

“The Greatest Commandment”
(Mark 12:28-34)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation: Jesus been questioned

1. By chief priests, scribes and elders regarding authority,
2. By Pharisees and Herodians on taxes,
3. By Sadducees on the resurrection.

B. Preview.

1. The last question comes from a scribe.

a. Scribes experts in law.

- (i) Copied Scriptures.
- (ii) Knew them well.

b. Heard arguing.

- (i) Recognizing that Jesus answered well,
- (ii) Asked another question:
 - (a) “What commandment is foremost of all?”
 - (b) Which is most important?

(iii) The answer important:

- (a) Which most pleasing to Him?
- (b) Which most concerned be kept.

(iv) If interested in honoring Him, pay attention.

2. This morning, let’s consider Jesus’ answer:

- a. First, the greatest commandment is to love God.
- b. Second, the second greatest like it: to love neighbor as self.
- c. Finally, knowing and agreeing with this isn’t enough to enter kingdom.

II. Sermon.

A. First, the greatest commandment is to love God with your whole being.

1. Jesus begins by quoting Shema (Deu. 6:4-5). Why?

- a. Because this where greatest command found.
- b. There is only one God.
 - (i) And the most important command
 - (ii) Is to love this one God with all have to love,
 - (iii) With all heart, mind, soul and strength,
 - (iv) With whole being.

2. Why should you do this?

- a. Because of what He has done for you.

- (i) Made you.
 - (ii) Cares for you.
 - (iii) Redeemed you.
- b. Because it's right,
 - (i) Because He's worthy to be loved.
 - (ii) Because of greatness: infinite, eternal, unchanging.
 - (iii) Because of absolute perfection: morally flawless, holy.
 - (iv) He's infinitely beautiful.
- c. Is it egotistical for God to require this?
 - (i) No, if anyone else, would be.
 - (ii) But not Him:
 - (a) Because He really is worthy,
 - (b) He's the only One who is.
 - (iii) Are to love intensely and comprehensively.
- 3. But how are you to love Him?
 - a. Not anyway you choose,
 - b. But as He commands.
 - (i) So many try to find ways to show love,
 - (a) Make so many sacrifices.
 - (b) But He says, to obey better than sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:22).
 - (ii) We love by obeying commandments: in this case, first four:
 - (a) That we take Him for our God.
 - (b) Worship Him as He desires to be worshipped.
 - (c) Treat His name reverently – when make promises, keep them.
 - (d) Keep His Sabbaths –
 - (1) Wants you to cease worldly activities,
 - (2) Spend the whole day with Him and His people.
 - (iii) Are to do these with intensity He desires:
 - (a) With whole being,
 - (b) As best you can.
 - (c) Not grudgingly.
 - (1) Indifference is sin.
 - (2) Putting things before Him is sin.
 - (3) God deserves more, much more:
 - (A) That you love with whole heart,
 - (B) With every faculty of soul,
 - (C) With whole mind,
 - (D) And with all your strength.
 - (E) With whole life –
 - (I) Offer self as living sacrifice,

- (II) Worship in everything you do,
- (III) Be His first and foremost
- (IV) At all times,
- (V) Don't live for self –
- (VI) Don't seek own pleasure –
- (VII) Live for God,
- (VIII) Seek His pleasure.

4. How can you love Him in this way?

- a. Only by power of Spirit.
 - (i) By nature, don't want to do.
 - (ii) Sin makes you indifferent at best,
 - (iii) Hate Him at worst.
 - (iv) Only Spirit can give ability.
- b. And only does this through Gospel.
 - (i) Must trust Jesus,
 - (ii) Turn from sins.
 - (iii) Follow Him.
 - (iv) He will give strength if trust.

B. Second, the second greatest is to love your neighbor.

- 1. Jesus didn't stop there.
 - a. Said there is second,
 - b. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
- 2. Who is my neighbor?
 - a. Jesus was asked that question (Luke 10:29).
 - (i) Answered with example: Good Samaritan.
 - (ii) Neighbor is anyone in need.
 - (iii) And a good neighbor is one
 - (iv) Who stops to help a neighbor in need.
 - (v) Neighbor is anyone near, anyone in need.
 - b. How much are you to love neighbor?
 - (i) As self.
 - (ii) Are to have same concern for them
 - (iii) As have for self.
 - c. Not surprisingly, Lord tells us how
 - (i) In last six commandments.
 - (ii) You are to love them by,
 - (a) Honoring their righteous use of authority.
 - (b) Protecting their life.
 - (c) Preserving their purity.
 - (d) Respecting their possessions.

- (e) Protecting their reputation.
- (f) By not becoming jealous of what they are or have.

3. Jesus says this commandment is like first (Matt. 22:39).

- a. Man is the image of God.
 - (i) Especially the brethren.
 - (ii) John says if don't love brother or sister in Christ,
 - (iii) Don't love God (1 John 4:7-8).
- b. You also love God by loving them.
 - (i) God is love,
 - (ii) When love reflect His nature.
 - (iii) "Love of man necessarily arises out of the love of God. The love of the creature is but the corollary to the love of the Creator. This is what the Christian finds, as a matter of fact. His heart is overcharged with love to God. It finds its way out in love to man. His direct service of God cannot, in the nature of things, go very far. He worships God publicly in His house. He glorifies Him secretly in the constant outpourings of his heart. He gives of his substance to the maintenance of every cause which is God's cause. But here it ends. God is so mighty, so self contained, that with all our puny efforts, much cannot be done to serve Him. So the Christian looks about to see how he is to show his love for God. He soon finds the way. Clearly, it must be by love for his fellowmen (John Hooper).

4. How can you do this?

- a. How love neighbor as self?
- b. Only in same way as love God:
 - (i) He must give you ability.
 - (ii) You weren't born with the ability to do this.
 - (a) You were born hating God and man –
 - (b) Just look at the evidence.
 - (1) Consider all the strife between people,
 - (2) The struggle between parents and children,
 - (3) The divorce rate among married,
 - (4) The degree of immorality,
 - (5) The fact that are those willing to kill
 - (6) People they don't even know.
 - (c) We're born loving self, but hating God and neighbor.
 - (1) Need a change of heart.
 - (2) Only God can give through Christ.
 - (3) If haven't had this change,
 - (4) Then trust Christ:
 - (5) He can change your heart,
 - (6) Make you new within.

- c. Jesus says love God and neighbor,
 - (i) No greater commandment.
 - (ii) In these, whole duty comprehended.
- C. Finally, knowing and agreeing with these two commandments isn't enough to enter the kingdom of God – you must also keep them.
 - 1. Finally, let's consider scribe's reaction:
 - a. Wasn't like others.
 - b. Accepted what Jesus said.
 - (i) You're right.
 - (ii) There is only one God.
 - (iii) And to love Him with whole being
 - (iv) And neighbor as self,
 - (v) Is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.
 - c. Scribe didn't side with opposition.
 - (i) They seemed to think God preferred the rituals.
 - (ii) No. I desire mercy and not sacrifice (Hos. 6:6).
 - (a) The Lord would rather we do what's right
 - (b) Than go through rituals,
 - (c) Even sacrifices to atone.
 - (iii) Better to do what's right to begin with
 - (a) Than to do what's wrong
 - (b) And have to seek forgiveness.
 - d. When Jesus heard,
 - (i) Said to him,
 - (ii) Not far from kingdom.
 - (a) This scribe understood
 - (b) What God was after in the commandments.
 - (c) But didn't yet have grace to enter kingdom:
 - (d) He needed to trust Jesus.
 - 2. Let this stand as warning in two areas:
 - a. First, don't ever think God prefers motions over heart.
 - (i) Going through motions of religion –
 - (a) Keeping the commandments,
 - (b) Going to church,
 - (c) Wednesday studies,
 - (d) Even witnessing to others –
 - (e) By itself isn't enough.
 - (ii) Pharisees very religious.
 - (a) Scrupulous in keeping commandments.

- (b) Even tithed down to their spices.
- (c) But overlooked more important things:
 - (1) Justice, mercy and faithfulness (Matt. 23:23).
 - (2) They did what did without love,
 - (3) Which showed in sinful things did to others.
- (iii) Jesus wants motions –
 - (a) Wants us do the right thing –
 - (b) But wants heart as well:
 - (1) Even our greatest sacrifices
 - (2) Are nothing in His sight,
 - (3) Without love (1 Cor. 13:1-3).
- b. Second, don't think knowing truth is enough.
 - (i) This scribe knew what God after.
 - (a) Jesus said not far from kingdom –
 - (b) That better than far,
 - (c) But still not in.
 - (ii) Just because know what pleases Him
 - (a) Doesn't mean you are pleasing Him.
 - (1) You must do what He wants
 - (2) With right heart.
 - (b) There is only One who can and has –
 - (1) Jesus Christ –
 - (2) And it's only by trusting Him
 - (3) That you can please Him in this way as well.
 - (A) Must be clothed with His righteousness,
If God to look at you as though have.
 - (B) Must have His Spirit
If have power to obey.
 - (c) Only way can have these things
 - (1) Is by trusting Jesus.
 - (2) If haven't trusted the Lord,
 - (3) Trust Him this morning,
 - (4) Turn from sins,
 - (5) And you will find His righteousness
 - (6) And the strength need
 - (7) To love as He calls you to love. Amen.