

Logan Reynolds
First Belton
January 19, 2025

Series: Power of Moments

Title: The King's Expectations

Text: Matthew 22: 34-40, 22, 34, 33; Deut. 6:5; Lev 19:18; Exodus 20:1-17; Rom 3:23, 6:23

Good morning and welcome! I hope everyone is doing well this morning.

Life is filled with moments. From the moment we are born and take our first steps, to the moment we breathe our last, life is filled with moments that have a way of defining who we are and shaping the course of our lives. The same is true of a church. This morning, we find ourselves in a powerful moment in the history of our church. We stand on the cusp of a new building and an exciting future that allows us to continue to grow and make an even greater kingdom impact in this community and around the world. What a powerful moment! Which is all the more reason why we must prepare to steward this moment well.

When I think about powerful moments, one of the first comes to mind when Jesus begins His ministry. We talked about this last week; Jesus' arrival fulfills the long-awaited prophecy of a Messiah King who comes as the Savior of the world. By His presence, He ushers in a new Kingdom. At His baptism, He is anointed as the coming King. By His message, He declares His Kingdom has arrived. As we move into the final week of His life, Jesus mounts a donkey and rides into Jerusalem as God's anointed King. What a powerful moment! The text says that when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. It is the same word that is used to describe the earthquake-like event that happened just after Jesus breathed His last breath on the cross and the veil was torn.

The idea being that when King Jesus enters your life, you will never be the same.

Now, once Jesus enters Jerusalem, we join the disciples on a journey with Jesus as He begins to prepare them for what is coming next. Jesus has set His focus on the cross and He is preparing His disciples for life after His departure. In like fashion, I want us to lean into these lessons and hear what Jesus would have for us as we prepare to be a ready church – a church willing and ready to help all generations know and follow Him.

Please turn with me to Matthew 22:34–40. After Jesus enters Jerusalem, He cleanses the temple and begins teaching as a King with authority.

Read Matthew 22:34 with me. *"But when the Pharisees heard that he (Jesus) had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer asked him a question to test him. 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' 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 your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

Looks like there is a bit of competition showing up in Jerusalem. First, the Pharisees attempt to question Jesus’ authority, but when Jesus responded, v. 22 says that they *“marveled at his words and walked away.”* So, the Sadducees thought they would take their shot by questioning Jesus’ teaching on the resurrection. After Jesus responded to their questions, v.34 says Jesus *“silenced the Sadducees,”* and v. 33 said that the crowds were *“astonished at his teaching.”*

Jesus 2, religious leaders 0, but they still can’t give it up. So, a lawyer, one who was an expert in Jewish religious law decides to question Jesus with an age-old debate among Jewish leaders – out of the 613 commands, which of them is the most important? In other words, out of all these laws, which is the one we must get right?

Jesus’ answer is brilliant for two reasons. The first is that His answer is directly from their playbook as He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:5. As Moses was preparing Israel to enter the Promised Land, he gives them this command: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* While the lawyer asked for the greatest, Jesus also gives them a second. He quotes from Leviticus 19:18. In a powerful word to God’s people, He tells them that they are to *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

If you have ever wanted to know, “What are God’s expectations of me?”, lean in. Here, King Jesus is telling us that all the Old Testament, all the laws and regulations given (613) boil down to this – *Love God and love people.* But He takes it a step further, by describing how we are to love God. Jesus is commanding us to love Him wholeheartedly and love people the way we love ourselves. I find it interesting that the New Testament would command us to live in moderation with everything. The one thing we are given the freedom to pursue in excess is loving God and loving people.

So, if there is one thing that we must get right, *it is loving God with total commitment, with total self, to total excess, and loving others as we love ourselves.*

I want you to stop and think about something – does it surprise you that Jesus’ greatest expectation of us is relational? It is not your health, it is not your wealth, it is not your appearance, it is not your success, it is your relationship with Him and others. I was thinking this week as I was preparing this sermon – if Jesus’ greatest expectations of us are primarily relational, why is it that those don’t seem to be on the top of our goals or resolutions list for 2025?

Hey, by the way, this really shouldn't surprise us! Just after God rescues Israel out of slavery, He brings them into the wilderness to rebuild their lives with Him. As a part of that, He gives them what we know as the *Ten Commandments*. Some may think of the *Ten Commandments* as a prohibitive act of God toward His people enslaving them in the wilderness, when the ten commandments actually serve as an invitation to freedom as they teach us how to have a healthy relationship with God and with others.

From Exodus 20, here are the *Ten Commandments* (showing on the screen). As we run through these, keep in mind that the first four teach us how we are to relate to God. While the last six teach us how are to relate to one another. These are the *Ten Commandments* as we know them: *You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain. Keep the sabbath holy. Honor your father and mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet.*

Historically, we think of these commandments as prohibitive, which means these are all the things that we can't do. Sometimes Christianity can be like this; we focus on all the things we can't do rather than focusing on what we can do. So, I would like for us to consider how these commandments help us love God and love people by looking at the positive of each commandment. In other words, let's not look at what God doesn't want us to do, let's look at what He wants for us. By the way, God wants freedom for you, not bondage. If He wanted bondage, He would have left Israel in Egypt and wouldn't have sent Jesus to rescue us from sin.

God wants us to love Him more than anything else. Freedom comes when we make God THE priority in our lives. I think about it like this - we ought to give God our first and best. He gets the first and best of my time, my relational capacity, my mental energy, my money and resources, my possessions, etc.

God wants us to worship Him as He is, and not as we think He is or should be. I doubt the majority of you in the room are creating images of God to worship. However, in our attempt to control our lives and relate to a God we can't see, we can bring Him down to earth and make Him like us. Here is a great example - we doubt His goodness. How can God be good if He allows this kind of suffering? We are limiting Him to our definition an understanding of good. He is completely and totally "other than", and as broken people we cannot comprehend His image or His character. So much so that on this side of Heaven, God tells Moses that if He were to see Him, He would be consumed.

God wants us to recognize that He is different from all of creation. His name is to be held with regard, honor, and respect.

God wants us to set apart one day a week to rest physically and spiritually. Typically, that means that we should prioritize at least one day, usually Sunday, to worship, fellowship, and rest our bodies for the week ahead. The idea of "burned out" is not God's design for you. Many of us are running on empty because we do not take God's word seriously to stop and rest. Even Moses says, God worked six days in creation and rested on the seventh. Why? Because rest is important. Also, church is important not just because it is something we are supposed to do, but because in doing so, our souls are reset, and we experience spiritual rest as we worship and fellowship with one another.

God wants us to honor, respect, and obey our parents. Obviously, this looks different in various seasons of life. If you are living under the roof or the finances of your parents, God wants you to honor and respect your parents. For adults not living under mom and dad's roof or finances, we need to heed the imperative to leave and cleave, and therefore the way we honor and respect our parents' changes - from that of a dependent to one caring for those who have cared for us.

God wants us to honor and protect all human life as His image-bearers. That means that we are pro-life for all life. It also means that we are to honor people, even those we disagree with, don't like, or are ugly to us. Jesus says to hold a grudge against someone is to murder them in heart. Freedom comes from cherishing all life and living reconciled with others.

God wants us to honor and protect marriage. Marriage is the one institution on earth that Paul says demonstrates Christ and His relationship to the Church. Henceforth, Satan's attack on marriage.

God wants us to respect the property of and to live with integrity towards other people.

God wants us to speak the truth in love, uphold justice, and protect the reputation of others. This means that we refuse to gossip about, speak ill of, or allow that to happen in our circles. Rather, we experience freedom when we speak the truth in love and seek to stay reconciled with others.

God wants us to cultivate a life of contentment, gratitude, and trust in His provision for our life. Here is what that means: When good things happen to others, we rejoice with them. When others have things and we don't, we cheer them on. Freedom will not be found in jealousy over what some else has, looks like, or gets to experience. Freedom happens when we reach a level of contentment that cheers others on and wishes them the best.

The second reason Jesus' answer is brilliant is because the very thing He commands us to do is the very thing we can't do apart from Him as King.

All of these things are what God wants for us. But understand this morning, God doesn't work the way we do. Nor does He see relationships like we do. Our relationship with God is not transactional – you do this, and I will return the favor. No, that is not how God works. See, before God ever gave Israel the *Ten Commandments*, He knew that they had no hope living these things out! They had no hope at experiencing the freedom through obedience He wanted for them. Even today, we can all do the "*Ten Commandment Test*" where we count how many of the commandments we break in a given day, and we would see that Paul had it right when he said in Romans 3:23, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" But hear me, while we fall short and Romans 6:23 says that we are deserving of death, "*The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

This morning, God's expectations of us are to love Him and to love others. The only way we have any shot at meeting these expectations is resting on the fact that Jesus our King came to the earth and lived up to those expectations on our behalf. He loved God with total commitment, total self, total excess, and loved people as Himself. He died to take on our punishment so we could walk out of an empty grave and live in freedom under the reign of King Jesus, empowered by His Spirit now living in us.

Through God's Spirit, we have been given the power to love God with total commitment, total self, total excess, and to love others as ourselves.