

Try saying these words aloud ...

"I am willing to be stirred into compassion and opened up to the power of love."

Allow a quiet space for the Lord to speak to you now.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

We bring to you our own sense of separation. We know that you can transform our illusion of being separate from you and from each other. Stir us and arouse our compassion. Alert us to offer what help we can.

We know that you can enable us to take a step forward and realise our innate generosity.

May a deep understanding of our interconnections always inspire our thoughts and actions. May we act knowing that everything we do, even the smallest service, can have infinite and powerful consequences. Help us to love you, by expanding our circle of love.

Amen



Loving the Lord - through loving others

'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'...

'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Matthew 25:34-36,40

*By thinking intensely of the good of others,
by devoting yourself to their service, you will purify your heart
by that work and through it you will arrive at the vision of Self which
penetrates all living things.*

Swami Vivekananda

Personal reflection on what it means

When you reflect on this passage from the Word, do you tend to consider what is required of you through these good actions in an outward and practical way for other people; or do you tend to consider what is required of you through these good actions on an inner level within your own spirit?

We are all unique. Do you have your own unique way of loving the Lord, through loving others?

Do you allow apathy or a sense of helplessness to destroy your good intentions and overwhelm that which could be done?

Can you really serve the risen Lord Jesus Christ by serving your friends and family, your community and the world with all your gifts and energy and strength?

Teaching focus

Compassion is at the core of the gospel message. This passage from Matthew's gospel is about charity and compassion. In Arcana Coelestia 4955 Swedenborg asks us not to restrict ourselves in our thinking, by only considering these good works in their outward form, but also to consider the deeper truth which lies concealed in the internal sense of the Word.

Each action that is described contains some deeper reality, which is of a Divine nature because it has its origin in the Lord.

In AC 4958 we can read what Swedenborg suggests is really meant by giving food to the hungry and these other acts of charity.

The Lord is present in those who hunger and thirst; He is present in that affection and longing for good and truth which we find in ourselves and others.



We are to recognise that part of ourselves and others which is aware of a lack of goodness and truth and which is longing for the bread of life, the water of life, wholeness and freedom. A caring response to this longing involves seeing what is needed, and how we can meet that need by giving what we have received from the Lord.

By loving the goodness and truth which we find in ourselves and in others [*charity towards the neighbour*] we love the Lord Himself, and He is with us.

All our loving is from the Lord, and all our loving flows back to the Lord.

How can we put this love into practice?

For people of many faiths, the ultimate aim is not ecstasy, power or

reward, but to be a humble selfless servant of Divine Love, dedicated to Divine Will and putting compassion into practice. It might be said that the proof of awakening to spirit is in works of profound loving service.



We love the Lord by bringing the whole of our human existence into living harmony with Divine Love.

This pathway asks us to place our whole being into service of the Divine plan. In practical terms this means firstly seeing the people we meet as potential angels who deserve the utmost tenderness, respect and compassion.

... when anyone looks with charity on someone in distress ... a feeling of compassion is aroused. And since the feeling is stirred by the Lord, it is an alerting by Him. Indeed when people who are perceptive have feelings of compassion they know that they are being alerted by the Lord to offer help.
AC 6737

Can you think of ways?

Staying aware of the depth of suffering in the world is an extremely demanding process. It is easy to ignore all except our own comforts and to feel separate from others. We have crucial work to do in detaching ourselves from that which considers itself alone, separate and uninvolved. We were created with a natural capacity for love. Our task is to discover, sustain, expand and develop this capacity until it becomes the ruling force of our whole being ... What opportunity for love is presenting itself to you at this time?

It may help to pause here and to take some time in the stillness.

We are reading about love. The moment we start to open our heart and feel an affection for what is good, the Lord is present with us. He is Love. To the extent that we can uncover and develop the sacred heart force of our true nature, the Divine is with us. And to the extent that the Divine is present, the Divine can speak to us.