

“Love God, Love Others”

Matthew 22:35-40

Pastor Dan Erickson

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We start with a little quiz.

Tell me which company/organization is associated with the following slogans:

“Melts in your mouth, not in your hands” – M&M’s

“The breakfast of champions” – Wheaties

“Just do it” – Nike

“There are somethings money cannot buy, for everything else....” there’s MasterCard.

“Can you hear me now?” – Verizon

“Diamonds are forever” – DeBeers

“Where’s the beef?” – Wendy’s

“Save money, live better” – Walmart

“Love God, Love others, and make disciples” ---

Well, that last one is not universally known, but in this room, almost all of you recognize that phrase as the purpose statement of Chisholm Baptist Church. Love God, love others, make disciples. Folks, this month we are going to focus on that statement, what it means, and what the implications are for our congregation and for each of us as individuals.

Now I don’t know if you will hear anything earth shattering over the next few weeks, but my prayer is that we would all develop a clearer understanding of God’s purposes for our church and how each of us can have a part in fulfilling that purpose for the glory of God. Let’s pause and pray the Lord would help this to happen today.

This morning we focus on the first part of the statement, love God and love others. Throughout the Bible we learn this is our responsibility, but it is most clearly spelled out in **Matthew 22: 35,36 And one (of the Pharisees), a lawyer, asked (Jesus) a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”** The Pharisees are Jewish religious teachers who, for the most part, don’t like Jesus. They are jealous of Him. The Jews were able to identify 613 different commandments in the Old Testament. This man figures if Jesus labels one as the most important, His choice will likely be seen as taking the other 612 too lightly. Yet, Jesus gives this answer, **Matthew 22:37-40 And he said to him, “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. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets. That maybe sounds a bit familiar. As human being, our most important responsibility is to love God with our entire being, in every aspect of life. That is what heart, soul and mind is about. And then we are to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. Love God and love others. Jesus says that is a concise summary of the entire Old Testament law. It is folks, very simple. Just two commandments. But is it easy? No, not at all. In fact, there is only one person who succeeded in keeping these two commandments perfectly. That would be Jesus. Every moment He was on this earth, His love for God the Father and for other human beings was pure and perfect. That has not ever been true of anyone else.

Matthew 19, as well as Luke 18, tells the interesting story of a man often called the rich young ruler. Jesus reviews the 10 commandments for him. Do not murder, commit adultery, steal bear false witness. On the positive side, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself. In response, the fellow replies **Matthew 19:20 I have kept all these commandments since my youth.**

At this point, Jesus could have laughed and said, “Yah, right.” Instead, He chooses to show the man how foolish his boast is by telling him to sell all that he has and give it to the poor. He is unwilling to do that because he really does not love his neighbor as himself. Of course, as Jesus explains in Matthew 5, murder includes hating someone, and adultery involves lustful thoughts about someone who is not your spouse. This man had certainly broken those commandments, even though he felt sure he had been keeping all of them. Self-deception and probably self-worship could be added to the list of sins of which he was guilty. So, really the first thing the phrase “love others” should do is make us aware of our failure to do so, of our sin. Because I have not always loved God with all my being and have not always loved other people as much as I love myself, I need God to forgive me for these great offenses against Him and against other human being He has made in His image. The great new is, He graciously

offers full and free forgiveness. Because He perfectly loved God the Father and other people Jesus was able to offer a perfect sacrifice for my failure, for my sin.

In fact, as the perfect God/Man, He offered a sacrifice sufficient for the sins of the entire world including you. However, friends, if you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, if you are not trusting in Him as your Savior and Lord, the terrible truth is that you are still guilty. Your sins have not been forgiven. Your failure to love God and other people as you should means you stand before the Lord, condemned. You are in desperate need of the forgiveness and salvation only He can provide. If you have not experienced that, or not sure you have, we need to talk, as soon as possible. Your life, your eternal life, depends on whether you receive the forgiveness and salvation only Jesus Christ can give.

So, as the apostle Paul said, the Law, love God and love others, shows us our sin, reveals we are sinners (Romans 7:10) and leads us to faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:24). Once that happens, when we are Christians, believers in the Lord Jesus, the Law then guides as to how we are to live, love God and love others.

As Luther said, the Law first point us to Christ, so that we might live, and second, Christ then points us to the Law so we might know how to live. Yet, even as Christians, none of us are perfectly obeying the law. We are not loving God with our entire being or loving other people as we love ourselves. Listen to what John Kuyper Liberty writes: *We sin all the time as Christians. We are disrespectful to God. We fail to listen to Him as we should as He talks to us in the Bible. Do you give Him the proper respect in hearing His voice from His Word? We are lazy in how we talk to our good and loving Father in prayer. We give Him the cold shoulder when we do not consider His glory in our big decisions, or our small decisions. We disrespect Him when we pridefully think that we are the ones who made ourselves wealthy, or pulled ourselves up by our bootstraps on our own to afford our houses, or card, or to pile up money in our 401(k)s.*

And folks, that is just our lack of love for God. We are also failing to love other people as we should. If you don't think you are, you need to sit down and have a very honest chat with your spouse or best friend. I can pretty much guarantee they will

be able to point out some ways your love is not quite perfect. Yet, even with all our imperfection, our goal as a believer in Jesus Christ is to love God with our entire being and love other people as much as we love ourselves. None of us do this perfectly, but all of us should have this as our goal. As a church, our desire is to enable and equip you to better love God and love others. We also desire that what we do corporately, our life and ministry together as a church, should be rooted in and full of expressions of love for God and others.

So, let's focus on some practical aspects of love for God and others. First, our love for God flows from his love for us. It is a response to His love. **1 John 4:19 We love Him, because He first loved us.** We experience His love in a wide variety of ways through what is called common grace. Air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, family and friends to love...the list goes on and on. Yet, His love is most clearly and fully expressed through Jesus' death on the cross in our place. **1 John 4:10 This is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

So, "How do I grow in my love for God? How can my love for the Lord be deeper and more consistent?" Well, it is our gratitude for the grace we experience through Jesus that fuels our love for God. We grow in gratitude as we reflect and meditate on God's love for us, His love for you. Again, this is a love most clearly seen on the cross. **Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** And the assurance of this love is most beautifully spelled out in **Romans 8:38,39 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Friends, if we learn to delight in God's love for us, our love for Him will grow.

Second, our love for God is expressed through worship. Both on an individual and corporate level. Some of you remember this Ole and Lena joke. Lena asks, "Ole, why don't you ever tell me you love me anymore?" Ole responds, "Lena, I told you I loved you 32 years ago when we got married, and if I ever change my mind, I will let you know." Folks, expressing love for God is not something that is "one and done." It should be

part of our lives every day. A few weeks ago, we talked about how our prayers should be full of praise and adoration for the Lord. And whether it is singing hymns in the shower or writing poetry of praise there are many different ways to express your love for the Lord in private, individual worship. Yet, the Bible, especially in the book of Psalms makes a big deal of corporate worship. God's people coming together to express their love for the Lord through songs, scripture reading, prayer, testimony, and hearing the Word of God is a big part of what a church is about. That is why our gatherings on Sunday morning are so important. And that is why during that time we are very intentional about God-centered worship. We believe our worship times will help you grow in your love for God. We seek to do that by focusing not on our feelings, but on God's goodness and greatness, on His grace and glory. So, our songs, for example, are primarily expressing to God and declaring to each other our adoration and praise for who God is and for what He has done, is doing and will do. Because we want to grow in our love for God, we want to make worship of God a priority.

Third, we also express our love for God through obedience. Jesus said, **John 14:15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments.** Now, none of us keep those commandments perfectly. We talked about that earlier. Yet, if someone has no desire to obey God, he or she really doesn't have any love for God. And if there is no love for God in your heart/soul it seems unlikely that you truly have been born again, have the Holy Spirit indwelling you and are really a new creature in Christ. Hebrews 11 makes it clear that faith leads to action, to obedience. I would suggest love for God leads to action and obedience as well.

Jesus' statement about loving God with our entire being also points to expressing our love for God in every aspect of life. In **1 Corinthians 10:31** the apostle Paul writes, **So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.** An important step in growing in our love for the Lord is realizing that we are not just to love Him on Sunday mornings, but every day, every hour. It only makes sense that genuine love cannot be confined to one aspect of life, to a religious aspect. Because God is creator of everything and sovereign over all, every part of life provides an opportunity for us to honor and please God, and also an opportunity for us to dishonor and

displease Him. As our love for God grows, we also grow in a desire to please Him in every aspect of life. So, when you are at work, or on the golf course, or shopping for clothes, or studying for a test, or mowing the lawn, or coaching a Little League team, or sitting in the dentist chair, or going to be at night. Your love for God gives you a desire to please Him in whatever you are doing.

One of the things that makes Chisholm Baptist Church a wonderful church is that so many of you, because of your love for God, desire to please Him, not just on Sunday mornings, but throughout the week. And many of you do that, not perfectly, but consistently. Our goal as a church is to help each of you grow in your love for the Lord, grow in your desire to please Him, and grow in your ability to do just that. Loving God is what we as a church want to do corporately and it is why we want to help you do as individuals.

Second, our purpose is to love others. As a church we want to be a group of people who love one another, and we want to help to better love the people around you, your "neighbors." I should also say a few words about what Jesus means when He says, "Love your neighbors as yourself," and you have probably heard this, "We can not really love others more, unless we learn to love ourselves more." No, no that is not what Jesus said at all. The assumption Jesus makes, and which I believe good psychology affirms, is that people do love themselves. The problem for those who struggle with low self-esteem or lack of self-confidence is not that they don't love themselves. Their self-love is seriously corrupted in some way, but almost all human beings are committed to what they believe is their own self-interest. That is why "love your neighbor as you already love yourself" is really the command Jesus gives us.

The command to love others has a very broad application. In the story of the good Samaritan, found in Luke 10, Jesus makes the point that our neighbor is pretty much anyone with whom we come in contact. Yet, there are two types of people Jesus says we need to make sure we love. The first is our enemies. **Matthew 5:44 But I say to you. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.** Then he adds, **Matthew 5:46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?** We often describe someone with deep affection for family and

friends as a very loving person. But Jesus is no impressed by that. Even the most non-religious people have that type of love. Jesus has a higher bar for us than that. He wants us to love people who don't love us, who may hate us and even try to harm us. Is that easy? No, of course not! But it is what the Lord desires from us, and what we, through His grace, are to strive to do.

The second groups of people Jesus specifically tells us we need to love are our fellow believers. Sometimes they may fall into the category of being of enemies, but not usually. This is an emphasis throughout the New Testament. In fact, Jesus says that our love for one another will be what identifies us as His followers to the world around us. **John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.** And I know there is more than one person in this room who is here primarily because of the love they saw exhibited in how people at Chisholm Baptist Church treat each other. That is how it should be.

Like our love for God, our love for other people flows from our experience of God's love found in Jesus Christ. **1 John 4:7,11 says, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.** I really do believe that reflecting on God's kindness, patience and forgiveness toward us, helps us to treat others in a loving way.

Love God, love other people. That is what the Lord expects from each of us. This church is about encouraging and enabling one another to do just that. But there is one more important aspect of loving God, and others on what we have not focused, yet. Our love for God, our desire to please Him, means we seek to fulfill the great commission of Matthew 28:19,20 and make disciples of all nations. And our love for other people means we are concerned for their welfare, their ultimate good. And that is something they will experience if they are disciples of Jesus Christ. So, if the Lord wills, that is our topic next Sunday... Making disciples.