

Community Church of Issaquah
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It's Hard: Loving God and Loving Others
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When Easter is past, there is a question that we should be asking. What is the legacy of Christ? What did he accomplish? How is he remembered by those who follow him? Today, we gather not only to worship but to be reminded of the very heart of our faith, the foundation upon which everything else stands. If we were to strip away every tradition, every structure, every debate, and every difference, what remains at the core of Christianity and the life of Jesus Christ is beautifully simple, yet deeply profound: love.

When Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest, He did not hesitate. He said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” And then He added, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments, He said, hang all the Law and the Prophets. In other words, everything God has ever asked of us can be summarized in these two divine instructions: love God fully, and love people genuinely. Today, let us reflect on what it truly means to live out these commandments - not just in word, but in action, not just on Sundays, but every day of our lives.

Loving God with All Your Heart

To love God with all your heart is to place Him at the center of your life. It means that your relationship with Him is not casual or occasional - it is intimate, intentional, and

constant. Loving God begins with recognizing who He is: our Creator, our Sustainer, our Redeemer. He is not distant or indifferent; He is a loving Father who desires a relationship with His children. But what does it really look like to love God? It means we trust Him even when life doesn't make sense. It means we worship Him not only when things are going well, but also amid struggles. It means we seek Him in prayer, listen to His Word, and obey His voice - even when obedience is difficult.

Loving God with all your heart also means surrender. We live in a world that teaches us to hold tightly to control - to follow our own desires, to chase our own ambitions. But loving God calls us to lay everything at His feet - our plans, our fears, our hopes, and even our disappointments. When we love God deeply, it transforms us from the inside out. Our priorities shift. Our desires change. Our perspective becomes aligned with His will.

Loving God with All Your Soul and Mind

Jesus didn't stop at the heart. He said we are to love God with all our soul and all our mind. This means our devotion to God is not just emotional - it is complete. Loving God with your soul means your entire being belongs to Him. Your identity is rooted not in what the world says about you, but in who God says you are. You are His creation, His beloved, His redeemed child. Loving God with your mind means we think about Him, we learn about Him, and we allow His truth to shape our thoughts. In a world filled with noise, confusion, and distraction, we are called to fix our minds on what is true, noble, and pure. This kind of love is active. It grows through time spent in Scripture,

through reflection, through prayer, and through a willingness to learn and grow in faith. It means we don't just believe in God - we pursue Him.

Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself

After declaring the first commandment, Jesus immediately connected it to the second: "Love your neighbor as yourself." These two cannot be separated. Our love for God is reflected in how we treat others. But loving others is not always easy. It's easy to love those who are kind to us, who agree with us, who make us feel comfortable. But Jesus calls us to something much greater. He calls us to love even those who are difficult, those who hurt us, those who are different from us.

Why? Because every person is made in the image of God. When we look at others through God's eyes, we begin to see beyond their flaws and recognize their value. We begin to understand that love is not just a feeling, it is a choice. It is an action. Loving your neighbor means showing kindness when it's inconvenient. It means offering forgiveness when it's undeserved. It means extending grace when it's difficult. It means being patient with those who test your patience. It means listening when you would rather speak. It means helping when you would rather walk away.

The Challenge of True Love

Let us be honest, this kind of love is not easy. It goes against our natural instincts. Our human nature leans toward selfishness, pride, and judgment. But God calls us to something higher. The love Jesus speaks of is sacrificial love. It is the kind of love He demonstrated on the cross - a

love that gives without expecting anything in return, a love that forgives without limits, a love that endures even in suffering. We cannot produce this kind of love on our own. It comes from God. The more we draw closer to Him, the more His love flows through us. When we experience God's love deeply, it changes how we love others.

Love in Action

So how do we live this out in our daily lives? Loving God and loving others is not just a theological idea - it is a daily practice. It shows up in small, ordinary moments:

- In the way you speak to your family
- In how you treat strangers
- In your willingness to serve others
- In your patience during difficult conversations
- In your generosity toward those in need

Love is not always grand or dramatic. Often, it is quiet and consistent.

- It is choosing compassion over criticism.
- It is choosing understanding over judgment.
- It is choosing forgiveness over resentment.

Imagine what the world would look like if we truly lived this way.

Barriers to Love

There are many things that can stand in the way of love - pride, anger, fear, and past wounds. Sometimes we hold onto hurt, and it hardens our hearts. Sometimes we build walls to protect ourselves, but those same walls prevent us from loving others fully. But God calls us to let go. He calls us to forgive - not because others deserve it, but because

we have been forgiven. He calls us to trust Him with our pain and allow Him to heal us so that we can love again.

The Power of Love

Love is powerful.

- It has the power to heal broken relationships.
- It has the power to bring peace where there is conflict.
- It has the power to transform lives.

When we love as God calls us to love, we become a reflection of Him in the world. We become a light in the darkness. People may not always listen to our words, but they will notice our love.

A Call to Commitment

Today, I invite you to examine your heart. Are you loving God with all that you are? Are you loving others as yourself? Where have you fallen short if you have? Where in your life is God calling you to grow? This is not about guilt - it is about transformation. God does not expect perfection, but He does call for commitment.

- A commitment to seek Him daily.
- A commitment to love others intentionally.
- A commitment to grow in grace.

Encouragement

Remember this: we love because God first loved us. His love is not based on our performance. It is not earned. It is freely given. And when we receive that love, we are called to share it. Let your life be a testimony of God's love. Love Him with your whole heart. Love others with genuine

compassion. And in doing so, you will fulfill the greatest calling of all.

Prayer

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for Your unfailing love. Teach us to love You with all our heart, soul, and mind. Help us to reflect Your love in the way we treat others. Soften our hearts where they have become hardened. Give us the strength to forgive, the courage to serve, and the grace to love even when it is difficult. May our lives bring glory to You.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

May we all go forth today filled with love - loving God deeply and loving others faithfully.