

LORDSHIP OF CHRIST AND LOVE
(SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 2011)

SCRIPTURE READING: 10 COMMANDMENTS; MATTHEW 22:34-46

INTRODUCTION

On June 25, 1967 the world's first live, global television event took place, entitled *Our World*. It was on this broadcast watched by an estimated 400 million people that the Beatles performed the song, "All You Need Is Love." Here at last was a message that could be understood by all people of every nation. Lennon later admitted that the song like others he wrote were propaganda songs. They were part of the false gospel that he and others made lots of money proclaiming.¹

I am no expert on the 1960's, but I would say that the reason why this decade was so influential was because there was little standing against the flood of lies.

How many people today would very much identify with the blasphemous notion that all you need today is love? Love and tolerance are the greatest two virtues of the day. Satan's greatest lies come from the twisting of God's truth and law.

We deal today with the final two exchanges between Jesus and the Pharisees. What makes these portions of Matthew's gospel so very tragic is that the Pharisees should have been the most receptive to the teachings of our Lord. As we have noted now many times, Jesus spoke very harshly to them. Some of them were guilty of committing the unforgivable sin – blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Jesus directly challenged and defeated the Pharisees not simply out of anger or frustration. No, Jesus importantly needed to show that they didn't have the answers to what Israel needed to do to find salvation.

In these final two exchanges we deal with two related themes – Love and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is very appropriate to consider these two themes together.

One challenge that comes from our passage today is this. The Lordship of Christ should be clearly seen in your love. True love for God and man must be connected to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will first look at the two encounters of Jesus with His opponents separately and then conclude with further reflection, application, and preparation for our celebration of the Lord's Supper.

1. MATTHEW 22:34-40 – WHAT IS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT?

Verse 34 states that the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees. Verse 33 only records that the multitudes were astonished at Jesus' teaching. The Sadducees had nothing to say in response to Jesus showing the doctrine of the resurrection is firmly based in God's covenant promises.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_You_Need_Is_Love

The Pharisees and Sadducees did not always get along very well. In Acts 23, when Paul brought up the subject of the resurrection to the Jewish Sanhedrin, a serious argument broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees.

When the Pharisees recognized that the multitudes were astonished at Jesus' teaching, they realized they could not just be happy to see the Sadducees silenced, but that they needed to do something to try to change the situation away from Jesus' advantage.

And so we read at the end of verse 34 that the Sadducees gathered together. Another way this could be translated is, "they took counsel together." What OT passage reads, "And the rulers take counsel together?" The answer is Psalm 2:2. Matthew in verse 34, perhaps intentionally, used the same verb found in the Greek translation of Psalm 2:2.² The Pharisees took counsel together against the LORD and against His anointed.

Their plan was put into action through the question of one of the Pharisees who more specifically is identified as a lawyer. This is the only time the word lawyer appears in Matthew, but we have seen mention before of scribes. Scribes were the professional scholars of the law. The word lawyer is a synonym for scribe.³

Again we see that the Pharisees were not just looking for true instruction but they came testing Jesus, as we read in verse 35.

Teacher, which is the great or greatest commandment in the law?⁴

This question was asked in an attempt to test Jesus, though it was not an unfair or ridiculous question. There are a number of places in Scripture where we find a summary of man's duty before God. Can you think of some OT passages which give a summary of the law? Answers could include Psalm 15 or Micah 6:8.

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

Jewish rabbis commonly discussed OT Law and which commandments were of greatest priority.⁵ According to later Jewish tradition, there are a total of 613 commandments in the five books of Moses. This equals the number of letters in the 10 Commandments. Of these commandments 248 are positive, as many as the members of the human body, and 365 are negative, as many as the days in the year.⁶

The Pharisees must have been hoping that Jesus would give an answer to this question that somehow would make him unpopular with the people or an answer that they could somehow use against Him.

² France, 843-844; Hagner, 646.

³ France, 844.

⁴ Translations vary between great and greatest.

⁵ France, 842.

⁶ A.T. Robertson, *Robertson's Word Pictures of the NT*, s.v. Matthew 22:36. Robertson here was citing Vincent.

Jesus gave the greatest answer to this question. The heart of the law is love. The greatest commandment is found in Deuteronomy 6:5.

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

Let me repeat some basic comments I made on this verse when we looked at it about a year ago.

First, we know that this love is not just a sentimental feeling. True love is obedience as Scripture states many times. Jesus himself stated, “If you love Me, **keep My commandments.**” **And yet we should note that the Lord doesn’t merely command you to obey but to love.** Love and obedience are to be perfectly combined. And when they are combined there is true beauty.

Second, we are love the LORD **our God**. The word LORD in Deut. 6:5 translates the name, Yahweh, God’s covenant name that He revealed to Moses. We are not simply to love God, but to love the LORD, our God. As Jesus taught we pray to our Heavenly Father. We pray to our Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is not some distant force or person, but one who has first reached out in love to you. You are to then know Him as your God.

Third, we see this commandment showing that true love means loving God with the totality of who you are – heart, soul, and mind.

Do you pray most of all that your love for God would be strengthened? Do you see that loving God is your greatest duty from which all other duties flow? Here is the heart of obedience.

Jesus most wisely did not just give the greatest commandment but gave then also the commandment that is like it.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

All men and women love themselves. Paul in Ephesians 5:29 stated, “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it...” Men and women may not love themselves in the right way, but all people love themselves. God commands that you love your neighbor with the same intensity of love that you have for yourself.

Jesus here quoted from the last part of Leviticus 19:18. This is the third time that Jesus referred to this passage.

The first reference to this passage is found in Matthew 5:43-48 where Jesus corrected the opinion of those who said you should love your neighbor but hate your enemy. Listen again to the very challenging words of Jesus found in verses 44-48.

44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, **45** that you may be sons of your Father 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 have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **47** And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? **48** Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Jesus stated that all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. These two commandments are like a pair of hinges on which the door of the entire OT turns.⁷ We will later return to this important thought.

2. MATTHEW 22:41-46 – HOW IS JESUS DAVID’S LORD?

Verse 41 states that while the Pharisees were still gathered together, Jesus then asked them a question.

We should see at least three connections of this passage with the previous passage and with other parts of chapters 21 and 22. There is first a connection in time as we see in verse 41. Second, there is a connection in terms of similar language. The greatest commandment is that you shall love the Lord your God. Jesus here asks how the Messiah can both be the son and Lord of David. Third, we should see a connection in terms of authority.

One of main themes in chapters 21 and 22 is the authority of Jesus Christ. Who is this Jesus who enters the city as the Messiah, riding on a donkey? Who is this Jesus who dares to turn over tables and chase out the money changers and those who sold doves? Who is this Jesus who receives the worship of the children who cried to Him, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Who is this Jesus to speak three parables declaring judgment especially upon the Jewish leadership and those who reject Him? The answer is found in Psalm 110.

Jesus began with a simple question to the Pharisees.

What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?

This was a simple but a very important question. What does the first verse in Matthew say? **The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.**

Stupid scholars here like to suggest that Jesus was somehow denying that He was the Son of David, but that makes no sense of what was taking place in this discussion. Jesus asked them an initial question to then prepare the way for the more challenging question which followed after the Pharisees correctly responded.

How then does David in the Spirit call Him “Lord” saying:

**The LORD said to my Lord,
Sit at My right hand,
Till I make your enemies your footstool?**

⁷ BDAG, s.v. “κρεμάννυμι,” 566.

If David then calls Him ‘Lord’ how is He his Son?

Two weeks ago we looked in much greater detail at Psalm 110 than we will today. But observe again four things that we see from Jesus and His quotation from Psalm 110:1.

Jesus identified David as the author of this Psalm as we find in the inspired inscription of the Psalm. There are those who simply respond by saying, “Well, Jesus was just saying that which was commonly accepted by those of His own day.” In other words, we know a lot more about Scripture than Jesus did. There are many who have the arrogance to say this.

Second, we see that David wrote this Psalm in the Spirit, in other words through the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that David was able to write about his Lord a thousand years before His Lord came to the earth as Jesus the Messiah.

Third, we should again note that the word Lord appears twice. The first LORD is the OT covenantal name for God, Yahweh or Jehovah. The second Lord is the word which means Master or Sovereign. It is a title of great respect.

Fourth, we must understand that a son would never be called Lord in Jewish thinking. Just the opposite. Children could correctly call their fathers by this title, but never would a Jewish father call his son, ‘Lord.’ This is why Jesus pressed this point. If David calls this one in Psalm 110, Lord, how can this one also be the Son of David?

There is no answer explicitly given here, but we by God’s grace can give the answer here. Jesus is David’s Lord because He is the Son of God. Jesus is David’s Lord, because Jesus is divine.

We don’t have to understand just from this exchange all that the New Testament teaches about the doctrine of the Trinity. This passage doesn’t contain all that we need to know, but it is a very important part of what we do learn in Scripture. And what an important point Jesus was making before the fullness of His suffering and death just a few days later.

Jesus did not just go around telling people, “I am the second person of the Trinity, who became incarnate, by adding to my divine person a fully human nature.” There are some who expect Jesus to have made statements like this and so they say, Jesus never really claimed to be God.

But for those who humble themselves before the Word of God, it is so clear and refreshing what we find our Lord saying about Himself. It is so refreshing to know the testimony of Scripture concerning our Lord Jesus Christ.

John Calvin here wrote:

Here the Holy Spirit puts into the mouth of all the godly a song of triumph, that they may boldly defy Satan and all the ungodly, and mock at their rage, when they endeavor to drive Christ from his throne. That they may not hesitate or tremble, when they perceive great emotions produced in the earth, they are commanded to place the holy and inviolable decree of God in opposition to all

the exertions of adversaries. The meaning therefore is: whatever may be the madness of men, all that they shall dare to contrive will be of no avail for destroying the kingdom of Christ, which has been set up, not by the will of men, but by the appointment of God, and therefore is supported by everlasting strength. Whenever this kingdom is violently attacked, let us call to remembrance this revelation from heaven; for undoubtedly this promise was put into the hand of Christ, that every believer may apply it to his own use. But God never changes or deceives, so as to retract what has once gone out of his mouth.⁸

3. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION:

The Lordship of Christ should be clearly seen in your love.

I would like to discuss two points of application before we come to our celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The first point is this. We need to vigorously pursue and hold sound doctrine while seeking to grow in true love for God and man. This point of application comes from the two sections we have considered. There is absolutely no conflict between seeking to do both, even though many suggest that doctrine merely divides while love holds people together. Many Christians and local churches don't seem to do a very good job pursuing both sound doctrine and demonstrating Christ-like love.

1John 3:23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and **love** one another, as He gave us commandment.

And let me speak here especially to the older and even younger children in this church. This local church is not the only faithful local church in Illinois or our nation. We have a testimony of God's blessing as well as many stories of failure to do and be all that God has called us to be. But I think it can be said that we do take seriously the need to rightfully understand God's Word. We believe in sound doctrine, and we believe that we are called to be local church that shows the love of Christ. So in some cases we do things very differently than what takes place in other churches. Our services are probably more serious, less dramatic, some might even say somewhat boring. Whatever others might say is not what matters. It is what God says that must be what truly matters.

And again speaking to children, your goal must be to both grow in your understanding of God and His Word as well as growing in your love for God and for others. This by God's grace must be your desire, and it must involve your best effort. Love and understanding do not just happen on their own. Love costs you something if it is true love. Love for God means you must love Him more than anything else. Love for others means you give up that which you have for others. Understanding God and His Word means that you give up things that are less important to receive that which is greater.

⁸ John Calvin, *Harmony of the Gospels*, s.v. Matthew 22:44.

The letters to the 7 churches in Revelation that we studied a number of years ago are very instructive in thinking about the importance of sound doctrine and love.

Recall the church at Ephesus. In quite a few ways it was a very faithful church. The church in Ephesus was commended for its works, labor, patience, and its intolerance for those who are evil. It tested those who claimed to be apostles and yet who were liars. The church persevered through trial. It labored for the name of Christ without giving up.

And yet this church had a tremendous blind spot and so a strong word of repentance was issued to this church. What was this church's great sin? **It had left its first love.**

When we studied this passage, I suggested that this love was the love they were commanded to show towards each other.

Think of the loss of their first love in terms of a relationship of a family. It doesn't mean that you start hating, but it does mean that there is a wall of separation and coldness. There is a slowness to sacrifice and help. There is a loss of support and encouragement through prayer. Instead there is just business as usual – routine replacing relationship. This is something that can be experienced in all our differing relationships and is something that a church can experience both in its relationship with God and its relationship to each other. Though the church of Ephesus was orthodox, they had departed from the position that they once had – a fervent love for each other. A love that was manifested not just in warm feeling but in action, in deeds of sacrifice and true help.

Churches that are serious about doctrinal orthodoxy may be tempted to excuse a lack of love. Love is keeping the commandments with respect to each other, but one of the commandments is that we love each other. So love is action, but it is action with warmth and compassion. It certainly is not just warm, fuzzy feelings, but it is also not just a cold and distant relationship.⁹

Second, consider again the words of Jesus found in verse 40, “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” The OT some would say is anything but loving. The OT is considered primitive, vindictive, cold, unloving. But Jesus states that the entire OT hangs on love for God and love for man. This the central focus of the entire OT. This is not just my clever summary or the summary of some wise scholar – this is the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Finally, consider how beautifully the Lord's Supper fits in with the context of our passage from Matthew.

As I mentioned earlier, Jesus triumphed over the Pharisees not long before His moment of greatest suffering and what can also be described as the greatest demonstration of love.

This text has called attention to your duty to love God and to love others, but this text also calls you to focus on your Lord and Savior. And so we celebrate not our love but the Lord's love. It is when we were most unloving and unlovable that Christ showed His love

⁹ Taken in part from my sermon, The Church at Ephesus – Do the First Works (Sunday, Jan. 1, 2006).

for us by dying for us. Because we have all failed in loving as we should we look not to our own goodness or knowledge. In faith we celebrate what Jesus did for us.

Rom. 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; **4** and perseverance, character; and character, hope. **5** Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Communion Hymn: 364

Benediction – Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.