

Trinity 18
Matthew 22:34-46
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A lawyer asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment in the Law, and our Lord answered by quoting the Law in Deuteronomy 6, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This commandment explains what it means to have God as your God.

Love the Lord God with all your *heart*. This means that you should love God with all your senses, your feelings, and emotions. This commandment excludes any pretense or hypocrisy. You cannot fulfill this command by outward show, by simply going to church and sitting in a pew or by putting a fish sticker on your car or wearing a cross around your neck. With all your heart the Law requires you to desire to be with God, to serve him, to praise him, to hear his word, and to devote your very being to him.

Love the Lord God with all your soul. Your soul is your life. The commandment requires that your entire life be devoted to the one true God. From the moment of your birth until your death, your whole life should be one of service and adoration to the one true God. Whom you marry, how you raise your children, how you work, how you relax, how you live, and how you die: all this shall be done out of love for the Lord God. Tithing mint and cumin or dollars or volunteering spare time, unless something comes up, will not suffice. This commandment demands your whole life.

Love the Lord God with all your mind. This commandment requires you to learn. Don’t just assume that you already know enough or that God’s word is not important. Listen to the Scripture readings in Church and meditate on them. Listen to the sermon and try to learn what you don’t understand. Attend Bible study. And at home, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the holy Scriptures, which are able to make one wise unto salvation. This is why the Proverb says, “The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.” (Proverbs 4:7) This commandment requires that you be a theologian. A theologian is someone who studies, learns, and discusses God’s word. Everyone, not just pastors, should be a theologian.

This answer convicted the Pharisees and priests of Jesus' day, who liked to put on a show of loving God with their outward actions and services in the temple and synagogues. And our Lord's answer convicts all of us. The Commandment, "You shall have no other gods" is not fulfilled by a nominal confession, but by full devotion in heart, life, and mind.

The commandment to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind is the greatest commandment and all other commandments are subordinate to and follow out of this great commandment. Yet, Jesus still adds a second commandment, which he says is *like* the first. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." This commandment is like the first, because it also commands you to *love*. While you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, you love your neighbor as yourself. This again convicts the religious elites in Jesus' day. The New Testament gives us plenty of examples of the chief priests and Pharisees despising their neighbors, while professing to love God. Yet, Scripture declares, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20)

This shows how serious this second commandment is. If one fails to keep this second commandment, he has failed to keep the first and greatest commandment. This teaches us that if we desire to serve and adore God in our lives, we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us. If you do not want your name to be slandered behind your back, then do not speak ill of others or spread gossip. You do not want to be cheated on, so be faithful to your spouse. You would not want to grow up in an unstable household, so control your desires and wait until you are married in order to honor the marriage bed. Don't steal or even desire to do it. As you cherish your own life, cherish the lives of others. This means you should also be an advocate for those weaker than you, especially the unborn, who are in danger every day of being killed with approval from the government. They have no voice. If you had no voice, you'd desire someone to speak for you.

On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets. So, you can't skirt around these two commandments. They cannot be ignored or cut out of the Law. If you remove these two commandments, you lose all of the Scriptures! This is why Jesus says that he has not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them.

These two commandments show irrefutably that we have failed to fulfill God's Law. It is exactly as St. Paul writes to the Romans in chapter three, "For by works of the Law, no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the Law comes knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20) These two commandments demonstrate to us that we are *unrighteous*, and therefore deserve God's wrath. Yet, St. Paul goes on, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." (Romans 3:21-22)

Likewise, Jesus continues on from his lesson on the two great commandments by asking, "Who is the Christ? Whose son is he?" Of course, the Pharisees answered, "The Son of David." Every Jew knew that God promised the Christ to come from the lineage of David. Then Jesus asks why David prophesied in the Spirit saying, "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet?" Jesus then asks how the Christ can be the son of David if David calls the Christ Lord.

Indeed, how could King David call anyone but God himself Lord, since David was the very king of Israel? The Pharisees could not answer this question. Likely, because they found the answer so offensive. The Christ is David's son according to the flesh, yet he is David's Lord, because he is true God. The Christ is the Son of God, the Second Person in the Holy Trinity: God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made. This is the only explanation to why the Holy Spirit caused David to prophecy that the Christ is his Lord! This means that the Law and the Prophets, which depend on the two great commandments bear witness to the fact that the Christ is David's Son and David's Lord, true man and true God.

And who is this Christ, this God-man? Jesus is no longer keeping this a secret. He entered Jerusalem to crowds praising him, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" When Jesus entered the temple, children cried to him, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" When the chief priests and scribes got angry and said to Jesus, "Do you hear what these are saying?", Jesus responded, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise'?" Jesus declared that God himself caused these children to confess him to be the Christ. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of David and the Lord of David, true man and true God!

Yet, David's prophecy from Psalm 110 does not stop at calling the Christ Lord. It says that the Lord will set the Christ on his right hand until he puts his enemies under his feet. This refers to Jesus' triumphal resurrection from the dead and ascension to the right hand of God the Father after Christ vanquished sin, death, and Satan. Jesus defeated these enemies by living in human flesh in perfect obedience to God and by dying for the sins of all people.

Jesus truly loved the Lord his God with all his heart. He desired always to be with him. When he was twelve years old his parents found him after a three-day search in the temple, and Jesus responded, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Jesus frequently went to a desolate place to pray, to colloquize with his Father. Jesus loved the Lord his God with all his soul. He devoted his entire life to his heavenly Father's will, even bearing bitter torment and death innocently on our behalf, because it was his Father's will. Jesus loved the Lord God with his whole mind. He grew in knowledge as a child and spent his ministry teaching young and old the Word of God. And Jesus loved his neighbor as himself. As he himself said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) And that is exactly what Jesus did. He loved your body and your soul instead of his own, so that he laid down his very life for you. In Jesus the Christ, David's Son and David's Lord we see the two greatest Commandments fulfilled. We see that on which all the Law and the Prophets depend fulfilled!

This is why St. Paul says that the righteousness of God is revealed apart from the Law. Not in opposition to the Law! But rather, apart from our works of the Law. No, the Law must be fulfilled. Scripture depends on it! But our works do not depend on it. Rather, we receive Christ's righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus, David's Son and Lord, who is seated at God's right hand having defeated sin, death, and hell! Through faith in Christ we receive the credit for the fulfillment of the Law, even though we ourselves have not fulfilled it!

So, it is clear that Christ Jesus loves God with his whole heart soul and mind and loves his neighbor as himself. But an important question remains. Can you as a Christian truthfully say that you love the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and mind and your neighbor as yourself? The answer seems to be a resounding, "NO!", as we have already heard. And it is important for us to see that we have

broken God's commandments, that we deserve God's wrath, and that we need a Savior and must repent of our sin. Yet, it is also important that you confess that you *do* love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And that you *do* love your neighbor as yourself.

How can this be? Because through faith, you have a new man! It is no longer you who live, but Christ who lives in you. So, while your body of sin will continue to rebel against God's commandment of love, your new man desires to be with God, to serve and obey him, to learn from him. Your new man desires to help your neighbor, to defend him, speak well of him, and support him. This seems confusing as we battle our sinful flesh our whole life through, but through faith in Christ who loves you and in the Holy Spirit, who has made your body his temple, you do love. Your new man cannot sin, even as your old man tries to drag you down. And the day will come when you will shed your old man and sin and death with him, and you too will rise above your enemies victorious.

Psalm 110, which Jesus quoted as saying, "The Lord said to my Lord." continues, "Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments." Through faith in Christ, we certainly do offer ourselves freely. And in eternity, clothed in garments washed white in Jesus blood, we will willingly love God with all our heart, soul, and mind without sin. Amen.