Keeping it Simple

6/2/19

Mark Series

Message 57

Mark 12:28–34 (CSB)

**28**One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, “Which command is the most important of all?”

**29**Jesus answered, “The most important is **Listen, O Israel! The Lord** **our God, the Lord** **is one.** **30Love** **the Lord your God** **with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind,** **and with all your strength.**,, **31**The second is, **Love your neighbor** **as yourself.**, There is no other command greater than these.”

**32**Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him. **33**And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

**34**When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And no one dared to question him any longer.

# 1. I don’t like complicated.

 A. It isn’t that I can’t handle it.

 1. I just don’t like complicated.

 2. I don’t like complicated plot lines in movies.

a. When you are watching a man’s movies, it is usually pretty simple:

 b. See the bad guys, kill the bad guys, try not to die in the process.

c. Our women’s movies are not like that with the exception of Hallmark movies.

 d. All Hallmark movies are the same!

e. There are two women, and two men, and a dog somewhere in the movie.

f. They all take place at Christmas in some place that gets lots of snow.

g. Surprisingly, I don’t like Hallmark movies even though they are simple, but that is the exception.

3. But for most things and areas of my life, I try to keep things as simple as possible.

 B. That’s why I like today’s passage so much.

1. Unlike the complicated question from last week about whose husband does the wife belong, this one is simple.

 2. What is the greatest commandment?

3. What is the ONE THING that summarizes and fulfills everything that God had said, declared, and commanded.

4. The rabbinic tradition counted 613 commandments in the Torah, 365 prohibitions, and 248 positive commands.(Edwards 370)

5. This scribe asks Jesus, “Which command is the most important?”

 C. It is in the simplicity of Jesus’ answer that we find the core of Christianity.

1. We are to practice 2 things: Love God with all of yourself, and Love your Neighbor as yourself.

 2. Get these two things right, and you will not be outside the will of God.

3. This morning, I want to explore 3 “Keeping it Simple” steps for how we are called to love God and love our neighbor.

# 2. Keeping it Simple, Step 1: Love God.

 A. Jesus starts off with the creed of Israel:

 1. Hear, O Israel, our God is one.

a. This is called the Shema, and would have been known by every Jew from the youngest to the oldest.

b. It is taken from Deut. 6:4, and was the most common prayer prayed by God’s people.

c. In the middle of a world that believed in hundreds of Gods, it reminded Israel that there was only 1 God and it was theirs.

2. Because there is only One God, there was only One God they were to worship.

a. In a world full of gods, they would have to divided their attention among many.

b. When there is only 1 God, then there is only 1 deserving of our full devotion.

c. The reason why idolatry is such a dangerous sin is that it divides our attention and affection, causing us to shortchange the only God that matters.

d. **When my attention is divided, so is my worship.**

**e. What has my attention will have my affection.**

B. Jesus says our MOST important goal is to Love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

 1. The four-part formula emphasizes the totality of our Love for God.

2. Just as Jesus did not spare any part of Himself for us, we are not allowed to spare any part of ourselves from Him.

 a. Half-hearted worship is not worship.

 b. Half- energy worship is not worship.

 c. God, rightly, demands all of our love, attention, and affection.

d. All of the costly sacrifices and offerings in the world will not satisfy the debt of love we owe to God.

 How do I make sure I am loving God with everything?

 C. **The external signs of love.**

 1. A person who loves God will read their Bible.

 2. A person who loves God will worship and pray.

 3. A person who loves God will go to Church.

 D. **The Internal signs of love.**

 1. A person who loves God will pray without ceasing.

2. Will devote significant amount of thought and energy to their relationship with God.

3. Will not give refuge to hatred, unforgiveness, or entertain sinful thoughts but will deal with them as soon as it comes to our attention.

 4. Will not grieve the Holy Spirit living within us.

 E. We have been given this incredible opportunity to love God.

1. You won’t hear other religions speak about the opportunity to know and to love God.

 2. Illustration: I have an autographed baseball from Stan Musial:

a. It is so cool to have something that the Greatest Cardinal has touched and signed.

 b. But his signature does not mean I had a relationship with him.

3. So often, all we want is God’s autograph, a passing moment with Him, but we don’t have any real relationship with Him.

4. Jesus said the greatest thing we can do is to love God and to be loved by Him.

The second commandment is like the first: We are to love God and LOVE people.

# 3. Keeping it Simple, Step 2: Love People

 A. Love your neighbor as our self is hugely important.

 1. Who is our neighbor?

2. Our neighbor is not only those who live close to us, but anyone we come across.

 3. We have never met a person that God has hated.

a. Scripture tells us that God does not delight in the death of the wicked.

b. That’s because God did not create humanity for them to go to hell.

c. God did not form us in our mother’s wombs and He did not breathe His Spirit into us to watch us burn.

 B. That is why it is imperative for us to love our neighbors.

 1. Because God is a God of love, not hate.

2. There is a real hell, and our job is to tell our neighbors that they do not have to go there.

 C. Loving our neighbor is not optional.

 1. As we will talk in a moment, we can’t love God and hate people.

 2. In fact, you do not have the right to hate people.

a. A few weeks ago, we discovered that we are never given permission in Scripture to curse people.

 b. We also do not have the permission to hate.

 c. You do have permission to love them.

3. If we want to enter the kingdom of God, the place where God’s will is done in us and through us, we must love God and love people.

So our last Keeping it Simple step is to Love God and Love People at the Same time

# 4. Do Both at the Same Time.

A. Pastor Pete Scazzero, pastor in New York City, tells of a woman who came back to the church after dropping out for 5 years.

1. Upon her return, She asked her pastor, “Why is it that so many Christians make such lousy human beings?”[[1]](#endnote-1)

2. Some of the meanest, nastiest people I have ever met have been pillars of the local church.

3. The least favorite day to work in a restaurant is Sunday because Christians are notoriously picky and cheap.

4. How is this possible?

1. Our churches are full of people who claim to love God but don’t love their neighbor.

2. Or, to be more honest, they have not allowed the love of God to enter them and change them.

3. “love *for* God releases the love *of* God.”[[2]](#endnote-2)

B. The theme of the American Humanist Association is, Good without a God[[3]](#endnote-3).

1. Humanists believe that people are naturally good and can be good without a god.

2. Scripture teaches that people are fundamentally sinful and in need of a Savior.

3. If you love God and not people, you have religion. If you love people but not God, you have humanism. If you love God and you love people, you have the Gospel.

 C. Jesus didn’t come to establish religion or humanism but Gospel.

 1. We are called to serve and to live by Gospel.

 2. The Good News that Jesus loves us and that He loves you.

3. One of the most important things we must continue to do is love people.

a. We must continue to be a church that demonstrates love and concern to the poor among us.

b. We must never be a church that harbors hatred towards people different from ourselves.

c. We must be a church whose love for God translates to a love towards people.

d. We must continue to be a safe place for us to invite our friends and family to come and meet Jesus.

 1. Some people will be offended by the message.

 2. Some people may not like the style of music.

3. But our lack of love towards people must NEVER be the reason someone does not come to church.

 4. God has called us to not only love Him but to love the people He loves.

 a. We must do both.

 b. Love God and Love Each other.

# 5. How do we Develop this kind of love?

A. One draws near to the kingdom of God not by proper theology but by drawing near to Jesus.[[4]](#footnote-1)

1. Our Theology, or our thoughts about God, can be completely correct and we can still miss out on the Kingdom of God.

2. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were proof that right believing does not always lead to correct behavior.

B. This scribe knew his Scripture. He would have had several if not most of the

Old Testament books memorized.

1. He would have known exactly what every little mark meant.

2. Yet, with all of this knowledge, this scribe was not “far from the kingdom of God”.

3. He was close but not there yet.

C. For us to love our community like we are supposed to, we must draw closer to Jesus.

1. If my relationship with Jesus is broken, my relationship with you will be broken too.

2. I must draw near to Jesus.

3. I must get close to Him, and to hear what makes His heart beat.

4. I must know what He wants and desires to see.

5. I must experience His love and compassion.

6. Then I can go and love the broken, the stuck, the unlovable, and the messed-up.

7. Then I find he grace to bless those who curse me, and to heal those who strike me.

# Application: This Morning I ask us to take time to pray for two areas:

 **First, Let’s get our relationship with Jesus right.**

 1. Let’s experience His love fresh and new.

2. Let’s commit to worship, prayer, and Scripture this summer like never before.

 3. Let’s draw closer to God than ever.

 4. Let’s pray for the power to hold nothing back from God.

 **Second, Let’s pray for an awakening of our love for our communities.**

 1. Let us ask for fresh eyes to see and new ears to hear.

2. Let us come to God with the people we hate, and ask for hate to be turned into love.

3. Let us pray that God will give us an incredible love for people who are not easy to love.

4. Someday, if Jesus has not yet returned, I want it to be said at my funeral that I loved God and Loved People.

1. Scazzero, Peter. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality (p. 30). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. James R. Edwards, [*The Gospel according to Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcmark?ref=Bible.Mk12.31&off=2520&ctx=e+fulfills+the+law:+~love+for+God+release), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 373. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. James R. Edwards, [*The Gospel according to Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/pntcmark?ref=Bible.Mk12.34&off=792&ctx=on+and+formulation.+~One+draws+near+to+th), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)