

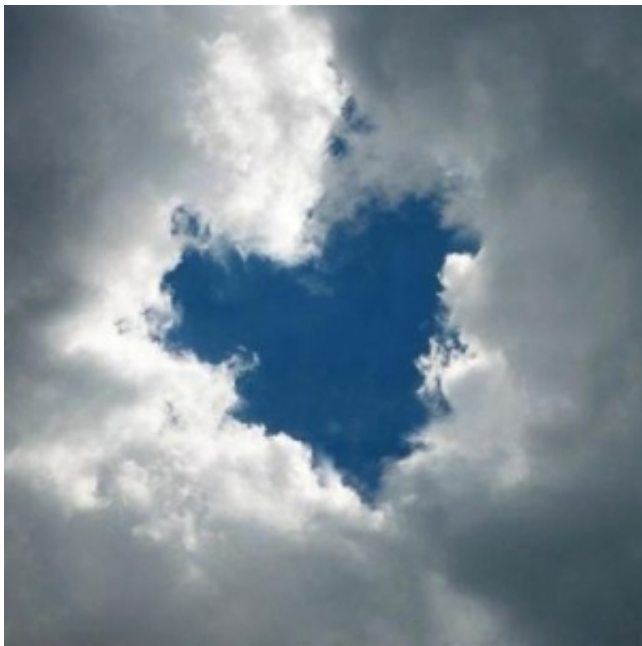


Watering Seeds of Virtue

Luke 6:31-36

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

“As you would have men do to you, do also to them. If you love those who love you, what good is that? Love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return and then you will be called the children of the Highest. Be merciful just as your Father in Heaven is merciful.”



Jesus calls us to live up to our divine potential. The whole of what that means is summed up here. Love everyone and do good for them, even our enemies and give without expecting anything in return. Then we will begin to resemble our Father in heaven and the world will know that we are His children.

To emphasize this I would like to quote a little further from the teachings of our Lord and then make a suggestion.

This from Matthew, chapter 5 verses 38-42: “You have heard that they were told, ‘An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.’ But what I tell you is this: Do not resist those who wrong you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn and offer him the other also. If anyone wants to sue you and takes your shirt, let him have your cloak as well. If someone in authority presses you into service for one mile go with him two. Give to anyone who asks, and do not turn your back on anyone who wants to borrow.”

And in case any should ask him what he meant by “giving” Jesus continues in verses 43-48. “You have heard that they were told, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But what I tell you is this: Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only then can you be children of your heavenly Father, who causes the sun to shine on good and bad alike, and sends rain on the innocent and the wicked. If you love only



those who love you, what reward can you expect? Even the tax collectors do as much as that. If you greet only your brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the heathen do as much. There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds."

Divine compassion is unlimited and shows no discrimination. A spiritual teacher once wrote, "If you do not show compassion toward your enemy then toward whom can you practice it?" The meaning here is more than one might think at first. "Practice" in this context means to nurture and increase one's capacity for compassion by expanding the ability through deeper and deeper application. Thank God, then, for the "enemy" because he offers the chance for an increase in virtue.

Now let me offer a suggestion that might be different to you. What do we have to give that has the potential of making the greatest contribution? We usually think in terms of money. One reason we say God gives to us is so that we can share what we have with those in need. You might say time, or belongings, or use many other examples, but there is something else we have to offer and that is our spiritual practice.

If we have a deep, rich spiritual practice the reservoirs of our hearts will be filled to overflowing with compassion and love. We will store up patience to share when it is most needed and tolerance for the despised and rejected when we encounter them. The stronger our daily practice, the more we have to give. Five of the virgins had enough oil, five had not enough. If we practice our spiritual discipline daily with commitment and perseverance we will always have enough and more to spare in time of need. If our daily practice is weak, then we will not have enough even for ourselves. A healthy spiritual practice is a gift we can give. Every effort we make to increase in virtue, enlightenment and deification touches everyone and everything. The fruit of our spiritual labors will help bring salvation to all.

St. Paul said to pray without ceasing. The scriptures speak in various places of meditating on the law of the Lord day and night. The Holy Ascetics speak of staying awake always and never falling asleep which does not mean never going to bed, but developing spiritually to the end that even when the eyes are closed the heart is still beating with spiritual awareness and the mind is focused and concentrated even when asleep on the "things that are above."

This takes practice. This takes perseverance and courage and devotion. If we are to develop the same unlimited compassion as our heavenly Father shows us, then we must do all we can to nurture and develop the seeds of goodness and virtue in us. Seeing our determination, the Lord will add to us blessing after blessing to share. "To him who has more will be given."

Living the spiritual life with intensity is possible in every situation, whether married or unmarried, in or out of a monastery, in any job or life situation imaginable. All it takes is desire and training. If we have the desire, the Lord will move heaven and earth to teach us what we need to know.

Source: [St. Mary Orthodox Church of Cambridge, MA](#)