

“The Greatest Commandment – Part 2”
Mark 12:28-34
(Preached at Trinity, February 19, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we saw last time, one of the Pharisees asks Jesus a question.
Mark 12:28 NAU - "What commandment is the foremost of all?"
Jesus answer can be summed up with a single word - - LOVE
2. With love we find our highest duty
 - a. Paul set forth love as a debt we owe to all men
Romans 13:8 NAS - "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law."
 - b. This was not a new law
Deuteronomy 6:4 – "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."
 - c. From the beginning a true relationship with God has been a matter of the heart.
True obedience can only come from the heart
Deuteronomy 30:6 – "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."
 - d. It was not a new law, yet in Christ it was renewed in its fullness so that it became the chief mark of our Lord's Kingdom.
John 13:34 NAU - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
1 John 2:7 NAU - "Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. ⁸ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. ⁹ The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him."
3. Paul made it clear that the law can only be kept by love.
Galatians 5:14 NAS - "For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
He didn't say that love *replaced* the Law but *fulfilled* the Law. Anything else is only an empty legalism.

4. This ἀγάπη love is only possible for one who has been transformed by the regenerating grace of God. It is an outward expression of the power of the Gospel.
This love is a volitional, willful action – a purposeful, unselfish service to others.
 5. I pointed out last time that this ἀγάπη love has two objects – God supremely and our fellow man. Last time we looked at the highest and supreme object of our love.
Mark 12:30 NAS - "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."
 6. Tonight I want us to examine the practical exercise of that love directed at our fellow man, but particularly toward the brethren.
Matthew 25:40 – “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done *it* unto me.”
1 John 5:1 NAU - "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him."
 7. But we must also love all men - Our neighbor as our self.
Mark 12:30-31 NAS - "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' ³¹ "The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
- I. As we saw regarding our love towards God, our love towards our fellow man is evidence of genuine saving faith. It is a high test to examine whether we are Christians
2 Corinthians 13:5 NAS - "Test yourselves *to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!* "
- A. Again, our examination must begin by using objective truth – by comparing our lives to the Biblical standard—and the Biblical record is clear.
1 John 2:9-11 NAS - "The one who says he is in the light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes."
John 13:35 NAU - "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
 - B. We owe this love to all men
 1. To our fellow man in general – our neighbor
 - a. Luke’s account of the Parable of the Good Samaritan defines our neighbor. The Good Samaritan – **Luke 10:25-37**
 - b. Jesus taught that we must even love our enemy – **See Matthew 5:43-48**
 - c. We love them because they are God’s high work of creation.
Job 7:17-18 NAS - "What is man that Thou dost magnify him, And that Thou art concerned about him, ¹⁸ That Thou dost examine him every morning, And try him every moment?"

Psalm 8:3-4 NAS - "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; ⁴ What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?"

- (1) God sent forth His Son in likeness of human flesh
- (2) Six of the Ten Commandments deal with how we treat one another.
- (3) To take the life of a human being is a high crime punishable by death. Jesus said anger & hatred are seeds of murder.

d. We are also to love them because we are living in an age of mercy. We who have received mercy must be merciful.

Matthew 5:44-45 NAS - "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you ⁴⁵ in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous."

2. Our highest obligation is to the brethren

Galatians 6:10 NAU - "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

This is the greatest evidence of our Christian conversion

1 John 3:14 NAS - "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death."

II. What does this love demand?

A. It demands sincerity

1 Peter 1:22 NAS - "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,"

1. The word for "sincere" means unhypocritical
2. Some hide hatred and bitterness in a cloak of pretended love. They flatter with their lips while holding a dagger in their heart.

Proverbs 29:5 NAU - "A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps."

3. A love void of action is a hypocritical love fueled by a hypocritical faith
James 2:15-17 NAS - "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? ¹⁷ Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself."
4. It doesn't matter how religious you become, if you don't love you are nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:3 NAS - "And if I give all my possessions to feed *the* poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

5. Sincere love is fervent love. It is strong and lasting.

1 Peter 4:8 NAU - "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."

C. It demands pity – We are sinners just as they are.

1 Peter 3:8-9 – "Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be pitiful, be courteous*: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

1. The brethren are full of imperfections in this life. We must deal with each other in compassion
2. We may disagree. Your brother may have more light than you, or less. We must labor together in love
3. We must be willing to bind up the bruised and broken. To uplift the weak

D. It demands forgiveness

Mark 11:25 NAU - "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions."

Colossians 3:12-14 NAU - "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. ¹⁴ Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

1 Peter 4:8 NAU - "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."

1. Love causes us to not be easily offended. Things are going to happen. We must be willing to forgive. To overlook one another's mistakes, insensitive comments.
2. We must be slow to anger, quick to forgive – God has forgiven us greatly Satan often uses a harsh unforgiving spirit to divide and weaken the brethren and to do great harm to the church

E. It demands humility – placing others above ourselves

Philippians 2:1-4 NAS - "If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

1. Pride has not yet been annihilated in any of us. We must labor to put every last measure of pride to death. It is pride that brings us to despise others. Racism is wicked pride. Jealously & envy start with pride.

2. True love creates humility
1 Corinthians 13:5-7 NAU - "does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, ⁶ does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."
 3. We must rejoice when others surpass us. We must labor for each other's advancement
Philippians 2:3 NAS - " Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;
- F. It demands that we pray for one another
1. As Christians we need to understand how infinitely connected we are.
 - a. The condition of one affects us all.
1 Corinthians 12:26-27 NAU - "And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it."
 - b. Even our sins affect each other
James 5:16 NAU - "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed."
 2. If we love one another we must continually intercede on each other's behalf. This is even demonstrated with our enemies
Matthew 5:44 – "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"
 3. We must pray for all men—all kinds of men.
1 Timothy 2:1 – "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men;"
 4. We have a particular responsibility for each other
Galatians 6:10 – "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Conclusion:

1. We need to pray that love would increase in our own hearts. Love is a grace that flowers in our soul. It enhances our holiness.
 Thomas Watson – "The body may as soon thrive while it has the plague as a soul that is infected with malice. While Christians are debating, grace is abating. As hatred increases, holiness declines."
2. Animosity between brothers hinders worship. Weakens our church
Matthew 5:23-24 NAU - "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."

3. Love is a true mark of holiness. Think of the most holy Christians you have met. Were they not fired with love for the brethren?
This was our Master's highest command for us.
John 13:34 – "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."
John 15:12 – "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."
John 15:17 – "These things I command you, that ye love one another."
4. May this love abound in us more and more.