



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
The last few weeks we have been learning the characteristics of our Heavenly Father by studying the Ten Commandments. When Moses brought these down the mountain, he found the Israelites bowing down to idols they had made in his absence. Why in the world would they do this? As we remember the story, these people had been slaves in a foreign land for over 400 years. This number of years of captivity may be hard for us to understand.

Let's put this into perspective: They in were in captivity longer than we in the U.S. have been a country! Each Israelite had a master and therefore live in a controlled environment. When Moses, their leader, left to speak with God, he was gone long enough for insecurity and fear to take over. Needless to say, they reverted back to their old ways.

We to might slip backwards if we haven't heard the Word of God for a while. We can become comfortable in what we knew before we came to Jesus. But hearing the Word is not enough to keep us out of trouble. We must also live God's Word, in worship and fellowship, in song and praise, and by desiring a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father.

In the following scriptures Jesus ties all the Ten Commandments together.

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.”

Do we not also test God once in a while? When we are fearful and anxious? The next scripture is essentially the same as above but has a little different commentary at the end.

Mark 12:28-34

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked Him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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.”

³² “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but Him. ³³ To love Him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask Him any more questions.

Jesus was quoting the Shema from Deuteronomy 6 and the law from Leviticus 19 to speak to them with something familiar and true. These religious leaders of the time loved to debate and argue over God’s law, and especially the laws they had created. What is right and what is wrong really was not the thought behind these discussions; power, greed and status drove the conversations. Much like today, we may also fall into this trap. Chaos and confusion are the tools of Satan. He has filled the world with lies and deceit and many cannot find the real Truth.

This is where we as Christians come in. By turning to God first and immersing ourselves in Him, we become tellers of truth. When conversations of discontent and grumbling come our way, we are to remind fellow Christians and others that there is a light shining in the darkness. His name is Jesus, and He is the fullness of God’s love.

The last sentence in the last scripture says this, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” We are proof that the kingdom of God is here now! God lives in us, and where He lives is His kingdom.

Let’s love our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind and with all our strength as we love our neighbors as ourselves.

Your Brother in Christ,

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