

Title: The Greatest Commandments

Passage: Mark 12:28-34

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And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" Jesus answered, "The most important is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

EXPOSITION

Context of Passage:

- 5th episode in series of 6 that Jesus had leading up to the crucifixion.
- Jesus popularity rose and resulted in various reactions. Religious leaders opposed Jesus. Disciples followed Jesus. Others were not sure and pondered whether Jesus was truly the Messiah?

Question

Mark 12:28

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

scribe

- one who copied the Law
- Unclear motivation of the question raised

Which commandment is the most important of all?

- Then, the Law comprised of over 300 commandments.

Answer

Mark 12:29-31

Jesus answered, "The most important is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Jesus' answer quoted "The Shema"

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

- Jew's would regularly cite the "Shema"
 - "The Shema" is repeated everyday by devout Jews
- Considered as the center of the Law: God is the one true God.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

- Foundation of Truth: God is one
 - Truth is grounded in who God is.
 - Objective truth
- Contrast: today's culture has turned "truth" into subjective measures.
 - A person defines their own "truth" (vs. objective truth)

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 17:17 (Jesus' prayer)

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

- God's truth is accurate regardless of time and age.
 - Remember that God's Words are always consistent.
- Question: What will you do with the truth? Will you submit to it?
- In the Old Testament, all the laws stem from the single truth that God is one.
 - None of the Law is inconsistent or contradictory. The principles behind them are always timeless.
 - God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

First Comandment

I. Love God with Everything in You. (v. 29-30)

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

- Meaning = Love God with all your being and everything you are.

Heart

- Meaning = command center of your inner being that controls all your emotions, desires and passions.
 - Heart reveals our true loyalties
- Example: Parable of the Prodigal Son
 - Older brother's heart was bitter (paid lip service but heart was far)

Soul

- Meaning = source of vitality and life; motivating power brings strength of will
 - Soul determines our conduct

Matthew 26:38

Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me."

- Application: Act such that God is honored.

Mind

- Meaning = faculty of perception and reflection that directs our opinions and judgments.
- Application: Serve God with your intelligence.
 - Thinking deeply about God is not optional but a requirement.
 - Ask and consider hard questions.

Matthew 6:28

And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,

- In the end, only God can save someone because our minds are otherwise blinded.

Strength

- Meaning = physical energies and functions.
- Application: How do I honor God with my physical abilities for God.

"It doesn't take much to be a believer; it just takes all of him"

Second Commandment

II. Love your neighbor as yourself (v. 31-34)

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

- Jesus made an Old Testament reference to Leviticus 19
 - Here, Jesus was first to connect loving God with loving neighbor as oneself.
- Here, Jesus' two commandments summarize the 10 Commandments.
 - First Commandment (love God) = summarizes the first 4 commandments
 - Second Commandment (love neighbor)- summarizes the latter 6 commandments (why not steal/covet/etc? we love our neighbor as ourselves)
- Both commandments are well-connected (analogy: rowing with two oars)
 - You cannot love God without loving your neighbor
 - You cannot love your neighbor without loving God.

Neighbor

- Meaning = anyone around you
- See Parable of the Good Samaritan

Luke 10:36-37

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

- The person who you think least of (even your enemies)
 - Why? They are made in God's image

Love as yourself

- God has ordained you for a reason and purpose.
- Who are you? Let God declare who you are and your worth.
- Clarification: Does not mean to prioritize or love yourself over others. Not self-absorption or self-pity (judging others who others treat you or what has happened to you)
- Not about guilt and shame
 - "I can't forgive myself"
 - Meaning = minimizing the power of the Gospel. God provided a way for forgiveness through Jesus
 - but you really say "That's not enough"
 - Repent and ask for forgiveness and ask for power to change your ways.

Question: How? How can we love our neighbor? See Leviticus 19

Leviticus 19:10-18

And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

"You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.

"You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

"You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD.

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Leviticus 19 list:

- Care for the poor (v.10)
- Do not steal (v.11)
 - Application: Does it affect you personally?
- Do not lie (v. 11)
- Be fair in business dealings (v.14)
- Care for those who are physically disabled (v.15)
- Deal justly with all (
- Do not gossip (sharing truth to someone who is not part of the solution)

- Do not slander (saying lies about a person to someone else) (v.16)
 - Contrast: speak truth
- Do not jeopardize the life of your neighbor (v.17)
 - Contrast: Be thoughtful of others
- Rebuke neighbor for their good (v.17)
 - Speak truth in love with grace and truth
 - Truth = God's truth
 - Ex: A child grabs a bottle of poison. If you truly love your neighbor, you need to tell the person the truth of what is harmful.
- Do not harbor hatred toward others (v.18)
 - How harbor hatred? We have not fully grasped who God is and who others are in their value to Him.
 - Contrast: Can we disagree in an agreeable way? Can we love others still?

Man's Response (v.32-34)

Mark 12:32-34

And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

You are not far from the kingdom of God.

- True religion is a matter of the heart
 - Not about religious rituals or external behavior.
- True religion is about a relationship with God and change of heart.
 - It's not about giving your heart to make it better but to change it altogether.

Application

If not a Christian: submit to God for salvation

- it's impossible to otherwise uphold the commandments on your own strength ("to try harder")

Matthew 5:48

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- There is nothing you can do to measure up to God's standard.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- Only God can give you a new heart.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

- supernatural power only comes through Christ.

If a Christian: examine your motive as to your perspective of God's commandments.

- What motivates you to obey commandments?
- If doing it to get God's favor, then missing the point of the Gospel.
- If doing it to love God better out of joy, then Holy Spirit is working in your life.
- If convicted and struggle with sin in obeying, then be encouraged the Holy Spirit is working in your life as well.
 - Stay close to Christ

1 John 4:7-12

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In 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. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.