

# The Gospel Of The Kingdom

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew in the 22nd chapter, Matthew chapter 22. We're continuing our study through the Gospel of Matthew, and today we're looking at verses 34 through verse 40.

So if you'll look there with me, beginning in Matthew 22, verse 34. But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. Teacher, which is the greatest commandment of the law? And he said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, again, we ask for your Spirit's help in the preaching of your word, that you would speak through your messenger, and that we'd see the truth of your word, and that Christ would be exalted in the preaching.

[ 1 : 1 7 ] We pray this in his name. Amen. Amen. So, our passage today actually references something that we saw last week with Jesus' interaction with the Sadducees.

He had thoroughly answered them concerning the resurrection. It says here he had silenced them. And so, that being said, the Pharisees heard how Jesus had silenced the Sadducees.

It's possible some of them could have even been present to overhear or see the interaction. And so, they gathered together. And I think based on what we've seen so far, since Jesus has entered into Jerusalem, we can assume that they gathered together for a new plan of attack.

He's defeated the Sadducees. He beat their argument. Is there some new question, some new argument that we could have against Jesus? And so, one of their own, who is also a lawyer, asked Jesus about the law.

Now, you may remember that the Pharisees and the Sadducees disagreed concerning the resurrection. We talked about that last week. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection. The Sadducees denied the resurrection. So, Jesus' answer last week affirmed the resurrection.

[ 2 : 2 3 ] So, in terms of this long-standing debate between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, Jesus is sided with the Pharisees. Or, maybe I could say, the side that Jesus holds, the biblical side, the Pharisees actually would be in agreement with.

But rather than be happy that Jesus has actually agreed with them on something, rather than rejoicing that they've got one up on the Sadducees, they're rather upset.

In other words, you can imagine this when you, maybe, maybe it's you and your spouse, you disagree on something. You're always looking for someone to sell the argument. Who's right? Who's wrong? And think of the joy when you find out you're right.

Not that you would gloat over your spouse or anything, but you want to know that you're right. And so, now here Jesus has said, basically, you're right. And there's no moment of happiness with them. They rather would have been found wrong if they could have seen Jesus defeated in their argument.

So, in other words, we could say they're more concerned about dealing with Jesus than even their ongoing spat with the Sadducees. So, it's more clear, even in Mark, that the intentions of the lawyer, it says here that, and they asked him a question.

[ 3 : 36 ] I'm sorry, I was looking further back. Verse 35, and one of them, a lawyer asked a question to him to test him. So, we understand from our text today that there's some desire that they're testing Jesus.

Is this a test to, again, attack him? Are they trying to disprove him? It seems to be that way. But we can see more clearly, probably in Mark, that the intentions of the lawyer may not have been all bad.

There could have been some genuine curiosity here. Mark 12, 28 says, And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another. And seeing that he answered them well, asked him, Which commandment is the most important of all?

And then, likewise, after Jesus, hearing Jesus' answer, we read in Mark 12, And the scribe said to him, You are right, teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and that there is no other besides him.

And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God.

[ 4 : 41 ] And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions. And so we see a little extra from Mark's account to understand that this man is testing Jesus, but part of the testing may have been to see who he really is.

What does Jesus have to say about the law? This is something that he studied his whole life, this scribe, this Pharisee scribe. He knows the law. Well, he's wondered about these things, and so he comes asking a question, testing Jesus, but his answer seems to show that he's not far from the kingdom of heaven.

He apparently isn't in there yet. He's not a Christian. But his understanding is more accurate than many of the Pharisees, we should say. Mainly in the fact that he's made this distinction.

It's better to do this thing, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbors as yourself, than all whole burnt offerings. In other words, offerings don't compare to the condition of the heart.

And so that, Jesus says, puts him closer to the kingdom of heaven, I would think, by far, than the other Pharisees Jesus has interacted with. In 1 Samuel 15, 22, we read, Samuel said, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?

[ 5 : 55 ] Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. And so obedience is better than sacrifice. Why is that the case?

Well, genuine obedience is something that comes from the heart. Sacrifices can be something that's external. It can be a pretense. It can be a show for other people. There's a way in which genuine obedience is coming from something that's going on inside the heart.

And we know that God judges the heart. Man looks at the outward appearances, but God examines the heart. And so here, this Pharisee is acknowledging that this obedience is indicative of something going on inside.

Loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving your neighbors as yourself is something that cannot just be manufactured. Sacrifices we can do. Right? If I change the terminology to say, instead of sacrifices, to say, church attendance, giving in the offering, prayer, daily Bible reading, I can make a whole list of things that we can say, yes, I can do those things.

I can check that off the list. But we understand that all those things can be done for all their own reasons without a heart that really loves the Lord. And so perhaps this Pharisee has some genuine curiosity about which commandment is the greatest.

[ 7 : 18 ] Think if he studied the law, in particular the same commandments, but maybe the broader law he studied, and which one of these is the greatest? Now, that may seem an odd question, but I think this is the kind of thing we do all the time. We try to decide which law we like best or which one seems to be the most important, and we're going to try to obey that law.

So the question may be something as simple as, which law should I strive to obey? So we have the broader law, we have the civil law, we have the ceremonial law, we have the moral law of God, the Ten Commandments.

In all these laws, which one is the most important? If I had to focus just on one, Jesus, which one should I be paying attention to? I think we've seen in our day even, maybe if I could put it the opposite way, do we sometimes ask the question of, which law is the most important?

If I'm going to break one of the Ten Commandments, which one should it be? I think in our day and age, we've seen a strong push to minimize the Fourth Commandment, the Lord's Day or the Sabbath. There are whole branches of theology that say, all the commandments still apply, except for the Fourth Commandment.

Nine out of ten, we have to keep on. And so, although it may be odd to say which one of these is the greatest, I think it's not unusual to see people trying to say, well, there's some commandment that I don't have to obey.

[ 8 : 32 ] Okay. I think if we put it the other way, if I were to say which one of the commandments is the most important, let's just say if I went outside the church and asked an unbeliever, just someone in American culture, which one of the Ten Commandments is the most important?

Well, in my experience in talking to people, I always see people emphasize the Sixth Commandment. Thou shall not murder. Right? So you ask someone about the Ten Commandments. Do you keep the Ten Commandments?

And they say, sure. What do they say? I've never murdered anyone. Well, do you understand that even that is minimizing the Ten Commandments and saying, here's the greatest one. Here's my summary of the commandments.

God in the Ten Commandments is saying don't kill people. And I happen to do that. Or I happen to obey that. Not I happen to kill people. I happen to obey that. Now, why emphasize that one commandment?

My guess is because when we look at the Ten Commandments, that seems like the easiest one to do. It takes a positive action that's pretty extreme. Right? Lying? I don't stand a chance.

[ 9 : 35 ] But hey, so far I haven't managed to murder anyone. We know that Jesus says, if you've hated your brother in your heart, you've committed murder. And we know that Jesus' standard is far beyond what we look at.

But if we just take it literally for what it says, of the Ten Commandments, I've got one of those that I've got a chance of obeying. Maybe I can make it a few more years without killing anyone.

I've come close a few times. But if I can just make it a few more years, boom, I've got one of the commandments. And so we see that there are ways in which I think even unbelievers ask this question. Which one of the commandments is the greatest?

And maybe, as I said, even which one do I have the most hope of obeying and fulfilling? Maybe even we, or this lawyer even, could have been concerned with supporting one of the commandments to support some position he has.

Sometimes we have certain theological positions and we want certain answers that will emphasize certain things that may support our position. But he comes asking Jesus to test them, maybe to some extent to really understand which commandment is the greatest.

[ 10 : 41 ] And so what I want us to do today is to consider Jesus' answer to this question of what is the greatest commandment. And really he answers in two parts.

He gives us the greatest and the second greatest commandment. But before I do that, I really want to hit at the basis of what I think Jesus is addressing here, and that's the issue of the heart. So we're going to look first at the heart, and then the greatest, and then the second greatest commandment.

So first, Jesus' answer is really inclusive of all Ten Commandments. We cannot really separate Jesus' answer out and say, well, Jesus is emphasizing the third commandment, or any numerical commandment that we might try to say.

He really gives us a summary of the Ten Commandments, doesn't he? It's what we have come to call the two tables of the law. The first table of the law is the first four commandments that pertain to God and the worship of God.

And then the second table of the law are the last six commandments that pertain to man and how we treat our neighbor. And so Jesus essentially summarizes the first table of the law with saying, loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

[ 11 : 47 ] If you do that, then you fulfill the first four commandments. And if you love your neighbors yourself, you fulfill the second table of the law, then it's six commandments. And so what he really gives is an answer that's inclusive.

So just to begin with, it's not as though Jesus is picking one of the Ten Commandments. He's basically saying, keep the Ten Commandments. They're all important. There is some priority in some way.

We'll talk about that. But Jesus' answer comes directly from Deuteronomy 6.5. Though Jesus adds after it, this is the great and first commandment. But these are the exact words of Deuteronomy 6.5.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And when Jesus says, this is the great and first commandment, he's not saying it's number one or two, three, four.

He's not saying it's the first table of the law. Chronologically, he's saying it's the foremost. It's of the greatest priority. This is the one to be emphasized above all others. And so we could summarize Jesus' saying, or Jesus' answer, by saying that love is the fulfillment of the law.

[ 12 : 51 ] Think about both answers. The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And the second is like it, love your neighbors yourself. So then love is the one unifying principle with both the first and the second commandment.

And so love, we could see, is the fulfillment of the law. In fact, that's exactly where Paul goes in Romans 13. Verses 8 through 10, Paul says, Owe no one anything except to love each other.

For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet. And any other commandment are summed up in this word.

You shall love your neighbors yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And so there Paul even tells us that this summarizes the law. And twice he says love is the fulfillment of the law.

If that's true, if Paul has rightly interpreted what Jesus, I think, is saying here, if love is the fulfillment, then the issue is not behavior, but the heart.

[ 13 : 59 ] I think this is a huge principle for us to understand as we think about the commandments. The commandments were never driving for behavior. They're driving at the heart.

They're not trying to get us to behave a certain way, although that behavior itself would be honoring and glorifying to God. There is a way in which the law helps to restrain sin in society. But the law is driven for the heart of man.

So in Luke 6, 45, Jesus says, The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of the evil treasure produces evil.

For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth beats. So our behavior, the things we say, the things that either love God and our neighbor or express that love for God and neighbor, or the things that express our hatred of God and our neighbor, the stuff that flows out of the mouth, it's coming from somewhere.

It doesn't just manifest itself there. I know sometimes we like to imagine it does. You know, you get upset, you say things, and it's, Well, where did that come? I don't know where that came from. It just popped up in my mouth.

[ 15 : 05 ] No, it's overflowing from our heart. It's revealing what's already there inside the heart. This is really what we've already seen in the Gospel of Matthew with Jesus and his parables.

Many of the parables he gave were about good fruit being produced. The good tree produces good fruit. And so the outward display, the behavior, the obedience that we might think of, that looks good or doesn't, he's saying it's coming from a source.

Remember even, though not a parable, an actual event, a miracle of Jesus did, was he cursed the fig tree. Remember what he talked about with the cursing of the fig tree? It wasn't producing good fruit.

The tree was bad from the inside, and so he cursed it. And we said that really was an example of all of us. If we're bad inside, if there's evil in our hearts, then we know that our end is going to be one of cursing and not one of blessing.

And so what we really see expressed by Jesus and his parables, his teaching, and in particular this teaching here, his answer is, what matters most exclusively is the condition of the heart.

[ 16 : 13 ] From our heart, everything else will be manifest and come out. That's why we're going to see this, maybe Lord willing, in a couple of weeks. This is why Jesus calls the Pharisees whitewashed tombs, and why some sinners and tax collectors are entering the kingdom before the Pharisees.

The sinners and tax collectors don't look good on the outside at all, but they know their need for a Savior, and the Lord works in their heart to make them good from the inside out. The Pharisees look great on the outside.

They're all painted up. They look nice, but inside they're completely dead. And so God is looking at the heart. He knows what's going on. And so Jesus' answer here gets at the heart of things.

And it's so atypical for how we would normally answer this kind of thing. We might say, well, you need to do this. You need to behave this way. And Jesus says, here's the fulfillment of the law.

Here's the greatest commandment. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. I think this is also when the Bible speaks of the law written on our hearts.

[17:19] There is a way in which God's law, broadly speaking, has been given to all men so that all men know, to some extent, murder's wrong. But we're told specifically that in the new covenant, that for Christians, God writes the law upon their heart.

Well, what does that mean exactly? What it means is that there's an internal desire in our hearts to obey God's law. It's contrary to our new spiritual nature to want to break the law.

Now, we're still battling with our human nature. We know what Paul says in Romans 7, O wretched man that I am, who will save me? And so we know that we're still battling sin. But inside of us, there's a desire to obey God's law out of love for God.

It's a heart desire. It's not that we put the Ten Commandments... It's fine to have the Ten Commandments on the wall. Don't get me wrong. It's not that we put the Ten Commandments on the wall externally and say, I've got to keep this.

I've got to keep this. I'm going to read it every day. I'm going to make sure that I don't do these things because I've got to do it. It's not even thinking that because if I do these things, God will love me. I think sometimes as children, which all of us are, we've all had parents.

[18:35] As children, sometimes we think in that kind of way. My parents are going to love me if I do these things, if I impress them, if I do this or whatever. Some of you know this already, but I'm a first child.

I have a younger brother. And you guys are probably well aware of first child syndrome, right? The first child always tries to please the parents, impress them with all the things they can do. My brother's the complete opposite of me. We're only a year and a half apart.

He kind of does everything the opposite of me to get attention in different ways. But it's just the mentality of me was always a people pleaser. I want to impress my parents. I want to make them happy with me.

And in some way, the mentality, though it's wrong, is to think that if I do that, they will love me more. I can get, I can earn my parents' love by being good enough.

And I imagine that's probably true for all of us in some area of our life. Maybe some of you firstborns in most areas of your life. But that's a wrong mentality to think in those kind of ways.

[19:34] Trying to do that, especially when we then take that toward God. And I could say as well, some of us parent in those kind of ways too. That we can be so harsh. We're trying to get our kids to do certain things that our kids are left thinking, if I don't do it, my parents don't love me.

Their love for me is based upon me keeping certain rules. And that's wrong. And we're teaching the wrong idea of God. Instead, what we see presented here is that it's the heart that matters.

Do we love God from the heart? The behavior will spring forth out of that. But we don't look first to the external. I've got to outwardly keep these things. That's pharisaism.

We would call it today probably legalism. To think that if I keep the rules, I'm going to be loved more by other people, or especially here, by God. Instead, we're to love God.

And out of that love for God comes the behavior that would flow, that's honoring to Him. So that's why the Bible speaks of the law written on our heart. For the Christian, God-honoring obedience comes from the heart, not from the external law.

[ 20 : 43 ] We want to do what's pleasing to our Heavenly Father. In verse 40 here, Jesus says, the entire Old Testament is dependent on this principle of love.

Look at verse 40. On these two commandments depend all the law and prophets. Now, all the law and prophets was a biblical way of speaking of the Old Testament.

The law and the prophets. It's a summary of the parts of the Old Testament. So the law and the prophets, Jesus is just saying, all the Old Testament is dependent upon these two things.

Loving the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself. So, maybe a way of saying this, what does it mean when all the law and the prophets are dependent upon this?

I think what Jesus is saying is that when someone lives out these truths of love for God and love for neighbor, that they're expressing the Old Testament. They're doing what the Old Testament has commanded, what the Old Testament would desire.

[ 21 : 45 ] We could say they're living out God's word. They're living out what God has given to men to do. And so, I didn't want for us to look at the commandments, or Jesus' answer of the first and the second greatest commandment, without first saying, the principle involved is this.

It's a heart issue. It's a love issue. It's not foremost a behavior issue. It's a love issue. And then Jesus says that the greatest commandment is first to love God.

I think I can even say that if we want to do the second commandment, we have to first do the first commandment. There's no hope in us loving our neighbor if we don't first and foremost love God.

So, the love of neighbor is of great importance, but it is secondary to love for God. This means loving God more than anything else in our life.

What does it mean when it says, maybe that's obvious, the fact that it says, you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. There's a repetition there.

[ 22 : 52 ] With all your... I think even in writing today, we would typically say, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And that's how I've summarized it about every time I've said it verbally now. But you see the repetition there.

You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. So, we get an idea there of the fact that this means more than anything else.

Every bit of my heart, soul, mind should be given to the love of God. Now, if we're going to love our neighbor, that's going to flow out of the fact that we have first loved God above everything else.

In fact, even if we were trying to be very nice people, and we wanted to love our neighbor more than anything else in our life, and we would love our neighbor more than God, we would not love our neighbor as much as if we loved God first.

And I think that's part of what Jesus is laying down here. We love God first, and out of that flows the other, which is probably getting ahead to my third point. But for now, let's see that it means loving God more than anything else.

[ 23 : 52 ] So, for example, Matthew 10, 37 that we looked at some time ago says, whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

And we talked about that back then, but these are really powerful words. Because someone who's good, even someone who loves God, ought to love their parents. And they ought to love their children.

And in fact, the parent, the father, the mother who doesn't love their child, it's wrong. That's not how things ought to be. So this is natural for us to love our children and to love our parents.

And Jesus says, if you don't love me more than them, you're not worthy of the kingdom. And so we see then, again, the idea of neighbor versus God. Where's the priority? Who should we love for most?

If we don't love God more than other things, then we're not worthy of the kingdom itself. And that includes not just father, mother, and children. That includes even our very selves.

[ 24 : 53 ] Now, this is hard for us because we know that the person we love most is ourselves. Maybe you're not going to acknowledge that. I'll acknowledge it for me personally speaking. Maybe this doesn't apply to you. But love myself more than anyone else.

But we're to love God even more than ourselves. And so Jesus in Matthew 10, we looked at 37, if we go on in verse 39, it says, and whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Whoever finds his life will lose, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. And so part of loving God more than anything else means laying down our lives. That may mean physically doing it.

It may mean spiritually doing that. But do we love God even more than our very lives? So Paul then says in Philippians 3, a great example of this, I count everything as loss.

Because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law.

[ 26 : 03 ] A righteousness of my own that comes from the law is what? That's outward obedience. He's saying, I'm not looking for it in my outward obedience to the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

So Paul says, I count everything else in my life as rubbish, which is garbage or even dung, manure. I count all those things that I once treasured as nothing compared to this, knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

And so this is the attitude that Jesus is presenting for us when it says, the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. It means we cannot be divided in our love for God.

Matthew 6, 24 says, 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 in money.

And so here we see the fact that it can't be divided. Our love for God has to be foremost and undivided love, greater than our love for our children, our parents, even greater than the love we have for ourselves.

[ 27 : 09 ] Even to the point, like Paul, that we can say, I count it all as rubbish compared to knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. And for Paul, that might mean really losing all things, losing his possessions because of persecution for the name of Christ.

Even eventually, as he did, losing his very life. I just imagine thinking of the idea of martyrdom. Would you lay it in your life for Christ?

What Paul is saying is, to lose my life for Christ is to lose nothing. Because if I lose my life, I gain Christ Jesus, which is far more. So I'm giving up a lesser treasure for a greater treasure.

It's the parable of the pearl, or the treasure that is found in the field. I'm giving up something of lesser worth for something greater. And so do we see God as greater than anything else in this life?



Do we love him as more? This is what all the Old Testament is calling us to. And we can even expand. Jesus, obviously speaking, before the completion of the New Testament, we'd say all God's word is saying this, to love foremost God above all things.

[ 28 : 20 ] And then secondly, he says, to love your neighbors yourself. Now Jesus has already said something similar back in Matthew chapter 7, verse 12, when he said, so whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.

For this is the law and the prophets. Now that's what we usually call the golden rule. But you hear Jesus saying there, and he ends it by saying, this is the law and the prophets.

It's almost the same wording he uses here. This is what God's word is pointing us to. Now part of this means dying to ourselves and our own self-love.

We have to love others above ourselves. Now remember, even as I say that the priority here, we love God foremost, then others, even above ourselves. It also means loving others as we love ourselves.

So there's a way in which self-love needs to die, and there's a way in which self-love needs to be redirected toward God and others. Maybe we could even combine these two and say that we should love others instead of loving ourselves or above loving ourselves.

[ 29 : 28 ] So if we love God first and know the joy to be found in him, then it will include others. It will include loving others.

It will also include showing others the love of God that we ourselves have experienced. We want others to know the joy that we found in God. So I think, go again to the priority here.

Foremost is you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. This is what you've been made for. This is where joy is to be found in life and in eternity. And so if you've experienced that, if you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, what is the most loving thing you can do for your neighbor?

Show them that joy. Show them the source of that joy. Point them to that. Let them experience that for themselves. If I were to go back to our mission statement that we've talked about, the whole idea of evangelism and discipleship.

For those who don't know the Lord, give them the gospel. Invite them to the church. Not just because we tell you to invite people to church.

[ 30 : 34 ] Not just because you think, oh, that's what I'm supposed to do. That's the external. But is there inside your heart a experiential love for God that you've known God to be the greatest joy of your life?

If you've had that and you want to love your neighbor, there's no greater gift you can give them. Right? You think about the material things in this life that we might enjoy.

Christmas is coming up. We're giving gifts, right? You think of the kind of gifts that maybe a family member might enjoy. You kind of know your kids and what they're going to like and you try to buy them things they're going to like or your spouse or your friends.

You bring them this gift. You think this is going to bring them joy. And it's true to that. And God is gracious to give us these things in life that provide joy for us, even material things. But is there anything in your life, Christian, that has brought greater joy than God?

Do you love anything else more than Him? Even father and mother, son or daughter? If not, if you love Christ foremost, if you found Him to be more joyous than anything else in this life, what greater gift can you give someone than to give them the gospel or to bring...

[ 31 : 45 ] When I think of inviting someone to church, it's essentially what the Samaritan woman did at the well. Come see this man who knows everything I've ever done.

Could this be the Christ? Come see Christ. You're taking Him before Christ and saying, come look. Look, you could even say, here's the greatest joy of my life. Come see. Will it give you joy?

Give it a try. Do we have that kind of desire to... That was evangelism. We could say as well, discipleship is a part of that, the equipping that we talk about. Are we investing in others?

Do we want others to grow? Christians, other Christians, do we want them to grow and know Jesus to be more joyous than they currently do? Each one of us struggles with this.

Every time we sin, we're in some way deciding in that moment that we think sin is going to be more joyful than obedience to God, than God Himself.

[ 32 : 47 ] God has said, don't do this. It's not good for you. Joy is to be found in me. And you say in that moment, this looks like a lot of fun. Have we found God to be so joyful that we want others to know it more deeply?

To wage war, to put to death sin in their life that they might experience God to a greater extent. And so when I think of loving our neighbor, I think it includes giving them the gospel, giving them Christ, and then for the Christian, helping them to see Christ more and more in their life.

Helping them to know greater joy in Christ. Galatians 6.10 says, So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

So as we have opportunity, do good to everyone. The evangelistic aspect, and then especially those of the household of faith, the discipleship aspect. And we know that Jesus provides really the extreme or the supreme example of this.

Mark 10.45 says, For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. So there we have that supreme example of that.

[ 34 : 03 ] One who had known fully the love that's to be had in God. Unhindered communion with God that He left to come to earth.

That He might die for our sins. That we too might experience that joy in God. If we're honest, we know that loving other people will not be easy.

And it's often going to be quite painful. We're going to get hurt. It's hard when you invest in someone, you try to give your life to them only for them to say mean things to you or to go somewhere else and say mean things about you.

When you know that you've maybe spent hours praying for that person or you've served them in ways that were sacrificial, you've given up things that you thought might be enjoyable, that you might bring them joy in Christ.

And so it's going to be hard. It's going to bring pain. But this goes back then to that priority list. First and foremost, we're to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

[ 35 : 04 ] And we have to believe that loving God will sustain us through this. Our hope of joy in this life isn't based on our circumstances. It's not based on what people say about us. Or even if they receive our love, how our neighbors treat us.

Our joy in this life is found in God. So if we've done the first commandment, that then empowers us to do the second commandment. Even when it's hard. We're looking not to the people for joy.

We're not looking for their approval or even their satisfaction with our service to them. That's not our motivation. We love God. And in serving others, we're actually finding greater delight and joy in God.

And I think a true love for God will inevitably impact others around you. If you really love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, then your heart will be moved to express that love of God to those around you.

You can't help but talk about those things you love. Right? We're eager to talk about those things we love. I think for men, often it's sports teams.

[ 36 : 13 ] Right? We want to talk about the sports teams we like. There's some of you who so love politics that you can't help but talk about politics. Well, not all of us share your love for sports or politics, but whatever it is, what we love most, we want to talk about.

And we want others to engage us in that. We want to bring them into that. Is that true for us with our love for God? Are we more happy to talk about the Eagles than we are to talk about God to our coworkers?

I can't pick on other people. Or Manchester United, for all of you Manchester United fans in the room. It's probably just me and my family. But is it to talk about your favorite sports team? Were you more eager to talk about that with people than you are to talk about your love for God?

If we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, then inevitably, that's going to spread to other parts of life. It's going to impact our neighbors and how we speak to those at home and to those at our workplace and friends wherever we gather together with them.

1 John 4.20 says, If anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

[ 37 : 30 ] And so, I've talked about it in a positive way. This really takes a negative perspective. But it's saying, hate your brother is some demonstration that we don't really love God. And I think if we go back to what we said that's the greatest expression of love for our neighbors, showing them Christ, sharing with them the joy that we've known in Christ, that if that's not something we want to do, we're not really loving our neighbor.

And it may mean we don't really love God. If we're much more eager to talk about sports or food or politics or whatever it may be that we're enthusiastic about, rather than God, do we really love God at all?

And I've tried all along to make some application, but I'm going to close just with a few final words of application. I think here Jesus exposes the weakness of the lawyer.

Or, again, we might say the legalist. The lawyer comes wanting to know, what's the greatest law? What do I need to keep? What do I need to do that I might find favor with God?

And it's a good reminder for us all to say, law-keeping does not earn for us salvation. We cannot merit salvation by how well we keep the law. Everything, the law and the prophets, all the word of God, everything depends on the condition of our hearts.

[ 38 : 59 ] It's our hearts that ultimately matter. And if we have an internal love for God and our neighbors, we will desire to keep the law.

It's something we want to do. And to some extent, we will do it without the external reminders or prohibitions. We don't keep it because we know, oh, that's what it says when we're supposed to do it. Our love for God, our love for neighbor moves us not to murder them or hate them in our hearts, to lie to them, to lust for them.

Even it moves us to behave certain ways in the Lord's day, to come and worship Him, to put Him foremost in our heart. Even what we say about God is affected by that.

And so we could say that the law and knowing that the law and prophets are dependent upon the heart, the law and indeed the whole word of God is the outflowing of love for God and neighbor in the heart of the person who's been saved by God.

Right? If this is a heart issue, we understand what's necessary, don't we? John 14, 15 says, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. So evidence of loving God is the keeping of the commandments.

[ 40 : 18 ] It's not the other way around. We don't keep the commandments to prove our love for God. If we love God, then we keep His commandments. And if it all comes from the heart, if it's a love issue, then what's necessary if we're going to do this?

Well, a heart transplant, right? Because God's Word tells us we have a heart of stone, that we're spiritually dead inside, and so what we need is for God for us to transform our hearts. And so if we read this rightly, what this means is that there's no hope in keeping the commandments for an unbeliever.

Externally, we can look good, we can obey it, we can look like we're keeping the law, but if it's not coming from the heart, if there's not foremost a love for God and a love for neighbor, if it's about love for myself and people thinking I'm a good person, or me meeting some objective standard, then we're dead inside like the Pharisees.

And so this is what I'm saying, Jesus is exposing the legalists to be false. What we need foremost is a new heart, what we need is God to work in our hearts. So if that's true, I think one response we have to have to this is prayer.

God, give me a love for you. It may mean if you're not a Christian, God, give me a new heart that's capable of loving you and my neighbor. But as a Christian to say, God, work in my heart to generate that love, to make me love you more and love my neighbor more.

[ 41 : 48 ] So I think there are many people in the world today, there are probably many people in the church today who try to be good by obeying external rules when what we really need is a heart transplant.

What we need is salvation. What we need is God to be working in our heart. And so Christian, what you most desperately need today is for that love to grow in you.

That love first to God. 1 John 4, 19 says, we love because He first loved us. So if we're going to grow this love for God, how are we going to grow the love for God? I've said prayer already, but what's going to manifest that love for God?

I think foremost it's going to be knowing God's love for us. Knowing God, His character, His attributes, and in particular how He's expressed that love for us. So we need to be in awe of God's love that we might love God more.

Think about that in terms of marriage. How when you see the love of your spouse expressed to you, how that moves in you and you don't want to love them back. You want to reciprocate.

[ 42 : 52 ] And so we need to see God for who He is. We need to see His love. love for God. My hope is that I can touch on that some in the Lord's Supper as we come to that in a minute.

When we say the love of God, we speak of not just God the Father. We often think of God the Father, but of God the Son as well. And I hope in our service to meditate on the love of God the Son that we might grow our love for God and our love for neighbor.

And then flowing out of that love for God as an expression of that love for God, we need to see our love for others grow as well. But again, that's secondary.

We need to grow our love for God and what's going to naturally flow out of that is a love for neighbor. Let's pray here. Dear Heavenly Father, we want to foremost and first thank You for the love that You have shown us in Christ.

And Lord, we pray that You would grow in us more and more love for You. Lord, if there's anyone in this room who doesn't yet love You, doesn't know You, hasn't trusted You, still has a heart of stone, Lord, we pray that You would change that heart, that You give them a heart that loves You.

[ 44 : 04 ] And then, Lord, for the Christian, we pray that You would grow and grow that love for You. Lord, we pray that these things in our life all around us would grow more dim in comparison to You.

That we would be less and less attached to the stuff of this world and more and more find our joy in You. Lord, we pray that as that becomes true that we will inevitably love our neighbor.

Lord, we pray that we would be sharing the gospel with those around us, that we would be pointing them to where our greatest joy is. And Lord, we pray also that we would be investing in the life of other Christians, that we would not be content just to look out for ourselves, but that our love for neighbor will be displayed in how we treat other Christians, that we would help them to grow, help them to fight sin, help them to be sanctified and more and more conformed to the image of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Lord, we ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.