

The Greatest Command Mt. 22:34-40

Thesis: To help us understand the importance and necessity of loving God and our fellow man.

Introduction:

- A. Jesus is approached by the Sadducees and Pharisees so that they can test Him.
 - 1. He was asked by the Pharisees if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not (22:15-22).
 - 2. He was given a hypothetical situation by the Sadducees so that they could “prove” that there was no resurrection (22:23-33).

- B. Now Jesus was approached by a lawyer who wants to test Him (22:34-36).
 - 1. This lawyer had heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees (22:34).
 - 2. Now he asks Jesus a question in order to test Him (22:35-36).
 - a. The lawyer did not really want an answer to this question; he only wanted to trap Jesus in His words.
 - b. The question was simple: “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

I. Jesus says that the first and great commandment is to “love the Lord your God” (22:37-38).

- A. Jesus says that we should love the Lord our God with all of our being (22:37).
 - 1. The word that Jesus uses for love is the Greek word “agapao” (Strong’s).
 - a. It is another form of the word “agape.”
 - b. It is the self-sacrificial love.
 - c. It is a love that is willing to give up everything for God.
 - d. Incidentally, this is the kind of love that God has for us.
 - 1) Jn. 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
 - 2) I Jn. 4:10 - In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
 - 2. Jesus says that we should love God with all of our being.
 - a. He says that we are to love God with all of our heart.
 - 1) The heart in this passage refers to our thoughts and feelings.
 - 2) It is the emotional part of our love for God.
 - b. He says that we are to love God with all of our soul.
 - 1) The soul is our eternal being.
 - 2) It is our immortal soul that will never pass away.

- c. He says that we are to love God with all of our mind.
 - 1) Our mind is our intellect.
 - 2) It is the deep thoughts and understanding that we have

B. Much of the law of Moses was based on Israel's love for God.

1. The children of Israel were commanded to love the Lord their God.
 - a. **Deut. 6:4-5** (Jesus quoted from this passage) - Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! {5} You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.
 - b. It was this love that they were to teach to their children and grandchildren.
2. In loving God, they were required to follow the commandments of God.
 - a. **Deut. 11:1** - Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always.
 - b. If they truly loved God, they would have no trouble following His commandments.
3. When they loved God and kept His commandments, there were great blessings attached to it.
 - a. **Deut. 11:13-15** - And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, {14} then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. {15} And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.
 - b. **Deut. 11:22-23** - For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do-- to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him-- {23} then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves.
4. **Notice that it was all based upon their love for God.**

C. Loving God with all of our being requires us to keep His commandments.

1. Today, if we must obey God if we truly love Him.
2. **Jn. 14:15** - If you love Me, keep My commandments.
3. **Jn. 14:23** - Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."
4. **I Jn. 2:3** - Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

II. Jesus says that the second greatest command is to “love your neighbor as yourself” (22:39).

A. Again, Jesus is quoting from the law of Moses.

1. The children of Israel were commanded to love their neighbor.
 - a. **Lev. 19:18** - You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.
 - b. This love encompassed their entire life, both personal and business.
 - 1) They were not allowed to loan their brethren money and charge them interest (**Deut. 23:19**).
 - 2) If an Israelite found an animal that another Israelite owned, they were required to return it to them (**Deut. 22:1-4**).
2. They were also commanded to love the stranger that was among them.
 - a. **Deut. 10:18-19** - He (God) administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. {19} Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
 - b. Remember, it is Jesus who teaches that a stranger can be a neighbor.
 - 1) **Lk. 10:25-37** – Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan.
 - 2) The point Jesus was making is that we should love those who are around us, whether we know them or not.

B. Today, we must love our neighbor as ourselves.

1. **Rom. 13:9-10** - For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” {10} Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
2. **Gal. 5:14** - For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
3. **Js. 2:8** - If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well;

III. Jesus also says that every command in the law is based upon these two commands (22:40).

A. Every law that is written in the law of Moses is based upon these two commandments.

1. Even in the Ten Commandments, we see these two laws.
 - a. **Ex. 20:1-11** – The first four laws are based directly upon our love for God.
 - 1) “You shall have no other gods before Me.”
 - 2) “You shall not make for yourself a carved image.”

- 3) "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."
- 4) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."
- b. Ex. 20:12-17 – The last six laws are based upon our love for our fellow man.
 - 1) "Honor your father and your mother."
 - 2) "You shall not murder."
 - 3) "You shall not commit adultery."
 - 4) "You shall not steal."
 - 5) "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."
 - 6) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

2. The law of Christ is based on our love for God and our love for man.

B. If we can truly love God with all of our being, and love our fellow man as ourselves, then we should have no problem fulfilling the law of God.

Conclusion:

- A. Do you truly "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind?"
- B. The true test of knowing whether or not you love God with all of your being is determined by your actions.
 1. Those who truly love God will have no trouble following after His commands.
 2. Your actions will tell you if you love God.