Jesus summed up how we are called to live in just two sentences. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and Love your neighbor as yourself. Sounds simple, but, of course, it isn't. Our sense of self-preservation seems to override our best instincts, especially when we feel insecure or threatened or too vulnerable. It's hard to think about and empathize with the needs of others if we are focused on ourselves and afraid for our losing something dear to us – whether a sense of security, or a sense of control, or even that old security blanket of being angry with someone or nursing an old hurt.

Loving God and loving others seems even more challenging when we begin to grasp the concept that our love or lack of love for others impacts the world's future. These commandments aren't just about loving for right now, but also about loving for the future. They aren't just about loving in Wilson, Newfane, or Lewiston, or Lockport, or Niagara Falls, but also about taking actions to show love to all humanity. The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead referred to this concept as "objective immortality."[[1]](#endnote-1) From my Christian theology, I prefer to think of it as our role in bringing about the Kingdom of God.

To do that, we are called to let go of our own self-interest and see the grandeur of the world that God made. That grandeur helps us hear the call – the call to move from individual interest into what is best for all the community, all the nation, and all the world that God created for all time.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Take Moses, for example. God had told him some time ago that he wouldn't live to enter the Promised Land. Still, he led the people faithfully, putting up with a lot of their whining and lack of faith. He was called to make it possible for them to enter the Promised Land and did so. When the people acted up and mistreated him, he must have been tempted to just walk out – after all, he was doing all this work and wasn't going to get to enjoy the benefits anyway. But he loved them, and he loved God, who had called Him to lead the people. So he put their needs and their children's needs ahead of what might have been easier for himself.

The apostle Paul talks about how he proclaimed the Gospel to those in Philippi and Thessalonica despite significant opposition. Paul didn't do that with a view only of himself, nor did he view it only in the short term. He loved the people so much that He wanted them to know about the greatest story ever told – Jesus—for themselves and for their children, despite the dangers to himself.

As we think about love within the context of these two examples, we realize that not only is everything NOT about us, but everything also is NOT about doing what is comfortable in the here and now. Love is about doing what is right for God and others in the long-term.

So, we may give up buying something on impulse to give that money to God's church instead. Or we may give up a moment of sitting in the chair watching TV to build a Habitat home for someone or to teach someone to read. We may take the extra time to recycle rather than throwing away because that means future generations can enjoy God's world. We may sense the call of God to embark on a new ministry that will bear fruit in the future, leaving behind an old ministry that is comfortable but may have run its course. We may give up the privilege of sitting around wishing that things were as they USED to be and instead focus our energy on co-creating with God the goodness that CAN NOW be. We may give up the fear of the future and its impact on us to hope for a future that benefits everyone – even if we know we won't live to see that future.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once said: "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree today." Apple trees bring food and shade, and beauty to many people for many years. To plant a tree amid chaos and doom is to let go of your own fears and choose to be hopeful. It is to let go of your own doubt and love others enough to do something that will help them even if you may not live to see it. It's to realize that the Kingdom of God is built by all of us lovingly planting seeds for a brighter future for those that come behind us.

I invite us to be willing to let go of ego, of wanting everything right now, and of fear and doubt. Be ready to put the call of God and the needs of others for all-time ahead of what may feel comfortable now.

Love God and your neighbor. In the midst of whatever fear tempts us to protect ourselves, keep planting.

1. # Religion Online: [Whiteheadian Thought as a Basis for a Philosophy of Religion](https://www.religion-online.org/book/whiteheadian-thought-as-a-basis-for-a-philosophy-of-religion-2/) by [Forrest Wood, Jr.](http://www.religion-online.org/author/forrest-wood-jr/) https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-8-a-whiteheadian-conception-of-immortality/

   [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. # Living Holy Adventure: The Adventurous Lectionary – October 29, 2017 – Pentecost 21, https://www.patheos.com/blogs/livingaholyadventure/2017/10/adventurous-lectionary-october-29-2017-pentecost-21/

   [↑](#endnote-ref-2)