

Intro

Back in Matthew. Let's recap where we were.

Jesus arrived in Jerusalem on Sunday (Palm Sunday). He's followed by crowds pronouncing him the Messiah. On Monday Jesus clears the temple and heals leading to praise. On Tuesday, challenged by the religious establishment (Pharisees, Sadducees, Sanhedrin), Jesus has goes on the offensive, telling them that tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the kingdom of heaven, but they would be excluded. Indicting them for rejecting God and killing the prophets.

Rejected by religious establishment. Loved by the crowds. This morning, the religious establishment continues to ask Jesus questions in hopes he'll ruin his credibility. In Jesus' response, we learn this:

BIG IDEA: Love for God drives everything

READ PASSAGE

PRAY

Body

Point 1: Love God with all your being

Explanation

A lawyer who was a Pharisee asks Jesus, "*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?*" (22:36).

"lawyer" = expert in interpreting religious law

"to test him" = not a genuine inquiry seeking understanding

"great" = in terms of status or importance

Jesus is clear and direct:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. – 22:37-38

"first" in terms of importance. Love for God is foundational to walking with God individually, and living as a local church.

Understandings of love

Love is a term we throw around all the time. What's most important is that we love each other. Love is what God really cares about. I love God because of all he's done for me. What does love really look like?

Love is a term thrown around in our culture. Falling in love. Falling out of love. A feeling that comes and goes. Making love. Love equated with lust or romantic activity. Love as something we enjoy doing. I love watching football. I love eating pizza.

What does love actually mean?

Lexical definitions

“to have love for someone or something, based on sincere appreciation and high regard – ‘to love, to regard with affection, loving concern’... [a] focus upon love and affection based on deep appreciation and high regard.” – Louw & Nida lexicon

“to have a warm regard for and interest in another, cherish, have affection for” – BDAG lexicon

▪ love = appreciation, regard, affection, cherish = affection devotion to someone that expresses itself in tangible action

Love for God in Scripture

1. Love for God is expressed in commitment or devotion

"No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money." – Matt 6:24

▪ love for God compared with devotion to him and serving him

Illustrations

A man's love for his wife drives him to reject pornography. A dog owner's love for their dog moves them to drop \$7,000 for a surgery. That's affection. Commitment to God is driven by affection for God!

2. Love can be a response to someone's actions

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. – John 10:17

▪ We love the Father because he sent the Son. We love the Son because he died for us. We love the Spirit because he transforms us. We love the Trinity because they had mercy on us.

The person who sees God as harsh and cold won't have the same commitment to God as the one who sees him as merciful and near. The person who sees God through their difficulties won't have the same commitment to God as the one who sees him through the cross.

3. Competing loves hinder love for God

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. – John 3:19

▪ love for sin...treasuring sin kills love for God

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. – 1 John 2:15

▪ world = fallen cultural systems that normalize sin and make righteousness odd, and even reprehensible

4. Love for God is expressed in obedience

"Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." – John 14:21

▪ genuine love for Jesus expresses itself in obedience

5. Love for God is the mark of true Christians

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. – Rom 8:28

Cultural understandings of love fall short in thinking love is temporary. In thinking love is feeling only. In limiting love to enjoyment. The commitment aspect is missing. Concrete actions that reflect love are missing. Love expresses itself in tangible actions. Mere feelings fall short of love. The man who says he loves his wife and beats her is speaking lies. The person who says they love God and acts like he doesn't exist is deceived.

With heart, soul, and mind

Heart = our inner self, our desires, our affections, our feelings, our intentions (affection for God falls within this category)

Soul = our inner life in terms of thinking, willing, feeling

Mind = our understanding of what is true, our logic, our thought life, our value judgments

Soul consists of both heart and mind. Heart emphasizes desires and emotions. Mind emphasizes intellect. The three are interrelated. Three aspects of our inner life. The point is **love God with all your being**, highlighting our inner life.

God wants us to think rightly about him. God wants us to desire what he desires. God wants us to experience emotions like he does. Love God with all your inner being, which inevitably results in external obedience.

Application

Well, how is this love for God expressed in everyday life?

When we're with God alone. When no one but God sees. My use of time in the office. What I claim on my taxes. What I do when bad images or advertisements show up at the bottom of a sports article. How I responded when having a really hard job at PNS.

In response to our circumstances. Trusting that God is working all things for our spiritual good or complaining or charging God with wrong? Do I engage life through the lens of entitlement or gratitude? Life is hard and people bring pain into our lives. Do I blame or trust God?

When I'm reading my Bible do I submit my judgment to his? Am I teachable? What if I'm reading a passage that reveals a sinful pattern in my life? What if a fellow believer points out a fault? Is my heart tender to God's word? Or do I harden up in rebellion? Do I love God with my mind when his word challenges me?

Love for God is a joyous delight in his being and actions. Who he is. What he does. When we delight in God, when we embrace his instruction, we live for God. That's love. That's devotion. That's obedience. Joy in God drives obedience, not duty.

Love for God is also expressed by love for neighbor...

Point 2: Love your neighbor because you love God

Explanation

Loving our neighbor as ourselves is the second commandment. Second in terms of rank. "Depend" means all the commandments found in the Old Testament are reflections of love for God and love for neighbor. All

the commands found in the New Testament reflect God's desire that we love him supremely and love our neighbor. Each and every commandment in Scripture reflects these two commands.

We tell the truth because we love God. We speak kindly to people because we love them.

The second commandment assumes we love ourselves. The second commandment also assumes we lack in love for neighbor. Our problem is an inordinate love for self. And lack of love for others. How is love for neighbor connected to love for God? Love for God, as the greatest commandment, grounds love for neighbor. We love neighbor because we first love God. Because we're devoted to God, we do what he commands. Because we delight in God and love him with our mind, we regard what he says as good and true. So we love our neighbor as a response to our love for God. What does love for neighbor look like?

1. Love denies self for another's good

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." – John 3:16

This act grounds Paul's instruction:

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. – Phil 2:3-4

- Love for self stands in the way of loving others.

2. Love is tangible

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. – 1 John 3:16-18

- Love moves beyond words and feelings.

3. Love corrects error

"For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." – Heb 12:6

- That's constructive criticism.

4. Love is forbearing

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" – Matt 5:43-46

- Loving difficult people who don't provide us with reasons to love them like God does.

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. – 1 Pet 4:8

- Covers in the sense of overlooking and continuing to love despite one's faults.

Application

Everything we do is a reflection of our love for God or lack thereof. Our speech. Our use of time and money. The time we give to prayer and the Bible. Our attitude towards circumstances. Our response to God's commands. Our attitude towards people. Our response to people. Our treatment of people.

How I treat my brother is truly a response to my God. Does my treatment of my brother reflect obedience to God's word? Or does my treatment of my brother reflect rejection of God's word? Everything we do in life reflects our love for God, or lack thereof, because everything we do in life is either obeying or rejecting God's word. Everything I do is either trusting God or rejecting God.

It's easy to love God. He's perfect. He doesn't make mistakes. He died for me. He gave me mercy. He gives me wisdom to live well. He's given me a new heart. He works good in my life. Heaven awaits.

People not so easy. God helps. People make life hard. God gives. People take. God forgives. People not so much. God is compassionate. People care about themselves. There was a time in justifying my sin I would have said I love God more than people. Putting love for God against loving people when Jesus puts them together. God calls us to love difficult people. Because we love him.

Loving our neighbor, loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, is an act of faith. Faith is a heart response towards God.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. – Gal 5:6

Galatians 5:6 teaches us that faith is at work through love. In other words, faith empowers loving actions towards others. And faith is a response to God.

Mind receives truth about God → Heart delights in that truth → God's word trusted → love for neighbor (acting on trusted truth that's loved)

Examples

Love inside and outside the church might be reflected in taking interest in someone. Introducing yourself. Starting conversation. Or knowing a need and acting to alleviate it. Giving your time and money. Taking interest in someone's spiritual good. Providing instruction, counsel, or correction. Listening. Sharing the gospel verbally. Basic things. Not just exceptional things. Love is tangible. Love moves beyond thoughts and feelings.

Love isn't something we're either perfect at or incapable of. It's something we should be increasing in. I'm assuming we are in desperate need for the Spirit to work love in us. You don't hear this sermon and instantly love perfectly. I'm judging myself as I put this together. If we're honest we know we fall short and need God's empowering grace for progress.

Point 3: Submit to God in love (22:41-46)

Explanation

Jesus turns the tables and asks the questions. *"What do you think about the Christ? Who's son is he?"* (22:42). They answer, *"The Son of David."* The common Jewish understanding that the Messiah (Christ = Messiah) would be a descendant of David. Jesus then throws a curveball, quoting from Psalm 110:1 where

David has a Lord who will sit at the right hand of the Father (place of honor and authority), and the Father will put all this Lord's enemies under his feet = exultation.

Jesus asks, *"If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son?"* (22:45). In other words, how can David's Lord also be his son? Jesus is the son of David who is David's Lord. The Messiah is both a descendant of David and the Son of God who will sit at the Father's right hand. The Messiah is exalted to honor that belongs to God alone, so he can't be a mere man. No more questions. Pharisees defeated.

Application

Jesus is Lord. The Son of God. God whom we're called to love with all our heart, soul, and mind. The Lord who gives commands. We obey Jesus because we love Jesus.

Non-Christians

Why do Christians devote their lives to Jesus' teachings? We obey Jesus because we love Jesus. We delight in who he is. We delight in his words. We revere him as Lord. We know that one day he will return to establish universal peace, punish rebellion, and reward the faithful.

Conclusion

Love for God drives everything. So Jesus says **Love God with all your being.** From love for God flows love for neighbor. **Love your neighbor because you love God.** We love our neighbor because we first love God. Love for neighbor is essentially a response to God. **Submit to God in love.** We submit to Jesus as our Lord because we love him.