

Matt 12.28-37 – Love the Lord with your all

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Main Point – Love God with your all, and others, because Jesus is your Lord & loving Saviour

Last Sunday night from Mark 12, Andy said, having kids is not the ultimate;

sex is not ultimate, marriage is not ultimate. Jesus is.

But maybe you're single and you have asked, Will I ever get married?-----

Or, Who should I ask out, or what if there's no one suitable?-----

Or, what course or job should I do? What is God's will for my life?(**SLIDE**)-----When

we ask such questions, as I have, we wonder what God wants us to do.

And it's okay to ask these questions and pray for God's guidance.-----

There's many issues we struggle with in life, and in the Christian life.

But we see today, what matters more.

We learn from Jesus, what matters most.

And the most important issue that God wants us to focus on is, how we love him, and love others.

Jesus says that's the most important.

We're in this series in Mark's Gospel, ch12.

To **set the scene**,(**SLIDE**) it's just 3 days before Jesus will die on the cross.

He's in the temple in Jerusalem, and he's faced non-stop challenges from the Jewish religious leaders.

Since ch11 it's been like a boxing match, with round after round.

It was members of the Jewish Sanhedrin.

Then they sent some Pharisees n' Herodians to question Jesus about paying tax to Caesar.

Then some anti-resurrection Sadducees came with a question, and Jesus made clear they don't actually believe the Scriptures, or in God's power.

But Jesus hasn't been defeated or entrapped.

Now one scribe comes to him, but more with sincerity than animosity this time.-----

Scribes knew their Bibles, they were experts in the law. They'd teach & apply the Scriptures & traditions to people. Think of a bible college lecturer today.

This scribe had heard the debate and Jesus answer so well, and he asks, 'Which commandment is the most important of all?'----

The first point is, The Greatest Commandments.(SLIDE)

This was something Jewish scribes & rabbis did debate.

Of the 613 commands found in our Old Testament, which are the greater? How do we summarise them? What is the Most important?

And Jesus answers, in these famous words, and a quote from **Deut 6v5,(SLIDE)**

'Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The words, 'all your mind' are not in Deut 6, but the meaning remains the same.

And heart, mind, soul and strength are actually overlapping terms.

For example the word 'heart' refers to the foundation n' centre of your thoughts, desires, feelings, choices and actions – it's all encompassing.

Jesus is saying we are to love the only God with all our emotions, thoughts, desires, actions; with our all, with everything you've got.

It follows on from v17, when Jesus said we should give to God what we owe him – that's our lives.-----

See how the word 'all' is repeated 4 times in **v30** – Love God with your all, all, all, all.

It's about total devotion; a total response.-----

Do you love God all the time, with all you are, all you think, all you do?-----

Do you do that?-----

Thomas Watson was a Puritan, a preacher passionate about Christ and believing n' obeying God's word.

His **picture** shows he was from a different time(**SLIDE**), the 1600's actually, but we can learn from him and people from the past, in loving God.

He said, so rightly:

'Let me earnestly persuade all who bear the name of Christians to become lovers of God. "O love the Lord, all ye his saints" (Ps 36.23). There are but few that love God: many give Him hypocritical kisses, but few love Him. It is not so easy to love God as most imagine.'-----

I confess I don't love God with my all.

And what Jesus says here is deeply exposing.

Maybe we even feel like impostors.

There's hours in a day that can go by without me thinking of God, being thankful or praying to Him, or considering what he wants of me.

So often, I forget God.

Every day I fail to love God with all my heart. Is that like you?-----

I think you n' I need to confess our failure and collapse onto Jesus.-----

Considering how I fall short of God's commands makes me so thankful for Jesus.

But as Christians who sin, it's helpful to see that Love for God includes daily admitting to yourself and God, that you are unable to be driven by a cross-shaped love without God's protecting, providing, forgiving, rescuing, and delivering grace. [Paul Tripp]

So our love for God must begin by knowing him; in a relationship of faith and trust.

Let us put our trust in him again, and in his grace, and not ourselves.-----

I remember, **Ray Davidson (SLIDE)** - on the left there – and a more godly Christian than I, now with the Lord) speaking with me about how her love for the God was expressed by loving his word. By wanting to listen to what he said every day, and do what he asks.-----

Make it your sincere prayer, that God will give you a heart to love Him.

Pray for grace to love him more.-----

Then Jesus says, the second greatest or most important commandment is, '**Love your neighbour as yourself**'.

This is a quote of **Leviticus 19.18.(SLIDE)**

First century Jews understood '**neighbour**' to refer only to their fellow Jews.-----

But in **Luke ch10,(SLIDE)** Jesus tells another scribe these two greatest commandments.

He's asked, 'Who is my neighbour?', and Jesus replies with the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

And you know the story - the priest and the levite, the religious people, walk on-by past the man who'd been beaten, robbed, n' left half-dead by the road.(**SLIDE**)

And it is a Samaritan – a despised outsider who helps the Jewish man.

He goes out-of his way, sacrificing time, money and care for, not just a stranger but someone you'd normally avoid.

And Jesus' point is, loving your neighbour is loving anyone you encounter in need.---

And we should understand that these two greatest commands **are connected**.

We show our love for God, by our love for others, especially his people.

How can you claim to love the God you don't see, if you don't love his people whom you do see?-----[cf. Matt 25.40]

In the Parable of the Sheep & the Goats(**SLIDE**) Jesus makes clear how we need to love his people [brothers and sisters] in practical ways – like visits and food, water, care (**Matt 25.31ff**)-----

In Mark 12 the word '**love**', is the Greek verb form of agape, [literally, agapeo].

This type of love is showing selfless concern for another.---

Various young children were asked, 'What does love mean?'(**SLIDE**) and I hope their answers make you smile:

8 year old Rebeca said, "When grandma got arthritis, she couldn't bend over anymore to paint her toenails. So grandpa does it all the time for her, even when his hands got arthritis too."

6 yo Chrissy said, 'Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries, without them making them give you any of theirs'.

6 yo Tommy said, 'I know my older sister loves me cos she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones'.

Real love is hard and costly.-----

Love is focusing on and seeking the good of another person, even when it's a sacrifice.----

So How are you going at this?

Loving those you know, and those you don't?-----

Love is seen in giving people our time, resources and help; listening, and care.

How should you love others at church, or growth group?-----

Love likely means you talk to the person who's annoying or different from you, you ask how they're going, and actually listen.

We put them first. Not ignore them, or sin against them.

In a week or two, you'll hear about a need to make meals for people with newborns – so could you go on a meal train to love someone who's struggling, even if you don't know them?

Paul Tripp's **24 Ways to Love** – the link is in the transcript – is really worth reflecting on.

Check it out - <https://www.paultripp.com/wednesdays-word/posts/24-ways-to-love-in-2024>

We come now to the rest of the passage and **point 2, The Greatest Need.(SLIDE)**

In **v32** the scribe agrees with Jesus' take on the greatest commandments.

He says we're to love God with all our heart, understanding and strength.

He doesn't mention 'soul', or 'mind', but the meaning covers that.

And he claims that loving God and neighbour is 'far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices'.

Jesus agrees - God cares more about people obeying his moral law; how we treat him and others, more than religious observances.

Hosea 6.6 explicitly says(SLIDE) God desires faithful love not sacrifices.

In Micah 6 God says (SLIDE) I'm not pleased with your sacrifices when you fail to act justly, love faithfulness and walk humbly with me. (& Isaiah 1.13-17)

Maybe the comparison for us today is like saying:

'I go to church on Sundays, I'm a Christian', then you're selfish, thoughtless and mean all week; or abuse your spouse.

It's like saying, 'God, I'm sorry for my sin', then quickly n' carelessly doing it again.

Or like saying, 'I know my bible n' believe in Jesus' but then you don't love people.

It's a contradiction.

So more than religious actions, or empty words, love matters most.-----

1 John 4.20 says,(SLIDE)

If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

So have you been convicted of something?-----

And what are you going to do about it?-----

Coming back to Mark **12.34**, Jesus says the scribe answered wisely, and 'you are not far from the kingdom of God'.

But that doesn't mean he has entered the Kingdom of God.

The man understands what matters most in God's sight.

But even the original question, 'what command is most important?' focuses on human achievement.

Even knowing the truth that you should love God with your all, and love others, doesn't mean you do it. And it doesn't save you, does it?-----

The man's greatest need is that he be IN the Kingdom of God.

But that's not achieved by obeying the greatest commands, because none of us do.

None of us do what God asks. We all fall short.

It's Jesus and how we respond to him, that gives us entry into God's kingdom

Our response to Jesus is what will give us relationship with God and a place in his eternal kingdom.-----

That's why, with no one able to outsmart Jesus & no more questions, he asks them a question.

It's like he moves from defence to offense in **v35**, as he wants people to grapple with what matters most – their response to him.-----

He asks, 'How can the scribes say the Messiah is the son of David?'-----

You see, by the 1st century the common belief was that the Messiah, the Christ (the promised King & Saviour), would also be a descendant of King David.

And they were right.

2 Samuel 7 promised that,(SLIDE) and Isaiah 9(v6-7) says that too.

Now Jesus challenges them to work out what Psalm 110 means.

He quotes **Psalm 110 v1(SLIDE)**

There 'LORD' in capitals refers to God's covenant name, Yahweh.

And capital 'L' o-r-d, was understood to refer to the Messiah, the Christ.

But Jesus' reasonable question is, How can this Lord, David's descendant, sit at the right hand of God n' be David's Lord?

For usually a son is not greater than his father, nor ruling over his father.

So how can the Messiah be superior to David while also being his descendant?-----

Jesus' enemies are stumped. They have no answer (Matt 22.46).

And the people marvel at his wisdom.-----

Neil explained Psalm 110 and the parallel passage in Matthew 22 much more fully in Dec last year.

But in short, capitals L-O-R-D refers to God the Father, and capital L, o-r-d, is the Son of God.

It's only because Jesus is the Son of God and divine, that he can be David's Lord

Jesus is saying without saying, humanly speaking he is the King of David's line, and he's the divine Son of God.

It's a veiled reference of Jesus' Messiahship and Divinity.----- His lordship.-----

On the day of Pentecost the apostle Peter in **Acts 2(v29ff SLIDE)** declares that Jesus was killed on a cross, he was raised, then exalted to the right hand of God, with all authority.

Then he quotes Ps 110 and declares that Jesus is both 'Lord and Christ' (v36).

This means Jesus is the King of the world, and King of God's kingdom, who can bring you into relationship with God.

So your response to him really matters.

Your greatest need is to trust in Jesus, to forgive your sins, your lovelessness; and enable God to accept you. Have you?-----

And Is he the Lord of your life?-----

If Jesus is the Lord, then I ask, are you loving him, with all your heart, mind, soul & strength?-----

So we love God by loving his Son Jesus.------(Matt 10.37; John 8.42)

And **why should you and I love God**, love Jesus, love others?-----

For me, most of all, because God loves us.

1 John 4 says,(SLIDE)

⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ God's love was revealed among us^[b] in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice^[c] for our sins.

And v19, "We love^[f] because he first loved us.-----

God has loved me, that's why I love him back.

God has loved us in giving his only Son to be our sacrifice for sins. And Jesus loved us by giving up his life for us.

1 Jn 3.16 says,(SLIDE) This is how we have come to know love: He [Jesus] laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.---

Oh the living love of a dying Saviour!-----

If you do not love God, you will love something else, either the world, or sin.

You'll over-love other creatures, or just yourself.-----

Our God has loved us more than any other.

And he calls us to love him with our all.

And our love for our Lord Jesus will be seen in a love for others.-----

I close with an encouragement written by a guy called **Phil**, who works in a manufacturing workshop, and he says:

Most Christians spend a huge part of their waking hours at work. But how do Christians work? We love. Love is a big deal for us. In fact, God says it's the biggest deal (Mk12:28-31). It makes all the difference.

For almost 40 years, I've worked in many jobs, in several different cultures. Here are some things I've learned. (And what Phil says applies equally to you if you're studying)

Love intentionally.(SLIDE) If I want to really love my neighbour as myself, I'd best get to know them. No matter how busy my workshop gets, I try to make time to listen to and better understand at least one [person] each day. It usually means asking a question when we are working on something together, and listening.

Love prayerfully – consistent, focused, informed prayer. Choose one person at your workplace and start praying for them, every day for a month. As you listen and observe, you can pray in a more informed way. To help me be consistent, I also chose a spot on the drive to work each day to start praying for the blokes at work.

Love sacrificially. Put yourself out for the good of others. Often the 'smaller' sacrifices impact our non-Christian friends. One work mate's adult son had an issue that I could help with. I simply went to meet him on a Saturday. It meant heaps to him that I gave up my free time and travelled to help him.

Love by taking responsibility. Sometimes we come across as self-righteous when we let people know we follow Jesus. A mate of mine introduced himself to his army unit like this: "You should know that I follow Jesus. That means that you can always expect me to treat you with respect and to tell you the truth. If you think I'm not living up to it, feel free to let me know."

He put himself out there as a Christian, but the responsibility was on him. Often the boys in my workshop apologise to me when they swear. I tell them that they can swear if they like – that's their decision. I say I follow Jesus, so I should live to a different standard, not those who don't follow him.

Love with words. Is it enough to let our actions speak for themselves? If I love God & love my neighbour as myself, then I'll speak about God's love as well as living it-out.

One situation that comes up over n' over is Monday morning: "What did you do on the weekend?" Saying "I went to church" goes down like a lead balloon in most cases.

Sometimes I tell them a story like, I heard this story of a bloke who had two adult sons, and the younger one said to his dad, "Give me my half of the inheritance..." Their responses included things like: "Wow, what a great dad." There was no need to mention 'church' or 'sermon'. The main thing was to help people look at the father's character, and then let them know Jesus told the story about God, our Father.

Love in hard times. Work is not always easy. People see us most clearly when we're under pressure. When someone has caused a problem, what should we do? Forgiveness is a mark of love. We still need to fix the problem, but we can avoid putting people down when they do something wrong. And if the problem is of my own making, or from my own sin, Are we willing to take responsibility, to ask forgiveness?

Love together. The Christian life is not a solo effort. If you work with other Christians, pray together that you'd all honour God in your work, and for co-workers. Make sure you don't use work time to pray, or pray [for show].

Love life. Work is a big part of how God made us to live, but life is more than work. Don't forget the rest of life – family, church, neighbours – and don't forget to rest. How does being a workaholic show love for God and people? Resting is a real form of trusting God.

Love actually! Run with one of these ideas this week. I pray that you will live your life for Christ, at work and everywhere.

Which idea will you put into action?-----

My Dad had a big stroke, brain bleed on Friday, and I'm not sure what the near future holds for him – but he knows and we know, where he's going, because God has loved him. And having your loved ones approach death, reminds you that love matters most.

So Love God with your all, and love others, because Jesus is the Lord who has loved you.

Let's pray