

Hanging Out With Jesus: How To Love The Way God Wants Us To Love

Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34

Good morning, men! We have a number of things I'd like to do. We have Area Directors in town for their first training which we call Ministry Partners Development. We have 10 men in town this week, and so I would like the Area Directors to stand where they are right now, and I wonder if you would join me in greeting these men from all around the country? Thank you, men! These men have just begun the journey, and their mission is to go back to a region of a thousand churches and their communities, and build relationships with about a hundred of those churches over the next three years and help them become more active in making disciples. We are honored to have them here this morning.

We also want to do a shout out this morning. We have a new group that's joining us, they've been around for about four weeks. Three guys at the Hollowell Brethren in Christ Church of Waynesboro, PA. Leader is Darryl McPherson, they're a new group meeting on Wednesday's using the video Bible Study. Darryl has said that each week they're already starting to go deeper with each other. So I wonder if you would join me in giving a warm Man in the Mirror welcome to these men. One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, glad you're here!

I had a birthday this week! It was great, my wife bought me a lovely card. On the card, she had wrote you're the answer to my prayers. You're not what I prayed for, but you're the answer I got. Gotta love it!

We're coming to a famous passage today. We're doing a series called *Hanging Out With Jesus* for those of you who are visiting. We're going through the Gospels one story at a time in chronological order. We're now on Tuesday of the passion week, three days before the Lord will be crucified. It's a day where he's encountering all kinds of religious leaders and they're asking him all kinds of questions. This is probably one of the more famous passages that we come to today. The title of the message is *How To Love The Way God Wants Us To Love*. We're going to begin in Mark 12 at verse 28.

You cut the Bible and it bleeds love. God loves you very much. For love, God created you. For love, God knit you together in your mother's womb. It's very interesting. Where does life even come from? Two rocks didn't mate one day and create life. You didn't really evolve from amoeba's mating, there's a much greater force at work in the world, and this is of course what we call God. For love, God has created you, and sent his son into the world. For love, God died for your sins. The most powerful force in the world is love, and the Bible says that God is love. The greatest attribute that he has is love. There is no other attribute or characteristic of God that can account for why God would want to enter into time and space and have a relationship with us. It's not his holiness, it's not his omnipotence, it's not his omniscience, it's not his omnipresence, but it is his love that gave him a motivation to be involved in our lives. He's done for love what he would do for no other reason.

What God Wants Most

The first thing I want us to look at is what God wants most in response to this way that he has loved us. Verse 28:

One of the teachers of the law (a scribe, lawyer or teacher. This is not a lawyer in the traditional sense of what we know, but a lawyer who is well versed in the Mosaic law) came and heard them debating (this is Jesus debating with the Sadducees about the resurrection). Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

Now it's interesting, because Jesus could have said anything he wanted to say at this point. Jesus could have said the most important thing is to do good works. He could have said the most important thing for you to do is to make sure that justice prevails in the world. How many of you are pastors? He could have said the most important thing for you to do is tithe, which would have made the pastors very happy! He could have said the most important thing is to live an aesthetic life, to take a vow of poverty, but he didn't do that did he. He could have said anything that he wanted to say, and here's what he said, verse 29:

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one (this is the Shema in the Hebrew life from Deuteronomy). Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

So if you can only do one thing, make it this. Then, verse 32:

"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices (which of course was the way of the old covenant)."

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

So all the questions asked of him Tuesday came to an end there. We're going to leave this passage now. Turn with me to Matthew 22. This particular text is in two of the four Gospels. There are different nuances in the way that the human authors portray them. All the things that are being said here today were said, but every Gospel writer practiced selection. He wrote down the things that he in his own human nature were the things God was leading him to write. Chapter 22 verse 34:

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

In the Talmud, which was the Jewish law, there's the Torah. The Pentateuch is the most classic and pure form of the Torah of the law, but then what happened is teachers began writing commentaries, making notes about it. It was all oral tradition at first, and most of it at this time is still oral tradition, but the Talmud takes the law and interprets it, makes comments about. So by the time that Jesus is making this statement, there are about six hundred major commandments in the law. Nobody could possibly understand it all! Is there some master key, some golden gateway? Is there some overarching idea that

pulls the essence of this law into one place? Jesus said yes, on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. Like what the living Bible says, keep these two and you will find you are keeping all the others. Augustine famously said love God and do what you want. What he meant was that if you really are loving God, everything else will align. So this is your North Star of spirituality here.

There are some other verses that you will want to look up, they're in the questions. I don't think we'll take the time to do them right now, but Romans 13 talks about how all of the commandments are summed up in this one, love your neighbor as yourself. If you keep that law you'll find that you are keeping the others. Then Galatians 5:14 basically says the same thing. This is what the text says, the most important thing that you and I can do in response to the great love that God has had for us. But because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy has made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions and sins. It is by grace we are saved through faith, but God showed his great love for us by sending his son Christ to die for our sins. The way that we respond to this is that we are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, strength, the totality of our being.

Some of you know that one of my favorite verses is Jeremiah 20:9. Jeremiah had been persecuted, locked up, and beaten. He's complaining to God that I do everything you ask and what do I get? I'm just doing what you said, calling down hellfire and sulfur to destroy the people with doom and destruction. I can't understand why they're mad at me, and I don't understand why you're allowing this to happen! Then he says in chapter 20 verse 9:

But if I say, "I will not mention his word or speak anymore in his name," his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.

Wouldn't you like to have that kind of passion for God? Wouldn't you like to love God like that? The title of this message is *How To Love The Way God Wants Us To Love*. That's how God wants us to love. He wants us to love him that much! Which is only a fraction of how he has loved us!

Every week, as some of you know, I have a preparation worksheet that's about eight pages. I use that to keep me on track when I'm preparing a message each week because I think I'm a smart guy. If I don't use this, I outsmart myself, and I get away from teaching you the Bible and what it says, and teach you my own best thinking. I don't want to do that. So one of the things I have on this worksheet is a section on what I call clarity, resonance and passion. In this section, I say that a poor message will make the obvious obscure. A good message will make the obscure obvious. But a great message will make the obvious obvious. So what is obvious here today? If this is what God wants most, to love him with that kind of intensity, that kind of intentionality, what is obvious? You can't do it! You can't love God like that, that's what's obvious. It's impossible to love God like this! So because it's impossible for us to love God like this, we turn to Jesus Christ and put our faith in him, because he does love the father like that. The two things that God wants is that he wants to have a reciprocal love relationship with you. He's going to love you even if you don't love him, but he wants a reciprocal love relationship.

The best way I know how to illustrate how much God loves me is to think about the birth of my first born, my daughter. I remember bringing her home from the hospital. My wife was exhausted. She laid down. I was exhausted, I laid down on my back on the bed, and I had this little creature that I had made, that I had created. So I put this little lump of flesh face down on my chest and I felt the warmth of that body flooding into my chest, and I could feel that little heart thumping. It was the sweetest experience I've ever had. The love that I felt at that moment, that overwhelming sense of love, the love of the father for the child, there is no sacrifice I wouldn't make for that child. God loves you that much and he

wants you and I to reciprocate in this with all our minds, hearts, souls, and strength, but we can't do that. But Jesus can do that, Jesus did do that.

The second thing he wants you and me to do is he wants us to love our neighbors as ourselves. To love other people the way that we ourselves have been loved. Let me ask you this question: Do you think that God would tell you that this is the most important thing you should do, and then not give you the power to do it? Of course not! He would never do that! That's why we have this option of putting our faith in Jesus and allowing Jesus in us to give us the power. My grace is sufficient for you, Jesus said, for my power is made perfect in your weakness. The Big Idea today is this: **God will never ask you to do something that He will not also give you the power to do.**

Philippians 2:13, for it is God who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It is God who works in us both to give us the power and the desire to do his will. One thing we know about God's love, it is resistible, temporarily. God's love is resistible temporarily, but God's love is also brutal, because if you don't love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength through the power that Jesus enables you to love him with, then he is going to allow futility into your life. You're going to end up feeling like Solomon at some point. Meaningless! Meaningless! Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless, a chasing after the wind, so you will end up feeling futile because you didn't get what you wanted, or you will end up feeling futile because you did get what you wanted! Whether you get what you want or you don't get what you want, because of this incredible love that the father has for us, if we do not reciprocate, then he is going to introduce futility. The whole of creation has been subjected to futility, not by its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, God. Why? So that the whole of creation might be liberated from our bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of light. He loves you! He is committed to the brutality of grace, to do whatever it takes to bring us to a place where we don't want to resist him.

I had lunch with a guy the other day and we were talking about all this. I said the problem with the man whose belief system has failed him is the only belief system that he has to evaluate his reality is the system that did fail him. So you need a new system. This is the new system. Love is the operating principle of the universe. It's not intellect, it's not reason, the most powerful force in the world is love! It's not money, power, will power, nor determination. All of these are important forces, but the most powerful force in the world is his love!

Why It's So Important To Him

Why is this so important to him, that we love him with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength, and love our neighbors as ourselves? Turn with me to Luke 10. In this passage we find the same principle that we found in the other two texts, but it's at a different time. It's much earlier, we've already been through this story once, and this is the parable of the good Samaritan. In this particular verse, it's not Jesus saying love God, but it is the person who asked the question who is saying it. I want you to just see what it says, verse 25:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus (this is a different time, a different story, but very similar). "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Wow! So he's asking the right question. Heinrich Van Loon writes this book *The Story of Mankind* and he talks about a big block of granite. Picture this in your mind, it's 100 cubic feet, and every 1,000 years a little bird comes along and sharpens its beak on the block of granite. However long it will take for that

little bird to wear down that block of granite into powdery dust is the first blink of eternity's eye. And you're worried about payroll today! What must I do to inherit eternal life? Then Jesus says:

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

So instead of telling him love God and so forth, he says how do you read it? In verse 27 he answers:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Sidebar, people have tried to sort of parse all this out, as in loving God with all your soul is different than loving him with all your strength, etc. That's not really what Jesus is getting at here. He's trying to communicate that it's everything! It's the totality of who you are which you are to love him with, so don't get hung up on that. Jesus says in verse 28:

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

So you'll be there when that little bird comes by every 1,000 years and you'll get to watch him sharpen his beak! Why this is so important to God that we have this reciprocal love relationship is because of this. Do this and you will live! This is the evidence of our faith. Galatians 5:6 the only thing that counts is faith, expressing itself through love.

There's another reason that this is so important and it's what we already read before, because all the law and the prophets hang on these two things. So do these two things and you'll find you will be doing everything that God thinks is important for human beings to do! If we will love him and other people, that takes care of everything, because everything he wants us to do is a subset of those two things! Justice, taking care of the poor, mercy, whatever it is! It's all summarized in these two things. I love that about God! It gives us this simplicity of how we can have this reciprocal relationship with him. There's so much more! Why do I always run out of time?

We're going to do a little video here. This is a sports caster at Ohio State University, a local sports caster whose daughter was tragically killed in an accident. This is his first day back on the job. The reason God wants us to love him is for eternal life and here's why he wants us to love our neighbor. Let's watch:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMa51rk7jRo>

Go thou and do likewise! **God will never ask you to do something that He will not also give you the power to do.** Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our dearest father, you have told us that you love us so much and you have told us that you want a reciprocal love relationship with us, that you want us to love you with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength and then to love our neighbors as ourselves. Lord, your word says that you will never call on us to do something that you will not also give us the power to do. So we pray, Father, that we would leave here today with eyes opened, hearts opened, minds opened, to receive your love and to give it back to you and all people. In Jesus' name, amen!