

“And my commandment is this: that you love one another... as I have loved you!”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, a man was walking down the street and saw an angel walking towards him. The angel was carrying a torch in one hand and a bucket of water in the other.

“What are you going to do with that torch and that bucket of water?” asked the man.

The angel stopped abruptly and said to the man:

**“With the torch, I am going to burn down all the mansions of heaven.
With the bucket of water, I am going to put out all the fires of hell.
Then... we are going to see who REALLY loves God!”**

“What is the angel’s point?” you ask.
Well, I am glad you asked that question!

The angel’s point is that many people obey God’s commandments because they fear the punishment of hell **OR** because they fear the loss of heaven. (Repeat—slowly!)

They don’t obey for the reason Jesus gives in today’s Gospel, which I just read to you from St. John. They, plainly put, don’t obey him **out of love**-perfect love. They obey him **out of fear**-imperfect love. Jesus says, very clearly and very simply, in today’s Gospel:

“If you love me (not fear me), you will obey my commandments.”

All through his life, Jesus told us to love one another... as he has loved us.

An important observation if I may: it’s easy to love those who love us. **BUT**, & there’s that proverbial **‘BUT’** in life, what about those who don’t love us; those who we feel don’t deserve... our love?

An attendant, important observation if I may:

NOBODY needs love more than someone who doesn’t seem to deserve it!

If we wait for people to become lovable before we love them, we will wait forever! It is precisely in being loved that they can become lovable!

Beware: this does NOT apply to emotional love, like that of dating or courting love. This is about love of God/neighbor, not boyfriend/girlfriend.

Even though we want to follow Jesus’ command to love ‘all’ ...so often...

fear i.e., of hell or loss of heaven gets between us and what we know we ought to do.

So, let me conclude with telling you something else:

Fear paralyzes.... Love releases.
Fear imprisons.... Love frees.
Fear sours.... Love sweetens.
Fear withholds.... Love gives.
Fear wounds.... Love heals.
Fear avoids.... Love invites.

So-o, in conclusion: We ought not worry about the fires of hell or the mansions of heaven.

We ought to... let the love of Christ permeate our being, especially in Communion, and thereby...free ourselves to love as we ought... to love as he taught.

May our God, our Abba, who loves us beyond all measure, bless you...
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen