

FROM ONE SERVANT TO ANOTHER

The Fountain of Godliness

Mark 12:28-31

INTRODUCTION: How wonderful it is in the providence of God that Mark 12 should be in our reading the week preceding Mother's Day. It is exceedingly appropriate because Mark 12 is where we hear our Lord answer the question, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

And I hope we all know how Jesus responded. He said, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*"

And isn't love what Mother's Day is really about?

- Don't we think about how our moms love us?
- Don't we think about how much we love our mom?

And moms, and not just moms, but all of you ladies, whether you will ever be a mother or not, let me say to you that God has created you in a way unique from men that makes love your specialty.

I say this to you ladies who see this quality in yourself for you to use it for your good, the good of those around you, and the ultimate good of the Kingdom of God. If you are a loving person, leverage that valuable quality in your life to be more loving still and to especially love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

At the same time, I challenge all of us men. The fact that we find love to require more effort on our part or more intention to make it happen, does not exempt us from the reach of this commandment.

The command of Christ called the first commandment and the greatest commandment is a commandment for us all, and one to which we all owe our most intense attention. So.o.o,

I. **WHAT IS THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT?**

What does it say? What does it mean?

Let us read all that the Holy Spirit caused Mark to record concerning it.

Mark 12:28–31 28 Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

29 Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments *is*: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

30 *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.*

31 *And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

If we want to be serious students of God’s Word and really understand the significance of what Jesus called the greatest of all the commandments, we should note several things.

A. Jesus is quoting the commandment straight out of the Old Testament.

Our Lord is quoting **Deuteronomy 6:4–5** “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

In quoting the commandment, **Jesus was affirming the status of the Old Testament as the Word of God**. He is putting feet to His promise that He did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them.

We would profit by following Jesus’ example in this. Too many who call themselves Christians are way too quick to toss an Old Testament verse or passage into the trash can of antiquity, with a casual explanation, “Well that’s from the Old Testament.”

To be sure, to draw the proper application from God’s revelation in the days of the old covenant, we must be careful to be aware of its context and be sure that we are using the passage in the light of its fulfillment by Christ and its explanation in the New Testament. But doing that is very different from just throwing it away as if it did not matter anymore.

Jesus said it matters! And when asked to name the first of all the commandments, He draws from the Word of the Father given to Moses 1,450 years before!

B. Jesus quotes the words of Moses exactly, adding only one phrase of explanation but making zero alterations in the meaning.

1. Jesus tells us to love the Lord our God.

- **Two words for love are used in the New Testament.**
 - **One is the love of commitment.**
 - **The other is the love of attraction.**

- **Jesus used the first, agape love, to describe God's love for us.**
- **And to describe how our love for God should be.**
- We are to love God with a committed love, not just out of an attraction because we like something He has done.
- Mothers, may I challenge you on this day that we honor you?
- Show your children how to love God when things are difficult as well as when times are good! Teach them with both example and verbal testimony how to still love God when you're sick, when you're broke, when you're grieving, when you're sad.
- Anybody can praise God and say they love Him when everything in the world is going their way.
- But the love God spoke through Moses and Jesus spoke about to those listening is the love of commitment that loves in thick and thin, in good and bad. It is the love with which God loved us while we were still sinners and the Father sent His beloved Son to the cross for us.

2. Love God with all your heart.

- The meaning of this expression among the Jews was not drastically different than the way we use it.
- The heart referred to the inner man.
- The heart was a person's identify, his real self.
 - **The meaning is that our love is to be genuine and not pretense.**
 - It is to be real and not just make-up.
 - It is to be who we really are without mask or costume.
 - It should look the same at home, at work, at school, as it looks at church.

3. Love God with all your soul.

- The soul is the seat of our emotions, mind, and will.
- **Our love for God ought to impact our emotions, our feelings.**

Do you remember the old chorus "If you're Happy and You Know It"?

- When Karen and I were doing bus ministry we sang it with our kids on the bus all the time.
- If you´re happy and you know it clap your hands.
- If you´re happy and you know it stomp your feet
- If you´re happy and you know it say Amen.
- But it was the chorus that spoke the truth and gave quite a good theological lesson.
- If you´re happy and you know it then your face will surely show it!
- Let me tell you something: If you really love God the way Jesus is describing, it will show in your emotions. People will be able to see it in the feelings you display.
- That does not mean you will always be happy and never sad. But it means that even in times of sadness, the comfort, the security, the faith, the confidence, the hope that you have in Christ will impact your aching emotions and it will be observable by someone who watches you carefully.
- **Our love for God ought to impact our will, our decisions that we make.**

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; ...**"

- Make no mistake about it. When we truly love God we are willing to give up our desires, our plans, our will, our way.
- And devote ourselves to His desires, His will, His way.

4. Love God with all your mind.

- Someone is thinking, "I thought the mind is part of the soul."
- It is. But Jesus is emphasizing it here, probably because those listening put a strong emphasis on the soul being the emotions.
- Jesus wants us to understand that really loving God impacts our minds.
 - I hope you have not already forgotten what we saw in Romans 12:1-2 a few weeks ago.

Romans 12:1–2 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service*. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- **God wants our minds to be transformed, to be renewed after we are saved.**
- He wants our minds to be captive to Him, learning to think His thoughts and to direct the other members of our body to do His will.
- Do you love God with all your mind?
 - I used to use my mind to question whether His word was true.
 - Not anymore. He has transformed my mind. I know His Word is true.
 - Now when I read something in Scripture that I do not understand, I know it is my mind that is messed up. I seek to understand so I can get my mind to thinking right because I know His Word is right.
 - Do you use your mind to plan things that honor the Lord, please the Lord; or do you use your mind to circumvent the desires and plans of God?

5. Love God with all your strength.

- **This means love God to the max.**
- Love God in the strongest way possible.
- This is one thing in life you are not to balance. “Well I love God just the right amount, not too little, but not too much.” That is the way many people, even those who call themselves Christians do.
- It is impossible to love God too much.

Now, while each of these words describe individually how we are to love the Lord our God, the fullness of their meaning really comes out collectively.

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

The Holy Spirit declares that **the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with our everything: all that is within us, everything we are!**

There is one other thing we should note here.

C. None of us can love God like that ... in our own strength.

John was known as the Apostle of love. He wrote

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

Only those of us who have been saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus, have experienced the love of God that caused Jesus to die upon the cross for our sins.

Only those who have been saved are having their lives transformed to be more like Christ Himself.

Only those in whom the Holy Spirit lives giving both direction and power to enable the redeemed to live lives honoring and pleasing to God.

Only the saved can keep this commandment, the greatest commandment of them all!

II. WHAT FLOWS FROM THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT?

What happens when I obey it? What difference does it make?

I like to think of this the greatest commandment as the Fountain of Godliness. The reason I call it that is because when the love of God such as is described in this verse flows in our lives, it overflows and runs off in multiple tributaries, only some of which I can even mention this morning.

First, genuine love for the Lord overflows in

- A. **Obedience to the other commandments**. That's what Jesus was talking about when He said, **John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word;**

Jesus' word here is absolute. Is there an area of your life where you are having trouble obeying the Lord? Maybe in some or a lot of areas, you are doing well, but in this one area, you are not walking in obedience.

What's wrong?

You don't love the Lord enough! That's what's wrong.

You may be thinking, “Well Bro. Mike, that just makes me mad for you to say that I don’t love the Lord enough. Who are you to say how much I do or don’t love the Lord?”

Hey, I’m not the one saying it. Jesus is saying it. Look at the text. Jesus said, not Bro. Mike said.

B. **Faithfulness** – What is faithfulness but repeated obedience.

C. **Love for others** – Jesus pointed this one out. The second commandment is like the first, love your neighbor as yourself.

III. WHAT FLOWS TO THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT?

What will help me to do the greatest commandment?

What will help me love God with all that I am?

The answer is in the very beginning of the commandment. You see the commandment does not begin with “You shall love the Lord your God with ...” Did you notice that? Look at the full commandment.

Mark 12:29–30

29 Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

30 *And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.*

Let me give that first part literally to you from Deuteronomy 6

Deuteronomy 6:4 (Hebrew Bible)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד: ⁴

Shema, Yisrael, Yahweh Elohenu Yahweh ehad.

Hear Israel, Yahweh, your Elohim, is Yahweh, the One and Only, the Everything!

- Yahweh is the personal name of God. The name Jesus means Yahweh is salvation.
- Elohim is the name of God that revealed Him as Creator and as the Sovereign Triune God (Father Son, Spirit).

So why is this grand and deep theological statement right before the commandment to love YHWH Elohim with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength?

Because the way to love God like that is to know Him as He is.

How do we know more of God? Through the faithful study of His Word.

CONCLUSION: Here is the truth of this passage in a nutshell.

The more we know God as He is,

The more we love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

And the more we love the Lord,

The more we obey Him.

When we do not obey the Lord, it is because we do not love God enough. When we do not love God enough, it is because we do not know the Lord God well enough.