

STONE HARBOR

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Date: August 16, 2009
Series: Who Jesus Is & Why He Matters
Section: Jesus on Mission in Jerusalem
Text: Mark 12:28-34
Topic: Love for God
Message Title: Love: The Foremost Commandment in the Kingdom of God
Short Title: Love: The Foremost Commandment

Mark 12 28-34

- 28 One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, [Just one came, could this be the exception to the antagonistic rule?]
and recognizing that He had answered them well, [“answered...well” – indicating good debater or truly good answer?]
asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" [Sounds like a genuine and good question]
- 29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, [No, “you are greatly mistaken...” Seems to be straight answer to a good question]
'HEAR, O ISRAEL! [Deut 6:3, Shema]
THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; [K&D: Dt 6:4 Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.Ⓜ]
- 30 **AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD** [D.A. Carson – Anti-idolatry]
WITH ALL YOUR HEARTⁱⁱ, AND □
WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND □
WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND □
WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' □
- 31 "The second is this, □
'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' [Lv 19, anticipation of Jesus Golden Rule]
There is no other commandment greater than these." □
- 32 The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher;
You have truly stated that □
HE IS ONE, □
AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; □
- 33 AND TO LOVE HIM □
WITH ALL THE HEART AND □
WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND □
WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, □

AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF,
is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

□
[How he thought Jesus would answer?]

- 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, [An intelligent answer is a repetition of what Jesus has said]
He said to him, "**You are not far from the kingdom of God.**" [What is it to be "not far" from the KOG?"]
After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions. [This would argue for ulterior motive to q.]

Read the parallels to see if any label this as yet another disingenuous question.

Possible Intro: It is easy to recognize a truly great work of art: Michael Angelo's Cistine Chapel (picture). It is easy to recognize a truly amazing structure such as the great pyramids (picture), likewise we have before us a passage of Scripture that is easy to recognize a monumentally important.

NOTE: With NASB right-justified notes from Johnny Potter

INTRODUCTION

This past week if you got sloppy behind the wheel and had a fender bender there is a good chance the car you run into might have been worth more than your house. This is auto week in Monterey. With an unbelievable number events: Concourse de Elegance at Pebble, the Quail car show where 3,000 tickets were sold at \$400 a pop. The only one I could afford to take in was the Concourse de Le'mons. The irony of having all these way expensive cars on display and having the ash from the Lockheed fire falling down on them gave me a chuckle. But the weather clear and the end result was some of the best cars in the world on display in one of the prettiest settings in the world.

I took in the Concourse de Elegance a view years back with Nathaniel and it solicited a lot of comments from me like, "Wow that is beautiful." But then we left, got back into my Subaru and life returned to normal.

Like that outstanding and valuable car on the 18th fairway of Pebble Beach only way better in that it can change your life, today we have before us a truth Jesus says is the, "the foremost of all commandments."

It is the commandment to love God.

We will give attention to that commandment and try to take it from general awareness into the core of our being and let the Holy Spirit transform us by that truth. We will see that love for God has a beginning, a center, and an end (i.e. something that it will produce in our day to day time and space lives).

But not only that, before we leave today I pray that we would have allowed the Scripture to make clear in our minds that what God is after is not just our loving actions, but something even more core to His will.

Follow along in your Bibles as I read Mark 12:28-34

Jesus says that love for God is the foremost commandment in the Kingdom of God. This first thing that I would like to draw particular attention to is...

Exegetical Main Point of Passage

Answering an arguably ill motivated question, Jesus declares what commandment from the Lord is foremost of all – with a designated starting point and a consequent ending the heart of the foremost commandment is love for God.

Homiletical Idea

The foremost commandment of God is to love Him; but those who seek to obey this commandment must embark from a particular starting point and realize a consequent end; further, in regard to one's personal membership in the kingdom of God, understanding this command only posits you close, something more is required of those who enter in.

Subject & Compliments

Love for God: The Foremost Commandment in the Kingdom of God

Intro: KOG

- Love's Beginning
- Love's Center
- Love's End

Conclusion: Moving from “not far from” to “in” the Kingdom of God

Goals of Message

The goal of this message is twofold:

1. that **people would fully understand God's foremost commandment to love Him**
2. that people in the chapel would become people in the kingdom of God and realize that it is only as covenant sons and daughters of God that we can obey this commandment according to His intention.

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

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Message Outline

Love: The Foremost Commandment in the Kingdom of God

- I. Love's **Beginning**
- II. Love's **Center**
- III. Love's **End**

Related Scripture

1. Math 22:34-40
2. Luke 10:25-28
3. Deut 6
4. Leviticus 19 esp. v. 18
5. Romans 13:8-9
6. Gal 5:14
7. Jas 2:8

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. What is the meaning of “The Lord our God is one Lord”?
2. In what way is this the beginning of love?
3. State in your own word the commandment to love from verse 30.
4. In what way is love for neighbor the completion of our love for God?
5. Draw a picture of the scribe being “not far from the kingdom of God.”
6. According to what we know of Jesus mission, how would He like to modify this picture?
7. How does one move from “not far from” to “in”?
8. What legitimate hope should this provoke in us and how can we be so provoked?

Memory and Meditation Verse

Jesus answered, "The foremost is,
'Hear of Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord;
and you shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'
The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Mark 12:29-31a NASB

I. Love's Beginning

A. Love for God Begins at the Point of Understanding the Truth that "The LORD our God is one LORD."

Riding 20 miles on the wrong train doesn't get you where you want to go. Say you are visiting your friend in a far away city that you have never been to before and he tells you to take the **Green Line** train South from the airport train sub-station to the 7th exit and he'll meet you there. One beginning point at the airport's train sub-station is not just as good as any other. If you get on the **Red Line**, even though you ride it to the end, you won't get to your friend.

Before Jesus states the foremost commandment, He quotes from the very heart of what His questioners accept as truth, Moses' words. He chooses Deut 6:4 beginning, "Hear O Israel!" Moses had originally said it as a strong attention getting command, "**Listen to this** O Israel! Listen the words I'm about to say, **this is important!**"

Jesus, citing Moses says, "**Hear O Israel! The LORD our God is one LORD.**" Mark 12:29

The commandment to love God has its necessary prerequisite in the knowledge that "**The LORD our God is one LORD.**" Well what does that statement mean?

B. What the Truth Means

1. The Meaning from the Context of the Book of Deuteronomy

a) Moses

Great deliverer of ancient Israel the one who God had chosen to reveal Himself to and to bring His people out of bondage in Egypt into the land He had promised to give to them, where they would dwell with God Himself. He was the one the people of Israel had agreed to have stand between them and God and whatever God told Moses the people had agreed to do. Moses mediated the covenant by which the nation of Israel was formerly brought into the relationship with God as His covenant sons. Moses had received not only the ten commandments, but had also demonstrated the Christ-like humility and love for the people of God as evidenced by his frequent intercession for them, a love that now led him to pen the book of Deuteronomy for their good, that they might receive the blessings of God as they enter the promised land.

b) Setting of Book

This is the last of the first five books of the Bible all written by Moses referred to as the Pentateuch. The people of Israel stand poised at the edge of Canaan, after forty years of wandering in the dessert as punishment for not having trusted God when He had first brought them to this entry point.

c) Purpose of Book

Moses sought to expound/explain the Law (Dt 1:5) God had given them and thus prepare them to be the people of God that they were by covenant but that they had

too many times proven by their disobedience to the terms of the covenant that they could not be. Keil & Delitzsch (K&D) see Moses words in this book as “a paternal address, full of solemn and affectionate admonition” p. 270
This is the author and his situation and purpose who Jesus quotes thereby bringing all this to the remembrance of His questioner who was steeped in this literature. Jesus says the beginning of the foremost commandment is, “The LORD our God is one LORD.”

2. The Meaning of “...The LORD...”

a) NASB Terms for God

- God = Elohim = “designation for the Supreme Deity.”^{iv}
- Lord = Title of God = a translation of Adonai
- **LORD = Special or Proper name for God = translation of YHWH, transliterated Yahweh or Jehovah.** This name is taken from the verb “to be” and Nelson’s Bible Dictionary says it means “simply but profoundly, “I am who I am.”” (p. 427) This was the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in the story of the burning bush from which we saw Jesus quoting in the passage we considered last week (Mark 12:18-27 esp. see v. 26 where Jesus refers to Ex 3).

b) Deut 6:4

K&D: “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah” = Yahweh our God is one Yahweh
Jehovah/Yahweh = the God who revealed Himself to Moses, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, **distinct from any other god whom others consider to be their god, this God** is one Lord.

3. “our God”

As distinguished from any gods other people regard as their god.
Jehovah/Yahweh is to be regarded by Israel as their God -- not any other nation’s so called gods.

Yahweh/Jehovah, Israel’s LORD is ...

4. “one LORD”

- Gundry sees the word order and grammar of this phrase as putting emphasis on the “one” of “one Lord” (p. 715)
- What does it mean that God is “one Lord”?
- K&D: indicate this is communicating that, “...Jehovah is the one absolute God...” p. 322 of vol. III “...to whom no other *Elohim* can be compared... the absolutely living God, as He made Himself known in His deeds in Israel for the salvation of the world.” Ibid p. 323
- “... the primary assertion of [Dt] v.4 is that there is only one true God...”^v

C. The Truth (Dt 6:4) is an Explanation of the First Two Commandments of the Ten Commandments

1. Dt 5:6-10 Restates the First Two of the Ten Commandments

6 I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 7 You shall have no other gods before Me. 8 You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 9 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 10 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

2. Dt 6:4 Begins to Explain the First Two Commandments

K&D describe Dt 6 as expounding the "...contents of the first two commandments of the Decalogue, that Jehovah alone is the true and absolute God, and requires love from His people with all their heart and all their soul, and therefore will not tolerate the worship of any other god besides Himself..." K&D p. 271

D. The Ten Commandments are a Summary Enumeration of the Stipulations of God's Covenant with Israel

God's Covenant with the Nation of Israel was itself first and foremost an instrument that established a relationship between God and His people. It was intended to define the terms of the relationship between God the Heavenly Father and the nation of Israel as His devoted son.

Much like a marriage covenant today it was not intended to be a burdensome list of rules you have to obey, but a set of promises to be a life long faithful spouse. And what is that? It is one who forsakes all others and sticks with the other person in sickness and in health, for better or for worse...

E. And God's Covenant with Israel was a Itself a Development of God's Plan to Restore Creation to His Original Intention

So when Jesus quotes Dt 6:4 as the beginning of His answer to the question of which commandment is foremost of all He is tying into a long history of God's working with mankind to restore them from their position of estrangement and death to a relationship marked by intimate communion and life. The one true God has been reaching out to man in love seeking to bring him into a close, enduring, loving relationship with Him.

Hear O Israel, the LORD our God is the one true absolute LORD.

To understand this is the beginning of fulfilling our commanded love for God. It is getting on the right train leading to the right destination. With this truth understood, we are ready to understand...

II. Love's Center

30 **AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD
WITH ALL YOUR HEART^{vi}, AND
WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND
WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND
WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'**

According to Jesus, love for God, in this way, is the heart – the center -- of God's foremost commandment! In what way did Moses and Jesus intend us to love God?

A. What Is the "Love" Commanded?

1. From OT Context of Dt 6

- a) **The Presenting Action is Obedience to Covenant Stipulations**
- b) **The Underlying "Action" is Being a Faithful Covenant Son**

2. From NT

a) Greek word used here is from root *αγαπαω*

b) Understood by seeing God's love for us

- **John 3:16** -- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
- **1 John 4:10** -- In **this is love**, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
- **2 John 1:6** -- And **this is love**, that we walk according to His commandments This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.
- **Galatians 2:20** -- "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
- **Romans 5:8** -- But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while** we were **yet sinners**, Christ died for us.
- **1 John 4:20** -- If someone says, "I love **God**," and hates his brother, he is a **liar**; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love **God** whom he has not seen.
- **John 15:12-17** -- ¹²"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. ¹³"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴"You are My friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶"You did

not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. ¹⁷"This I command you, that you love one another.

B. Who Is the Object of Your Commanded Love?

1. It is the LORD (Grk: κυριος for Hebrew YHWH)

Remember that Yahweh was the special or proper name for God, the translation of YHWH which was transliterated Yahweh or later Jehovah and taken from the verb "to be" meaning "I am who I am." We have already seen that this was the name by which the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob revealed Himself to Moses in the story of the burning bush. This was the unique name of the absolute and true God of the Bible who is restoring all creation to Himself.

2. God (Grk: θεος)

3. Your God

The love that is commanded is not love for someone else's God, but the love for "your God," i.e. the God with whom you have entered into covenant relationship with and taken as YOUR God, receiving Him as yours and pledging yourself to Him.

If you can NOT properly regard Him as Yahweh your God, you can not properly love Him and this command is not even intended for you.

C. God Must Be Your God

In fact, no one should make the mistake of thinking that they could obey this law from any other position than that of an adopted child, i.e., one who is in a genuine relationship with God as their one true and absolute Father.

If you are not in covenant relationship with God the father, you might be able to do actions that others label as loving, but you will not be loving God according to the way He commands you to love Him.

D. How Are You to Love God?

1. With:

- a) All Your Heart**
- b) All Your Soul**
- c) All Your Mind**
- d) All Your Strength**

2. With Everything You've Got!

The secret to treating this commandment as God intends is to be found less in understanding its subtleties and more in submitting to its clarity. We are to love the Lord our God with everything we've got!

If I stay true to the contexts of Deut 6 and Mark 12 this command calls me

- **to know God** as He has revealed Himself in the pages of Scripture and in the person of Jesus; and
- **to believe/trust in the God** who promised in the OT to restore all things and who came in the person of Jesus in the NT to fulfill that promise; i.e., by the grace and faith God has given me, I am to trust in **Jesus**; and
- **to be the adopted son** God has regenerated me to be; and **finally=lastly**, coming as a natural fruit of my new life in Christ, if I am to love the LORD my God I am ...
- **to obey** by my Heavenly Father

3. Johnny, Are You Loving the Lord Your God with Everything You've Got?

The Lord brought some things to mind. Some thoughts that I harbor that are not like those of Christ's. Some holding on to ease that was not modeled by Jesus. My prayer life is not what God has called me to. All these come at the crossroads of my life as a natural man and my life as a new creation in Christ. Where I do not love God as I should, I find I am living as the dead man I was before Christ, not as the new man I am in Christ.

- **John 14:15** – Jesus says, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.”
- **John 14:21** -- "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."

We must not think that we can do acts of obedience and thereby satisfy the commandment to love. It does not work like that.

- **Galatians 5:22** -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness

We encounter love in Gal 5:22 here as a fruit of the Spirit of God. This reminds me to see that it is the Spirit of God in me who produces the love that enables me to love the Lord my God with everything I've Got. So, it is really less about doing more acts of obedience and more about being the adopted son of God and just loving Him with the natural genuine love of a son.

4. Beloved, Are You Loving the Lord Your God with Everything You've Got?

a) Helpful Questions

- (1) Have you taken God to be your God?
- (2) Are you loving Him with all your heart?
- (3) Are you loving Him with all your soul?
- (4) Are you loving Him with all your mind?
- (5) Are you loving Him with all your strength?
- (6) Do you know Him as He has revealed Himself in the Scripture and in the person of Jesus?
- (7) Do you believe/trust in the God who promised to restore all things and who has come in the person of Jesus to fulfill that promise?
- (8) Are you living as an adopted child of His?
- (9) Are you, as a natural fruit of your new life in Christ, obeying your Heavenly Father?

It can be difficult to get a real crisp view on this as we are grappling with whether or not we love the invisible God. Many of us who have walked with God for a long time are forced to evaluate our love in the invisible realm of our thoughts and attitudes. Fortunately, Jesus gives us in the next verse the way we can tell whether or not we have reached love's end.

III. Love's End

31 "The second is this,
'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'
There is no other commandment greater than these."

The second and necessarily resulting compliment to the foremost commandment is the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. Now that is a little easier to evaluate!

We know we have gotten on the *Green Line* headed in the right direction if when we get off at the 7th stop we see the smiling face of our friend waiting to meet us. Likewise, we know we are loving the invisible God if we are loving our visible neighbors.

I know I love myself. I know I do because I feed myself when I'm hungry, I take a break when I'm tired, I brush my teeth, I dress myself, I comb my hair, I take myself on vacation, I pay my mortgage when it's due, I put myself to sleep when I'm tired, I take myself to the doctor when I am sick, I forgive myself when I am bad... I love myself. And you love yourself too.

But that's not the point, the question here is do we love our neighbors as ourselves? I don't. I'm busted! I don't even know some of my neighbors, much less their problems that I might relieve them.

I can console myself in that I know most of you and that I love you by feeding you the healthiest food from God's word that I can whip up with what I've got... but I still find myself falling pretty short of loving my neighbor as myself.

The story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) keeps me from trying to justify away this passage by thinking that neighbor is somehow supposed to be restricted to you guys.

Luke 10:25-37

- 25 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying,
"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"
- 26 And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"
- 27 And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD
WITH ALL YOUR HEART,
AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL,
AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH,
AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND;
AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."
- 28 And He said to him, "You have answered correctly;
DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE."
- 29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"
- 30 Jesus replied and said,
"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers,
and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead.
- 31 "And by chance a priest was going down on that road,

- and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.
- 32 "Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.
- 33 "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him;
and when he saw him, he felt compassion,
- 34 and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them;
and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.
- 35 "On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper
and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'
- 36 "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor
to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?"
- 37 And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him."
Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

Then of course there are the words of the apostles that seem to come right out of Jesus' words

- [Romans 13:8-10](#) -- Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his **neighbor** has fulfilled the law. For this, " YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, " YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR **NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**" Love does no wrong to a **neighbor**; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.
- [1 Corinthians 10:24](#) -- Let no one seek his own good, but that of his **neighbor**.
- [Galatians 5:14](#) -- For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, " YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR **NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**"
- [James 2:8](#) -- If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, " YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR **NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,**" you are doing well.

The Lord can surely grow me in this area. I'm not going to beat myself up too much, but I am going to yield to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I need to love my neighbor more completely!

It is a reasonable yardstick for me to evaluate the measure of my love for God by the measure of my love for my neighbor, the observable bearing witness to the invisible. I'm coming up short of God's measure of love.

This will be a point of significant prayer over the next several weeks. I will ask the Lord, how He would have me love my neighbor. This much I know so far, God would have my acts of love come out of my regenerated nature as a new creation in Christ – and not out of my degenerate nature which wants to be approved by acts of self righteousness.

I would be missing the mark if I thought I could satisfy the requirement of the law by doing acts of kindness to my neighbors apart from my union with Christ and distinct from His love for them. It is only in Christ that the law is ultimately fulfilled. It is only with the mind of Christ that I can truly know how to love my neighbor as God intends. It is only with the power of His Spirit that I can begin to love my neighbor as He intends.

I hear the lord prodding me to continue to be transformed. Johnny, know the Lord your God and accept as yours the heart and deeds that are His. Do not do, before you are! The impossibility of fulfilling the

law to love my neighbor as myself on my own power compels me to Christ, to rely on Him and the strength that comes from my union with Him. He after all did love His neighbors as Himself.

John 15:13 -- **Greater love** has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

That is exactly what Jesus did. Paul encourages us, in Philippians 2

- 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
- 6 who, although He existed in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
- 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant,
and being made in the likeness of men.
- 8 Being found in appearance as a man,
He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him,
and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
- 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW,
of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

By the providence of God this brings us to the completion of the passage and the point I'd like to conclude on.

Conclusion

- 32 The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher;
You have truly stated that
HE IS ONE,
AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM;
- 33 AND TO LOVE HIM
WITH ALL THE HEART AND
WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND
WITH ALL THE STRENGTH,
AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF,
is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."
- 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently,
He said to him, "**You are not far from the kingdom of God.**"
After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

"You are not far..." But he was not in! To be close to a good place is only good and exciting if you are headed in. To be close and headed away is a bummer. To be close to the kingdom of God and headed away is a tragedy!

If the questioning scribe basically repeated the answer of Jesus in agreement with Him yet Jesus said of Him, you are not far from the kingdom of God, then we have got to see that knowing even the greatest commandment is not our ticket into the kingdom of God. And citizenship in the kingdom of God is what it is all about! What is it that must be added to our knowledge of Scripture in order to enter the kingdom of God?

It of course is faith. And faith, of course, like all good things, comes from God. We must exercise the faith God gives us specifically the faith in Jesus -- that He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the anointed one who God had promised would crush the head of the serpent and restore creation. For the inquiring scribe this would mean not just accepting Jesus' answer as good, but accepting Jesus as God's Savior!

We must exercise our faith in Jesus that shows itself in our lives by our following Him. Remember what He has already told the rich young devout ruler who had kept the law from his youth who had asked Jesus, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Mark 10:21 -- Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and **sell** all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and **come, follow Me.**"

Following Jesus is the outworking of genuine faith. It is in this faith prompted following of Jesus as a disciple of His that we come to enter the Kingdom of God. From there, joined to God through faith in Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can love the Lord our God with everything we've got.

Let's pray.

Endnotes

ⁱ Lord our God is one God -- [In paganism there are many Gods. Athens altar to unknown God.](#)

ⁱⁱ Heart – DA Carson points here to mind, the way you think, your whole being...

ⁱⁱⁱ Not far from the kingdom of God – This in context of the story line of the Mark 10:45 Jesus came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many – the way one enters the kingdom is by the ransom of Jesus.

^{iv} See p. vi of NASB Forward under the section on Principles of Translation and paragraph on The Proper Name of God in the Old Testament.

^v p. 64 Earl S. Kalland in The Expositor's Bible Commentary Volume 3.

^{vi} Heart – DA Carson points here to mind, the way you think, your whole being...

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