

Inspirations ~ from the Gospels

Love your neighbor as yourself

16 Friday Mar 2012

POSTED BY TVARAJ IN CHRISTIANITY, FOOD FOR THOUGHT, GOSPEL FOR THE DAY, HUMANITARIANISM, POST A DAY 2012, RELIGION

≈ 14 COMMENTS

Tags

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Friday of the Third Week of Lent. The reading is from Gospel of Mark 12:28-34.

“One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, “Which is the first of all the commandments?”

Jesus replied, “The first is this: ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’

The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

The scribe said to him, “Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, ‘He is One and there is no other than he.’

And ‘to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself’ is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”¹⁴

And when Jesus saw that [he] answered with understanding, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to ask him any more questions”

All the established religions of the world concur in one axiom, namely, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

In Hinduism

The Hindus, followers of the oldest of the religions now being practiced, believe that one's own Self or Soul is really identical with the Self or Soul of all other creatures. Hence one who injures another injures oneself. In the Hindu Vedas, "Love your neighbor as yourself" is an inherent precept of unity with the absolute self, 'That art thou' (tat tvam asi). So, it follows that because one loves oneself, one is bound to love one's neighbor, who is not different from oneself"

"This is the sum of duty; do naught onto others what you would not have them do unto you." (Mahabharata 5,1517)

"One should not behave towards others in a way which is disagreeable to oneself. This is the essence of morality. All other activities are due to selfish desire." (Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva 113.8)

In Judaism

For the devout Jew all the commandments were to be kept with equal care, but there is evidence of preoccupation in Jewish sources with the question put to Jesus.

In Leviticus 19:15-18, we read:

15 *You shall not act dishonestly in rendering judgment. Show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty, but judge your neighbor justly.*

16 *You shall not go about spreading slander among your people; nor shall you stand by idly when your neighbor's life is at stake. I am the LORD.*

17 *You shall not hate any of your kindred in your heart. Reprove your neighbor openly so that you do not incur sin because of that person.*

18 *Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your own people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.*

It is a *mitzvah* (commandment) for every human to love each and everyone from Israel as he loves his own body (self). As it is written, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself", therefore one must sing his neighbour's praises, and show concern for his financial well-being, as he would for his own well-being and as he would for his own honor. Anyone who aggrandizes himself at the expense of another person has no portion in the world to come.

In the first century BC, Hillel (later known as Hillel the Elder) migrated to the Land of Israel from his birth place Babylonia, to study Torah. He worked as a woodcutter, and eventually became the most influential force in Jewish life. Hillel is said to have lived in great poverty. He was known for his humanitarianism. One of his most famous sayings, recorded in *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers, a tractate of the *Mishnah*), is "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?"

The following source **Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a** is usually quoted to approve of Hillel's indulgence of the gentile and the wisdom of this approach.

Shammai was Hillel the Elder's friendly adversary. Shammai was a native of the Land of Israel. Little is known about him, except that he was a builder, known for the strictness of his views. He was reputed to be dour, quick-tempered and impatient.

One day a gentile came to Shammai and said to him: "Convert me (to Judaism) on the condition that

you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot.”

Irked by the request of the gentile, Shammai pushed him aside with the measuring stick he was holding.

A few days later this same gentile went to Hillel, and Hillel converted him, saying: *“That which is despicable to you, do not do to your fellow, this is the whole Torah, and the rest is commentary, go and learn it.”*

Let us take Hillel’s words seriously and try to understand what he means.

In Zoroastrianism

That nature is only good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self. (Dadistan-i-Dinik)

“Whatever is disagreeable to yourself do not do unto others.” (Shayast-na-Shayast 13:29)

In Jainism

“A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated.” (Sutrakritanga 1.11.33)

“One should treat all beings as he himself would be treated.” (Agamas Sutrakritanga 1.10.13)

In Taoism

Regard your Neighbour’s gain as your own gain and your neighbour’s loss as your own loss. (T’ai Shang Kan Ying P’ien)

In Buddhism

“...a state that is not pleasing or delightful to me, how could I inflict that upon another?” (Samyutta Nikaya v. 353)

“Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.” (Udana-Varga 5:18)

In Confucianism

“Do not do to others what you would not like yourself. Then there will be no resentment against you, either in the family or in the state.” (Analects 12:2)

“Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence.” (Mencius VII.A.4)

Tsekung asked, *“Is there one word that can serve as a principle of conduct for life?”* Confucius replied, *“It is the word shu—reciprocity: Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.”* (Analects 15.23)

In Islam

“No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.” (#13 of An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadiths)

I am reproducing here a part of the article *“Love thy neighbour’ in Islam”* written for the January 2008 issue of the London-based Faith Magazine. cf. <http://www.faith.org.uk> (See Related Articles at the bottom for the link to the full article).

- Another point needs to be made. Whereas Christian doctrine prescribes loving thy neighbour like thyself, Muslim doctrine prescribes loving for one’s brother (an yuhibba li-akhî-hi) what one loves for oneself. Here, Islam’s wording of the golden rule is not dictated by any of Arabic’s linguistic or syntactical rules but is instead intentional. It is not love thy neighbour, but love for thy neighbour [. . .].” The object of man’s love is again beyond mankind because it is in God. As the

eminent medieval theologian al-Ghazâlî (d. 505/1111) wrote, only God is the One who deserves love; man's love for himself leads directly to God since every man owes his existence to God.

- But who is the one for whom we must love that which we love for ourselves? Another important collector of canonical sayings and deeds by and about the Prophet, al-Tirmidhî (d. 278/899), said that "if you love for those you love what you love for yourself, you are a Muslim." One's brother is also Muslim and, not unlike neotestamentary writings, brotherhood is first of all linked to confession, this according to the writings of the Tradition. For many, the Muslim's brother is the Muslim, the believer's brother is the believer, everyone is a brother in God's religion and in His Book, that is to say in the pact with the Messenger, and even a slave is a brother when he prays. The Qur'n itself says that "believers are naught else than brothers" (Qur'n, 49:10) and that "He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace" (Qur'n, 3:102-103).

In Sikhism

Treat others as thou wouldst be treated by thyself. (Adi Grandth)

In Bahá'í Faith

Desire not for anyone the things that ye would not desire for yourselves. (Gleanings 66)

Recently I read the following passage attributed to the American Shawnees Indians: "Do not kill or injure your neighbor, for it is not him that you injure, you injure yourself. But do good to him, therefore add to his days of happiness as you add to your own. Do not wrong or hate your neighbor, for it is not him that you wrong, you wrong yourself. But love him, for Moneto loves him also as he loves you."

If You Don't Love Your Neighbor



Hannah's Creek Revival » If You Don't Love Your Neighbor

There are many people
who will say they're Christians
and they live like Christians on the Sabbath day

But come Monday morning, til the coming Sunday
They will fight their neighbor all along the way

{chorus}

Oh you don't love God, if you don't love your neighbor
if you gossip about him, if you never have mercy
if he gets into trouble, and you don't try to help him
then you don't love your neighbor, and you don't love God

In the Holy Bible, in the Book of Matthew
Read the 18th chapter in the 21st verse
Jesus plainly tells us that we must have mercy
There's a special warning in the 35th verse

Oh you don't love God, if you don't love your neighbor
if you gossip about him, if you never have mercy
if he gets into trouble, and you don't try to help him
then you don't love your neighbor, and you don't love God

There's a God almighty, and you've got to love him
if you want salvation and a home on high

If you say you love him while you hate your neighbor
then you don't have religion, you just told a lie

Oh you don't love God, if you don't love your neighbor
if you gossip about him, if you never have mercy
if he gets into trouble, and you don't try to help him
then you don't love your neighbor, and you don't love God

Oh you don't love God, if you don't love your neighbor
if you gossip about him, if you never have mercy
if he gets into trouble, and you don't try to help him
then you don't love your neighbor, and you don't love God

then you don't love your neighbor, and you don't love God

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thoughts on “Love your neighbor as yourself”

1. *said:bography*

March 16, 2012 at 1:53 am

Thank you Tvaraj for this neighbourly stroll.

I think you’ve got it right about my fellow Jews: “Love your neighbour – as long as he’s Jewish” (my quip). For most Jews this is an anti-Jewish statement. I argued elsewhere that the statement is right on the traditional Jewish button. If you’re interested, here you go;
<http://onedaringjew.wordpress.com/2011/11/21/love-your-neighbour-as-long-as-hes-jewish/>

REPLY

○ *said:tvaraj*

March 16, 2012 at 9:27 am

Raphael,

Thanks for visiting my blog “Inspirations” (<https://tvaraj2inspirations.wordpress.com>) and I dropped into yours to see who you are and what you are up to. I like the way you write and I

think I can glean and learn a lot from you about Jews and the wJewish ways. I am going to follow you from now on.

REPLY

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