

OPENING OUR HEARTS TOTALLY TO JESUS

In today's Gospel (Matt 22:34-40), Jesus tells us in the most concise way how to do the Father's will. Asked by a Pharisee "Which commandment in the law is the greatest? He said to him, 'You shall **love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.**'" Jesus is quoting the *Shema*, a most important prayer from the Torah (Deut 6:4-5). Mark's Gospel account adds, "Hear, O Israel ... You shall love the Lord with **all your strength**" (Mark 22:29-30).

Jesus is showing how he fulfills God's covenant with Israel. He invites us to give *everything* to Him, our **all** – heart, soul, mind, strength – not just lip-service to statutes etched on stone. Yes, giving our all is hard, but Jesus gave His for us: humbling Himself to become man; dying for our sins; and rising again to open up eternal life for each of us. Then, in sending the Holy Spirit, He gives us aid to join with Him in His New Covenant, just as the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold:

"I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:30-34).

"I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you so that you walk in my statutes..." (Ezek 36:26-27).

Our hearts, made for Christ, are restless until they rest in Him. ***Unleash the Gospel*** teaches: "Everyone yearns for authentic happiness. Everyone wants to be ... fulfilled as a human being, and to matter to others in some way. God himself has placed these desires in the human heart, and they can ultimately be fulfilled in Christ alone; anything less will fail to satisfy."

In many ways we fail to open our hearts and minds to Christ. We look to the secular culture for answers to our questions about meaning and truth, but the false answers there do not satisfy. We try to fill our hearts with material things, worldly honors, or some vague "niceness," but they cannot fulfil our deepest desires for the Good, aesthetic values, love, friendship or sacrifice. When things, 'busy-ness', and fear occupy our hearts and distract our minds, there can be no room left for Jesus.

Unleash the Gospel reminds us the Holy Spirit is here anew for us. Let's open our hearts for Jesus to occupy, and pray that with His Spirit in us, we will love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength.