
Evensong Love, with Heart, Soul, and Mind

A sermon by the Very Reverend Sam Candler
Atlanta, Georgia
A Sermon for Evensong
Proper 25A - in the Revised Common Lectionary

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

Can anyone here deliver me a perfect definition of music?

We are worshipping this afternoon in the beauty of holiness, using and enjoying the gift of music as part of that beauty. What a joy it is to worship while our choir sings, to let these rhythms and melodies and harmonies transport us, if only for a moment, to the kingdom of heaven.

I am so glad our Christianity has not led us away from the creativity of music. Some of our neighbor's religions have led them away. They interpreted scripture over the years in such a way as to deny the spirit of God working through our musicians.

Some religious communities have outlawed certain musical instruments because mention of those instruments could not be found in scripture. Can you imagine such a thing? Some churches still prohibit organs because those instruments are not in scripture. That's like outlawing cars or computers because they are not found in scripture.

Indeed, as some of you know, even harmony was prohibited in some early Christian churches. Only one line of melody was allowed, because only then was the word clearly understood. Our tradition has enjoyed the harmony of organs more than most.

Some churches even today don't like drums. They are afraid of rhythm, afraid of all that clatter and percussive noise.

Perhaps there is no perfect definition of music, but at the risk of over-simplification, at the risk of sounding like a sure simpleton in the midst of these extraordinary musicians today, I want to offer one. Music is loving God with melody, harmony, and rhythm.

The reason I put forth that definition is because it fits my sermon today. Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

That commandment has a lovely Trinitarian nature to it, even though we humans have struggled for much of our history with trying to explain what exactly is our heart, what exactly is our soul, what exactly is our mind.

I believe that our problem in loving God these days is not that we are opposed to loving. It is that we do not know our heart, or our soul, or our mind. What are those entities.

Well, the heart is that part of us that knows joy. It is our desire and our intention. It is our rhythm. The heart, and its steady

beat, gives us rhythm. To love God with our all our heart is to find joy in life.

The soul, ah the soul, is our spirit. It is that part of us that knows passion, which knows the ups and downs of life, the rising and falling of life. The soul is the melody of our lives. To love God with all our soul, is to find our passion in life.

And the mind -are you with me now? The mind is that part of us which thinks and assigns, which creates patterns and structures and harmonies in life. The mind is the harmony of our lives. To love God with all our mind is to know truth in a variety of sounds and to hear clarity in those sounds.

For the musician, the beauty of holiness is love woven through rhythm, melody, and harmony: heart, mind, and soul. The true musician has found a way to love God with all those beautiful gifts.

For the rest of us, our search continues. We are not against love, but we do not yet know how to find joy in life; we do not know how to love God with all our heart. Or we do not know how to find passion in life; we do not know how to love God with all our soul. Or we do not know how to find truth and clarity in our life; we do not know how to love God with all our mind.

Good love requires finding our heart, finding our soul, and finding our mind.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and prophets."

If we are looking for simplicity in our Christian theology, here it is, summed up in power and authority:
"Love God: love your neighbor."

It is simple, but it is not simple-minded. Find your heart, your soul, your mind. Find yourself! If I do not know myself well, if I am unable to know what is really good for me, then I cannot know what is truly good and valuable for my neighbor either. I cannot love my neighbor as myself, when I do not know how to love myself well.

Good love requires good thinking. It requires good heart and good soul. Love God; love your neighbor.

AMEN.

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