

**With All**

**May 28, 2017**

**Matthew 22:34-40**

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" 37 He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Jesus is in the thick of controversy with his opponents waging multiple attacks on him. The opponents are not atheists, they are not the non-religious of the world, they are not satanic. No, the opponents of Jesus are the religious leaders. That's because he was winning favor of the crowds which was a threat to their self serving religious establishment. The problem is one of greed and selfishness. According to Matthew by now the Pharisees have challenged Jesus many times. But now it is passion week and the movement against Jesus has heated up significantly.

What is revealed in the Scriptures is that the extent of the conspiracy has a long and wide reach. It includes several segments of the religious establishment including the chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin, the Sadducees, and the Herodians. It does not include the poor segments; those living on the fringes of society.

In today's Scripture the Pharisees heard that Jesus has silenced the Sadducees. Keep in mind that a conspiracy is at work here. In a conspiracy there are different groups working together covertly for their own means. The Pharisees get together to plot what to do next. The Scriptures do not tell us what they discussed. However, what is recorded as happening reveals the catalyst. Apparently they realized that they were not going to be able to trap Jesus without some legal footing. So a lawyer challenges Jesus by asking him "Which commandment in the law is the greatest?" Notice the question is not which commandment is the greatest. The lawyer is not concerned with the commandments, or the will of God, or anything theological. The question is "which commandment in the **law** is the greatest?" His concern is in regards to the law. He wants to trap Jesus with the law.

Often at times the Scriptures portray some beautiful characteristics of Jesus. One of these occurrences is here as Jesus addresses the hypocrisy. He does not argue with or challenge his opponents. Jesus' defense is in the realm of education. He talks openly and honestly and tells a story that reveals the truth in their actions. The parables are in your face, this is how bad you are. After that is established he addresses the challenge with a direct and explicit answer. "You are to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your mind." With all is 100%, it is not just partial, it is not haphazard.

This is a very serious lesson for all of us today. The commandment to love God is all inclusive. It applies to everyone; all of us. It also applies to all of the individual, every part of you, every bit of you, all of you. The focus is on God, as it should be. However, the focus of the opponents of Jesus is on the self. The greatest commandment is to love God with all. The second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. All of the law (remember Jesus is talking with a lawyer whose concern is not righteousness but the terms of the law) is based on these commandments to love. Love is the essential ingredient that the religious leaders were missing. The religious leaders were acting on different motivations but the least of these was love. Their focus was on rules and regulations, not on care and compassion.

The contemporary lesson is that our responsibility is to be like Christ. To be a Christian is to carry the title of Christ which demands belief and obedience. We are to have Christ characteristics in order to be called Christian. To be like Christ is to focus on the will of God, the spirit of God, and the love of God.

There are hundreds of lessons in the Bible where people break God's covenant only to be warned by God but fail to repent and end up being punished. God allowed the chosen people to be punished because of their failure to repent. They refused to repent because they were self righteous. They didn't think they needed to repent because they thought they were right with God. This is due to the covenant of Abraham. They perceive righteousness to be reserved for them as God's chosen people due to their lineage as descendants of Abraham.

Jesus affirms the commandment you are to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And you are to love your neighbor as yourself. The disparity exists between the Christian we actually are and the Christian we should be. We come to church to worship and that's nice. But if we honestly and truly love God with all of the heart, soul, and mind then we would do more. We belong to the church which is the body of Christ. We come to this body to worship and that is nice. But if we honestly and truly love the neighbor as the self then we would be different people.

My sister-in-law moved back to Ohio taking with her the things that she wanted but she left the rest. She left behind a cat. She abandoned the cat. The last thing that I need is another cat. But I can't let the cat be abandoned, neglected, starve, and go uncared for. So, we bring the cat home where we can care for it. The cat turns out to be a very loving and affectionate pet so much so that I named her sweetie. I figured that is an appropriate name for such a sweet cat that's so loving, cuddling, warm, and so sweet. But after several days she became possessive. She fights with the other cats and runs them off. There is a dualistic nature to her personality. She has one nature around her master and one nature around others. This is like the religious leaders that were in opposition to Jesus. There was a dualistic nature to them. They were one way to their master but the complete opposite to others. They abused and neglected the others and aggressively attacked the innocent Christ who was an advocate for the others. They became possessive and aggressively attacked what they perceived to be a threat to their system. If they were truly in tune with God that would not have had such insecurity.

When Jesus says to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind he hits a nerve leaving no room for hypocrisy. His opponents claimed loyalty to God but plotted to kill the innocent. When Jesus says to love your neighbor as yourself he hits a nerve that leaves no room for hypocrisy. If one loves the neighbor as the self as they are commanded by God then they can't possibly plot to kill the innocent. Jesus reveals the extent of their hypocrisy. What they preached did not match the reality of their actions. The lesson for us is in regards to how the Scripture speaks to us today. Love God 100%. Love God with your whole being, heart, mind, and soul and love your neighbor as yourself.