbor, as the essential truth of their being. They want and expect to be set free from this burden in the world to come. There they think, for God's glory, they can limit His inclusive nature to the narrow

limits of their heaven. Within the safety of their walls, they will regard hell from afar and say to each other, "**Listen to their cries, but do not weep, for they are our neighbors no more!**"

Paul would be heartbroken before the presence of God if he thought for a moment there was anyone beyond the reach of God's mercy. So, what will we say about our Brother Jesus Christ, who loved his brothers, upholding them with His love? Who, for whom there was yet a dim hope in the ages to come that He might be able to help them? He would arise from the company of the blessed and go down into the dismal place of despair; to sit with the only, the last of the unredeemed. The last of Judas's race and for them see Himself, more blessed in the pains of hell than in the glories of heaven!

But this is crazy talk. God is, and always will be, All in all. The Father of all our brothers and sisters! You will not, dear brother, be less glorious than we, taught of Christ and able to consider others. When you go into the wilderness to seek, you will not come home until you have found. Who in heaven, being like Jesus, learns that one of his companions from before was still trapped in darkness, would he not feel that he must get up and go? I'm speaking of one who has Christ's mind and the love of the Father in his heart! As awful as that may be but feels no other choice but to go down into the smoke and fire, traveling wherever he must to find his neighbor? Going down into hell because they, the religious, became so hard and heartless to the brothers and sisters You gave them. They cared not for your freedom, not knowing Your heart, not knowing Your love.

Freedom! Prison of Self

Just one more word. **This love of neighbor is the only door out of the prison of self!** We think our self-awareness is us, but our life consists in the breathing in of God, and the knowledge of the universe is His truth. Life is to have Him, know Him, and enjoy Him. Whereas, if we could but forget ourselves, ten times more would be our life in God and our neighbor. **The center of our life is in the Spirit of God, with friends, neighbors, and all our brothers as one! This is the broader world that this represents in which alone our soul can find room. It is in himself that he is imprisoned!**

If you don't feel it now, you will feel it one day. Feel it, as a living soul would feel death, imprisoned alive in a dead body. Our life is not in knowing that we live, but in loving all that lives. Everyone is created for the all. For God is the All. He is our Life! The primary joy of our life lies within the liberty of the All. Our delights, like those of Ideal Wisdom, are with the sons of men. Our health is in the body of which the Son is the head. The world of life is open to us, for we must live in it or die!

Oneness

Oneness is not the loss of our distinction or well-being but the gaining of a far deeper and complete one. God and our neighbor will return love to us as pure Life. No longer will we agonize over generating it in the light of our own darkness. We will know the glory of our being in the light of God and our brothers.

But we may have only begun to love our neighbor, with the hope of loving him more in the future. When, as if starting over, we receive another word from the Lord. One that seems harder than the first, although it is not, for only with obeying the former, loving our neighbor, can it be attained. If we have

not learned to love our neighbor as ourselves, our hearts will sink within us at the words, *"I say to you, love your enemies."*

CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES

Love Fulfills the Law

I am certain that it is impossible to keep the law towards one's neighbor except one loves him. The law itself is infinite, reaching to such delicacies of action, that the man who tries most will be the man most aware of defeat. We are not made for law, but for love. Love is law, because it is infinitely more than law. It is of an altogether higher region than law—is, in fact, the creator of law.

Were there no love in us, what sense of justice could we have? Would not each be filled with the sense of his own wants, and be for ever tearing to himself?

The Purpose of Law

Of what use then is the law? To lead us to Christ, the Truth,—to waken in our minds a sense of what our deepest nature, the presence, namely, of God in us, requires of us,—to let us know, in part by failure, that the purest effort of will of which we are capable cannot lift us up even to the abstaining from wrong to our neighbor.

What man can judge his neighbor aright save him whose love makes him refuse to judge him? Therefore are we told to love, and not judge. It is the sole justice of which we are capable, and that perfected will comprise all justice.

It is but an abstract idea which, in reality, will not be abstracted. The law comes to make us long for the needful grace,—that is, for the divine condition, in which love is all, for God is Love.

Good Samaritan

And the Lord taught him that every one to whom he could be or for whom he could do anything was his neighbor, therefore, that each of the race, as he comes within the touch of one tentacle of our nature, is our neighbor.

Keep thou the law thus, not in the letter, but in the spirit, that is, in the truth of action, and thou wilt soon find, O Jew, that thou lovest thy Samaritan?

Universal Neighborhood

The whole system of the universe works upon this law—the driving of things upward towards the center. The man who will love his neighbor can do so by no immediately operative exercise of the will. It is the man fulfilled of God from whom he came and by whom he is, who alone can as himself love his neighbor who came from God too and is by God too.

Loving God

A man who knows that he does not yet love his neighbor as himself may believe in such a condition, may even see that there is no other goal of human perfection, nothing else to which the universe is speeding, propelled by the Father's will.

But while it is true that only when a man loves God with all his heart, will he love his neighbor as himself.

Now, here lies the mistake at last. While the thinker supposes a duality in himself which does not exist, he falsely judges the individuality a separation.

But let a man once love, and all those difficulties which appeared opposed to love, will just be so many arguments for loving.

The Maker's Design

For his action is his response to his maker's design, his individual part in the creation of himself, his yielding to the All in all. For man is a whole; and so soon as he unites himself by obedient action, the truth that is in him makes itself known to him, shining from the new whole. For his action is his response to his maker's design, his individual part in the creation of himself, his yielding to the All in all.

The whole system of divine education as regards the relation of man and man, has for its end that a man should love his neighbor as himself. It is not a lesson that he can learn by itself, or a duty the obligation of which can be shown by argument, any more than the difference between right and wrong can be defined in other terms than their own.

Loving Your Brother

A love namely, in which the divine self rushes forth in utter self-forgetfulness to live in the contemplation of the brother.

A man must not choose his neighbor; he must take the neighbor that God sends him.

One in God

Thus will love spread and spread in wider and stronger pulses till the whole human race will be to the man sacredly lovely. Drink-debased, vice-defeatured, pride-puffed, wealth-bollen, vanity-smearred, they will yet be brothers, yet be sisters, yet be God-born neighbors. Any rough-hewn semblance of humanity will at length be enough to move the man to reverence and affection.

When once to a man the human face is the human face divine.

Hark! Listen to their moans. But do not weep, for they are our neighbors no more.

Freedom! Prison of Self

This love of our neighbor is the only door out of the dungeon of self.

The region of man's life is a spiritual region. God, his friends, his neighbors, his brothers all, is the wide world in which alone his spirit can find room. Himself is his dungeon.

Oneness

Nor thus shall a man lose the consciousness of well-being. Far deeper and more complete, God and his neighbor will flash it back upon him— pure as life. No more will he agonize "with sick assay" to generate it in the light of his own decadence. For he shall know the glory of his own being in the light of God and of his brother.