

## CS – The Greatest Commandment

11/5/23

Matthew 22:34-40 | Mark 12:28-34

Sunday AM

Good AM. I hope you've had a blessed week! It's hard to believe that we're in week 9 of our Come/See series today. But I have to say that I'm so thankful to hear the many stories of how God is moving in our church through this study of the life/ministry of Jesus.

Today, we've arrived at the scene of what Jesus says is the most important commandment in the Bible – to love God w/ every fiber of our being and to love others the way we want God to love us.

When you hear the word love, what thoughts come to mind? This week, I read a humorous article sharing the idea of love from a group of preschoolers:

Caroline, age 5 – *My mom says love is finding a boy who is kind. So that's what I'll do. I'll find a boy who is kinda' tall and kinda handsome and love him.*

Mary, age 4 – *Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day.*

Bobby, age 5 – *Love is what's in the room w/ you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and just listen.*

Karl, age 5 – *Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other.*

I'm not so sure these preschoolers have grasped the idea of love quite yet – but the sad truth is there are many adults who struggle w/ love too – and yet ***loving and being loved is an absolute must in life.***

While money might make the world go round; it's love that makes the trip worthwhile. *Neil Oliver*

**DYK** – in the Greek language, there are (4) primary words used for love w/ only (2) found in the N.T.

***eros*** – refers to having a romantic, affectionate love

***storge*** – refers to having a love for family

***philio*** – refers to having a strong, friendship love

***agape*** – refers to having a sacrificial, selfless love

In Scripture, when the Bible speaks of love, it most often refers to ***agape*** love – which Paul reserved exclusively for describing the unconditional, selfless, and sacrificial love of God that God desires for us to have for Him and others. (which brings us to our text)

*Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him w/ a question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God w/ all your heart, w/ all your soul, and w/ all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The 2<sup>nd</sup> is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law /prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:34-40*

**In context**, Jesus is in Jerusalem a few days before His arrest and the cross. The religious leaders are once again asking trick questions to get Jesus to incriminate Himself. But as usual, ***Jesus answered their crooked questions w/ straight answers confounding them.***

In His response, Jesus restated the Sh'ma and tied it to the 10 Commandments. The Sh'ma was (1) of (2) prayers Moses commanded the Israelites to recite daily and the Pharisees held in a small box on their forehead known as a phylactery. (see pic)

*Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever. And you shall love the Lord your God w/ all your heart, w/ all your soul, and w/ all your might. These words I command you today shall be in your heart – and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit at home, when you walk along the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets b/w your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Dt. 6:4-9*

**But what did Jesus actually want to convey to us?**

In His response, Jesus summed up the Torah all in one to say that as we obey the 1<sup>st</sup> (4) commands that teach us how to love God – we're enabled to live the 2<sup>nd</sup> (6) commands to love people.

I Loving **GOD**

Loving God requires (2) essential ingredients:

A **ACCEPT** there's (1) God and We're Not Him

**New Flash** – You're not God? In fact, I want everyone to look at the person to on your right/left and say – *You are pretty awesome, but you're not God! And btw, neither am I! So, don't expect me to be perfect!*

This might seem like a simple truth, yet it's amazing how difficult it is for people to think humbly and rightly of themselves.

<sup>3</sup> *For by the grace given me I say to you: Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought but think of yourself w/ sober judgment, in accordance w/ the faith God has given to each of you. Romans 12:3*

Paul was saying that we all need to think accurately and appropriately of ourselves in light of who God is.

I'm reminded of the man w/ a high opinion of himself who stepped on a coin-operated scale that dispensed a card sharing his weight along w/ comments about his personality. After reading the card, he gave it to his wife, "Look at this!" She read, "*You're a dynamic, handsome, born leader who is admired by women everywhere.*" She replied, "*And I see it got your weight wrong too!*"

*If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Galatians 6:3*

**IOW** – at all times, we need to humbly and rightly know our place. Not thinking too highly or lowly – but rightly of ourselves in light of who God is.

I'm reminded of the true story of a U.S. co-ed visiting the Beethoven Museum in Germany where she became fascinated w/ the piano on which Beethoven had composed some of his greatest works. She asked the guard if she could play the piano – playing the opening of the Moonlight Sonata. As she was leaving she asked, "*Have all the great pianists who've come here played on this piano?*" He replied, "*Paderewski (the famed Polish pianist) was here a few years ago but he said **he wasn't worthy to touch it.***"

**Always Remember** – *the biggest difference b/w you and God is that God doesn't think He is you!*

## B ALIGN My Life/Will w/ His Life/Will

To love God w/ all of your *heart, mind, soul, and strength* is an invitation to worship God by rightly aligning your life under His will and ambition for your life. This requires consciously allowing Jesus to sit on the throne of your life so that He is allowed to call the shots and direct your steps and actions.

***This is both a once-for-all and min. by min. decision.***

It's a ***once-for-all decision*** in that each person must realize they're a sinner in need of a Savior, and in response to the unktion of the H.S., by faith, they **surrender** to Christ as their Savior.

It's a ***min. by min. decision***, in that, as we strive to seek 1<sup>st</sup> the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in a fallen world where trials/temptation abounds, we have to choose to **submit** to God's Word and to the leading of the H.S. as they both speak truth into our lives to direct our steps.

This is only possible when we enthrone Jesus as Savior and Lord by receiving Him as our Savior and aligning ourselves under Him thru the H.S. as our Lord.

This is what it means to love God w/ all of our *heart, mind, soul, and strength*. AND the direct result of this decision to love God ALWAYS results in the ambition to love others as God loves us.

*By this will all people know you love me and are my disciples – you love others as I've loved you. Jn 13:35*

## II Loving PEOPLE

**Truth** – the quality of every ***horizontal*** relationship, begins w/ our ***vertical*** connection w/ God. So, if I love God w/ all of my *heart, mind, soul, and strength* – I can't help but to love other people in the same manner as He loves me and as I want to be loved.

This is the heart of the 10 Commandments – if we get the 1<sup>st</sup> (4) right – which deals w/ our relationship w/ God, then we'll be enabled to get the 2<sup>nd</sup> (6) right – which deals w/ our interaction w/ people.

In Luke's version of the story, the Bible says that this expert in the Law asked a follow-up question that provoked Jesus to share the Good Samaritan Parable.

**In case you don't remember** – in the PGS, a man is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when he is robbed by a group of thieves. Then a priest and a Levite pass by w/out helping, until finally, an outcast Samaritan helps the man and carries him to a safe place where he ensures the man is taken care of by the innkeeper. Then, at the end of the parable, Jesus asked – which of these is a good neighbor who honors God?

Of course, the real question wasn't who was the good neighbor, BUT – ***what kind of neighbor are you?***

**In this parable**, Jesus reveals (5) types of neighbors in our world – which we're all capable of being at any point in time if we're not submitted to loving God first.

- **Robbers** (Thieves) Users, Abusers, and Accusers
- **Religious** (Priest) So heavenly there no earthly good
- **Rushed** (Levite) Too busy to be bothered
- **Reluctant** (Innkeeper) Indifferent/Unconcerned
- **Righteous** (Samaritan) Willing, Able, Concerned

**Don't miss the point** – God **NEVER** loves us to our detriment but **ALWAYS** to the truth.

**In the same way**, we're to love people to the truth and never to their detriment. This can only occur when we (1) *love God fully*; (2) *see ourselves rightly*; (3) *prioritize people over agendas*; and (4) *treat others the way God wants them and how we want to be treated*.

What does it mean to love your neighbor? It means to love others in the same manner Jesus loves you.

*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love doesn't know God, b/c God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live thru Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:7-11*