

It's All About Love 11-20-05

Matthew 22:34-40 (NIV)

³⁴Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

It had been a demanding day for Jesus. He knew the cross was only a few days off. The religious leaders questioned His authority. They questioned Him about taxes. They questioned Him about resurrection. His every answer was so precise and wise that their plots had failed. (Ecclesiastes 8:1) The last question from the Sadducees had solicited a response that silenced them. The word means to muzzle. Like the man at the wedding feast with no wedding robe, they were speechless.

³⁴Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. Before they had tried to trick Him by using their disciples. It hadn't worked. Seeing their rivals, the Sadducees, shut down, they put their heads together for one last effort. They are going to present Him with one of their most brilliant legal minds. Over the years, the rabbis had supposedly determined that, just as there were 613 separate letters in the Hebrew text of the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, in the book of Numbers, there were also 613 separate laws in the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. Such letterism, as it is sometimes called, was extremely popular and was considered a valuable exegetical tool for interpreting Scripture. The rabbis had divided those 613 laws into affirmative and negative groups, holding that there were 248 affirmative laws, one for every part of the human body, as they supposed, and 365 negative laws, one for each day of the year. The laws were also divided into heavy and light, the heavy ones being absolutely binding and the light ones less binding.

There had never been unanimity however, as to which laws were heavy and which were light, and the rabbis and scribes spent countless hours proudly debating the merits of their particular divisions and the ranking of laws within the divisions.

—MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The

They probably thought that this man who claimed to be Messiah would come up with His own ideas, ideas that they hoped would be sufficiently unorthodox as to condemn Him. (Matthew 22:15) ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: Who better to ask a question than one of their leading legal minds? What they failed to see was that Jesus' answers were getting through to this thoughtful man. I believe he used the title 'Teacher' sincerely. The Gospel of Mark tells us that he had noticed that Jesus had given a good answer. (Mark 12:28) Mark also tells us that at the end of the conversation that Jesus told him he was not far from the kingdom of God. (Mark 12:34) Sometimes when we think there is not a soul listening to what we say, God is getting through. If the Holy Spirit is speaking through you, lives will be touched.

Commented [notes1]: 1 Who is like the wise man? Who knows the explanation of things? Wisdom brightens a man's face and changes its hard appearance.
Ecclesiastes 8:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 15 Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words.
Matthew 22:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 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?"
Mark 12:28 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 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.
Mark 12:34 (NIV)

He presented the question they so often debated and argued over. ³⁶"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" It's a simple question, but one with deep theological significance. If Jesus had His own agenda separate from the Laws of Moses, His answer would betray Him. But Jesus had already said He had not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them. (Matthew 5:17) He is the Word made flesh. (John 1:14) No response from His lips will ever contradict the Word, for He is the Word. He wasn't the One out of line with the word of God to Moses, they were.

³⁷Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. This passage is called the *Shema* by Jews, for it begins with the word "hear". "Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is one, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God..." This was the passage they attached to their foreheads and bound to their arms. (Deuteronomy 6:8) It is kept in a small box on the doorframes of their homes even today. (Deuteronomy 6:9, 11:20) Faithful Jews quoted it twice daily. This was and still is the most familiar passage to Jews. Jesus was saying the most important command is the one you are all so familiar with. Had familiarity led to apathy toward it then? And now?

Hear! Shema! Don't just let it float off your lips without hearing it in your heart. Don't let it be just sounds, but let it be from the lips of God to you. (Deuteronomy 5:1) *Israel* are those who prevail with God, those who have entered into a covenant relationship, heirs of the promise. They are those whose hearts are circumcised to be able to hear- tune in. (Jeremiah 4:4) *The LORD (JHWH) our Gods (elohim) are one.* God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are one. They said it so often, did they stop and think what it meant that God in the plural is one? Do we?

Love- *Aheh*, the Hebrew word for love used in Deuteronomy 6:5, refers primarily to an act of mind and will, the determined care for the welfare of something or someone. It might well include strong emotion, but its distinguishing characteristics were the dedication and commitment of choice. It is the love that recognizes and chooses to follow that which is righteous, noble, and true, regardless of what one's feelings in a matter might be. It is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *agapaō* in the New Testament, the verb of intelligent, purposeful, and committed love that is an act of the will.
—MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The

Make a dedicated commitment that in all circumstance you will follow hard after JHWH your Elohim (the LORD your God). Did you notice Moses and Jesus said, "your God". He is to be yours personally. You are to claim Him as your own, not just the God of your people, or of your nation, but YOURS.

We are to love Him with ALL our being, heart, soul, mind, and Mark adds strength. In other words, with all that we are. *Heart*—the very core of our being. It is your inmost desires, the essence of who you are. Is your life about your love for your Creator and Redeemer? Can it be said of you, as it was of David, that your heart is after God? (1 Kings 14:8) *...with all your soul...* the term soul is what we would relate to as emotion. Jesus referred to how troubled His soul was in the Garden.

Commented [notes5]: 17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. Matthew 5:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Deuteronomy 6:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 20 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, Deuteronomy 11:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 1 Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. Deuteronomy 5:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done— burn with no one to quench it. Jeremiah 4:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 8 I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, but you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in his eyes. 1 Kings 14:8 (NIV)

(Matthew 26:38) It is our passion. Is your passion about loving God? ...with all your mind... the Hebrew term was broader and related to our might. It is moving ahead with mental energy and strength. It has a sense of determination and willful vigor. (1 Corinthians 9:24)

Genuine **love of the Lord** is intelligent, feeling, willing, and serving. It involves thought, sensitivity, intent, and even action where that is possible and appropriate.

—MacArthur New Testament Commentary,

The- Like so much of religious ritual, we can find ourselves doing meaningful things in a meaningless mode. Jesus gave them the answer they already knew. Each of His answers up to this point was anything but what they expected, and then He answered with what they would give as a trite answer. It made it even more powerful. He was saying that they got this one right; they just didn't live it. If they lived it, why would they be trying to trap Him?

As my children were growing up, I used to drill them on this verse. I knew if they got this one, they would get the main substance of it all. If your heart, soul, and mind are in a love relationship with your God, you may stumble off the path but you will be back on it soon enough. That is why the proverb says that if you train up a child in the way they should go, when they are old they will not depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6) If you experience an all out love for God that involves your whole being, everything else falls into place. It is seeking first the Kingdom of God and knowing all else will be added. (Matthew 6:33)

Do you live to love Him? His is the greatest love you will ever know. It is a love so great that all other loves are just a reflection. It is a love that values you more than you can imagine, that thinks of you constantly. (Psalm 139:17-18) Why would God love you like that? He created you with incredible potential, but that is not why He loves you. He loves you because He chose to. Did you notice in His command that it is an act of the will to love Him? It is a choice you make. You see, He is only asking you to do toward Him, what He has already done toward you. (1 John 4:19) The great difference is that He loved us first. That makes it so much easier to love Him. He is everything pure and righteous. It is only right to love Him. To believe in Him is to love Him. Not just to believe He exists, but to see that He is all goodness and truth and then embrace who He is because it is right.

Unbelief is hatred toward God. It is a rejection of all He demonstrates Himself to be. Sin is hatred toward God. If you love Him, you obey Him. If you habitually disobey, it is because you hate Him. (Luke 16:13) A person lives in rebellion toward what they hate. If they hate evil, they rebel against it. If they hate righteousness, they live in rebellion towards it. You embrace the light or you embrace the darkness. Too many want to live for self and claim salvation through Jesus. That isn't embracing the light. That is rejection of the greatest command. These Pharisees believed they were in the light because of their adherence to ritual, but they could not say they truly loved God when they did not live the great command. Their lives were about self-exaltation, not God exaltation. They thought about self-promotion, not glorifying God. Their heart, soul and mind were fixed on self rather than God. The reality was that they embraced the darkness, and they would prove that in just a few days, as

Commented [notes13]: 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."
Matthew 26:38 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.
1 Corinthians 9:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.
Proverbs 22:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
Matthew 6:33 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.
Psalms 139:17-18 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 19 We love because he first loved us.
1 John 4:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."
Luke 16:13 (NIV)

they demanded the death of the light that came into the world. (John 1:9) They succeeded in deceiving themselves. God help us never to be under such self-delusion but to truly love God with every ounce of our being. I ask you to consider what your life is about.

Here is a description of the life of one that loves God with their all so that we might examine to what extent we have entered into the Great Command. A person who loves God:

meditates on God's glory (Psalms 18:1-3)

trusts in God's divine power (Psalms 31:23)

seeks fellowship with God (Psalms 63:1)

loves God's law (Psalms 119:165)

is sensitive to how God feels (Psalms 69:9)

loves what God loves (Psalms 119:72, 97, 103)

loves whom God loves (1 John 5:1)

hates what God hates (Psalms 97:10)

grieves over sin (Matthew 26:75)

rejects the world (1 John 2:15)

longs to be with Christ (2 Timothy 4:8)

and obeys God wholeheartedly (John 14:21)

Commented [notes20]: 9 The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.
John 1:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 1 I love you, O LORD, my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. 3 I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and I am saved from my enemies.
Psalms 18:1-3 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 23 Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.
Psalms 31:23 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 1 O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
Psalms 63:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 165 Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble.
Psalms 119:165 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: 9 for zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me.
Psalms 69:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: 72 The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.
Psalms 119:72 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.
Psalms 119:97 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Psalms 119:103 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.
1 John 5:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 10 Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
Psalms 97:10 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 75 Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster cr... [1]

Commented [notes32]: 15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ... [2]

Commented [notes33]: 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--an... [3]

Commented [notes34]: 21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who lov... [4]

-adapted from The MacArthur New Testament Commentary.
If that doesn't describe you, you may have joined a club instead of marrying a Savior. The Great Command is a call to real salvation.

Jesus didn't stop with that answer. He gave them a bonus answer. He told them the greatest command, but He also told them the second great command. ³⁹*And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'* If you love God, you will love what He loves. He so loved the world that He gave His only Son. (John 3:16) The Son loved the Father with His all. He lived entirely for Him. Because of that love for Him, He laid down His life for us. (Luke 22:42) You see, you can't just have the first Great Command on its own. It expresses itself in the second, just as the life of Jesus demonstrated so perfectly.

I have heard and read so many sermons about this passage teaching us to love our self. So much is made today of a lack of self-esteem. That is not even a point being made here. It is just referred to as fact that we love ourselves. (Ephesians 5:29) We feed ourselves; we care for our body and even many of those who claim a self-loathing are really expressing a smothering self-love. They are so in love with themselves they are depressed that they can't bring themselves constant pleasure and joy. True self-worth is found in the value of God choosing to love us. It is His love and the promise to restore His image in us that gives a sense of personal value. (Romans 8:29)

Jesus is saying that as we love ourselves, we should love others. Treat others as good as you would treat yourself. Care about them as you care about yourself. That is the outcome of loving God. This is the same kind of love with which we are to love God. It is a choice to be active, intentional and to purposefully set out to demonstrate that love.

You can pretend to do the first commandment, but when you are really living it, people see it demonstrated in the second command. That is the tangible evidence that the first is real in your life. No one can love like that unless they are full of the Holy Spirit. You'll never be overflowing with the Spirit unless you love God with your all. When your life begins to be about God instead of about you, then He invests a greater deposit of His Spirit in you that expresses His life in genuine love and concern for others. (Acts 5:32)

⁴⁰*All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*"
Every command God gave goes back to these two. I remember a time when I went through all the Levitical Laws and considered how they were based on these two commands. If you want the spirit behind any command in the Old or New Testament, you will find it when you see its connection to these great commands. I have often seen a Scripture quoted to bring a decision that ignored the connection to these commands. If it ignores love for God or your fellow man's genuine need, it is not the spirit of the law but the letter. (2 Corinthians 3:6)

God has always been after one thing in both the Old and New Covenants. He wants to be our God, the God we love with our all. Why? Because He chose to love us, and

Commented [notes35]: 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes36]: 42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Luke 22:42 (NIV)

Commented [notes37]: 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- Ephesians 5:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes38]: 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. Romans 8:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes39]: 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." Acts 5:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes40]: 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 3:6 (NIV)

loving Him with our all is the best thing for us. It will keep us on the path to eternity with Him. It is a demonstration that our relationship is real. Otherwise, you simply have religion. Religion without love is mere ritual.

Every time I come to this passage I know I fall so short. Jesus' life demonstrated this command. When I grow discouraged by how far I have to go, I remember that Jesus doesn't ask us to do something He will not enable us to do. In each situation, I must decide to actively participate with the Spirit of God in me. I must be intentional about letting Him demonstrate His own love through me. He is the great enabler. If it were up to us, we would live in our own little selfish, demanding world, but the Enabler has come. See His great love for you and your love for Him will be the spontaneous response. Out of that love for Him you will demonstrate a love for others as you yield to His life in you. Don't despair because you have so far to go. Rejoice that you have come so far. Rejoice that He will finish the work He started in you. (Philippians 1:6)

Commented [notes41]: 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

In Matthew 21 and 22, Jesus answered four questions and told three parables. He was always calling people to saving faith in Him. He didn't do it in our Western analytical way. Listen to the salvation message the way Jesus presents it.

Question of Authority and Tale of Two Sons:

³¹Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. ³²For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. Matthew 21:31-32 (NIV)

Believe John, repent, and live a changed life.

Vineyard:

⁴³"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. ⁴⁴He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." Matthew 21:43-44 (NIV)
Fall on Jesus and be broken. You must give God what is due Him.

Wedding Banquet:

Come to the wedding banquet. Matthew 22:4 (NIV)

Everyone is invited to feast with the Great King. Receive your covering, the righteousness of Jesus, the Messiah.

Taxation:

"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." Matthew 22:21 (NIV)

You are made in the image of God. You owe Him everything.

Resurrection:

"He is not the God of the dead but of the living." Matthew 22:32 (NIV)

God is living and active and those who are in relationship with Him enter into a living and active relationship.

The Greatest Commandment:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Matthew 22:37 (NIV)

A relationship with God requires your whole being be passionate about it.

There is the invitation of God to salvation in six different ways from the lips of Jesus. It should challenge us to be led by the Spirit instead of following a formula. There is nothing wrong with the formula for the young Christian to learn by, but Jesus invited people to know Him in seven different ways in two chapters. We'll get the seventh next week. Do you hear each one? Have you believed John that Jesus is God's lamb, repented, and experienced a changed life? Have you fallen on Jesus and been broken? Have you received the wedding invitation and been clothed in the righteousness of Christ? Have you given God what is due Him, your all? Have you entered into a living, active relationship with God? And have you done so with your whole being?

It's not the salvation message you are used to hearing, but it is Jesus' own salvation message.

Page 4: [1] Commented [notes31] notes

75 Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.
Matthew 26:75 (NIV)

Page 4: [2] Commented [notes32] notes

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
1 John 2:15 (NIV)

Page 4: [3] Commented [notes33] notes

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.
2 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)

Page 4: [4] Commented [notes34] notes

21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."
John 14:21 (NIV)