

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 22:35-46

Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions. (KJV)

Complete love for the Lord God with all the heart, mind and soul is the expectation set forth in the current Gospel. Believers are reminded of this great commandment each year on the Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

Christians benefit by continually assessing their love for the Lord. If growth in Jesus Christ is to occur, believers are to consistently take steps during earthly life to increase their love for the Lord until it is complete.

Maintaining complete love for the Lord in the heart, mind and soul requires conscious commitment. Believers need to be vigilant to achieve complete love for the Lord. Weakened love for the Lord can occur in subtle ways unintentionally.

Peril to the believer's heart, mind and soul always exists in the world. Threats to the heart, mind and soul are often disguised and not readily recognized. Being completely loving of the Lord requires vigilance and keenness of mind.

Consistent nourishment from the Lord and clinging to the Lord keeps the believer firmly united and protected. Prayer and fasting and the Divine services of the Church strengthen the believer in the daily battle to fully love the Lord.

The world is full of deception, temptations and perilous attractions that will ruin maintaining the pure life in Jesus Christ. The believer is challenged to always be careful.

The current Gospel also describes the importance of showing love for one's neighbor in the same way one loves the self. God's help is absolutely needed to ensure love for one's neighbor occurs.

When love for God fills the heart, mind and soul, the believer realizes the value of love for one's neighbor. Love for God and love for neighbor are inseparable for the resolute Christian.

Being a resolute Christian takes work. Prayer, fasting and attending the Divine services is work. Honoring and adhering to Jesus Christ's teachings and expectations requires serious effort.

To experience growth in Jesus Christ involves enduring effort. A believer can live many, many years from the time of baptism until departure from this life.

Believers have extensive challenges as life progresses

Looking deep within the self enables believers to assess and measure the degree of love for the Lord in the heart, mind and soul. Being honest with the self will reveal if the believer loves his or her neighbor as much as loving the self.

The Kingdom of God and eternal life are the primary goals for believers established at baptism. Daily thoughts and actions are to be directed toward seeking God's Kingdom and eternal life.

Assessing life each day determines if the believer is true to Jesus Christ's teachings. When a believer realizes love for God is not complete and love for neighbor is less than it should be, repentance and changes are required.

Each person decides deep within the heart, mind and soul whether complete love for God is truly desired. Each person determines for the self the degree of interest in loving his or her neighbor.

Being a lukewarm Christian denies the self of the beauty, joy and fulness of living completely in Jesus Christ. Complete love for the Lord God and love for one's neighbor are completely free and voluntary decisions.

Great joy abounds in adhering to and following Jesus Christ's teachings. Loving God completely brings peace and joy to the heart, mind and soul. Loving one's neighbor results in healthy and joyous relationships.

Today the Church celebrates the Conception of St John the Baptist. John the Baptist was honored to Baptize the Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan. He was blessed to know and experience Jesus Christ in the flesh.

Believers today and every century until the Second Coming experience Jesus Christ. Believers "put on Christ" at Baptism. The Lord Jesus Christ is alive in the hearts, minds and souls of believers.

Believers experience Jesus Christ in the Holy Mysteries of the Church. In the Divine Liturgy, believers partake of the Precious Body and Blood of Christ. On this Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Jesus Christ is in our midst.

Today is the day to love God completely with heart, mind and soul. Now is the time to love one's neighbor. Enter into the joy of the Lord through loving God and neighbor.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost. The Conception of the Glorious Prophet and Baptist John. September 23/October 6, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania.

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