

Sunday, September 14, 2025:

## Matthew 22:34–40 The Greatest Commandment

Matthew 22:34–40

**34**Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. **35**One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: **36**"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" **37**Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' **38**This is the first and greatest commandment. **39**And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' **40**All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

### Introduction:

It is Wednesday of Passion Week, which means in 2 days Jesus will be crucified. The strategy being used by the religious leaders is to turn the people against Jesus by positioning Him in an adversary role to Moses.

The religious Leaders over time had added to The Law. As one scholar says, the religious leaders 'built a fence around it' so that the people would not get close to The Law and potentially break it. There were so many laws it would be impossible to know them all. People would want to know the most important ones to be sure to keep. "What must I do to inherit eternal life? What must I do to inherit the Kingdom of God?"

### 1. The question:

**Matthew 22:36**"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

### 2. The reply:

**Matthew 22:37**Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' **38****This is the first and greatest commandment.**

Jesus has an immediate answer. He quotes Deuteronomy 6 which they would know.

**Deuteronomy 6: 4**Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **5**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

### 3. This is the Greatest Commandment:

- There is only **One God**.
- **Love the Lord** your God. Love here refers to the love of action of choice (choosing to love) rather than feeling or emotion. Not the love that you just feel, but the love that you choose to be faithful to. Choose to Love Him.
- **All your heart**: The word heart, in the Hebrew understanding, is the core of a person's identity. **Proverbs 4:23**: Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you

do flows from it. **Proverbs 23:7**: 'As a man thinks in his heart, so he is.' It is where your motivations come from.

- **All your soul:** **Matthew 26:38**, in the Garden, Jesus says "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." There IS an emotional love for God. **Matthew 26:38** Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."
- **All your mind:** Jesus adds Mind (mind not found in Deuteronomy). Jesus is saying your reason or thought processes are to be engaged in this dedication and love for God. Your thoughts, your intentions, your reasoning, your thinking should be rooted in your love for God. **Psalms 1:2** but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. **Colossians 3:2** Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.
- **All your strength:** Mark adds **Mark 12: 30** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' **31** The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Our Physical abilities. This is our energy, our actions. Where we spend our time and, get this, the effort that we put in. **Ecclesiastes 9:10** Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,

With these four references (heart, souls, mind, strength) Jesus covers our entire being. He specifically identifies each part, and each time he uses the same word – **ALL**.

#### **4. The Second Commandment:**

He goes on to tell the second commandment is to love others as ourselves.

**39** And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

What does that look like? **Luke 10:29-37: Parable of The Good Samaritan**. This is not a passive love; it is a love that goes out of its way. If you interact with someone, they are your neighbor. We have lost the value of human life, we see death around us and are unfazed, we scroll past because we are uncomfortable. We cannot afford to lose sight of this value. Every person, made in His image, is seen as infinitely valuable by God and we are called to love them.

**Matthew 5: 43** "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' **44** But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45** that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. **46** If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? **47** And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? **48** Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The Law exposes our failure to love God and our neighbor. God knew that, and He sent Jesus to be that final sacrifice for our sins– he died for us, and now we can reflect his love

to others. Perfection is still not ours, but grace for our sins is ours. Jesus showed us how to love others and then commanded us to love others.

Hebrews 9: **11** But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. **12** He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

Hebrews 10: **11** Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, **13** and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. **14** For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy....

**19** Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, **20** by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, **21** and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **22** let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

### **Closing:**

**Deuteronomy 6:4** Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **5** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. **6** These commandments that I give you today **are to be on your hearts**. **7** **Impress them on your children**. **Talk about them** when you **sit at home** and when you **walk along the road**, when you **lie down** and when you **get up**. **8** **Tie them as symbols** on your **hands** and bind them on your **foreheads**. **9** Write them on the **doorframes** of your houses and on your **gates**.

Show love. Love for others is a natural outflow of a love for God; you cannot genuinely love the Lord without genuinely loving those made in his image. God cares about people so much He died for them!

**John 13:35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

**1 John 4:19** We love because he first loved us.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What are some things (other than God) that you love? Why do you love them? Is it obvious to others that you love these things? How? Are there degrees of love for these things? Do you love them all equally or differently? How and why?

2. What does it mean to love God? Some people would say that Loving God means seeking our happiness in Him. Agree or disagree and why? What are some ways we can show our love to God and/or find our happiness in Him?

3. Do You love yourself? As much as you love others? Can you love others if you do not love yourself? What does it mean to you to reflect God's love to others? Is loving others loving as God loves? In what ways do your actions reveal the depth of your love for people?

4. What are three things you could do this week to show love to others outside of church? What are three things you could do at church to show love to others?

5. **BONUS QUESTION**: Can anyone really love like Jesus? Really? That is an extraordinarily high bar. Love your enemies? Walk the extra mile? Turn the other cheek? Can we bring perfect love into our imperfect lives? Do we try?