

SERIES: **The Jesus Journey**

TEXT: **Mark 12:28-34**

TITLE: **What does God want from me?**

Context: Jesus has had wave after wave of religious elites question Him in hopes of trapping Him; all have failed

Mark 12:28 One of the scribes approached. (Their trade was to interpret the law, its rules and regulations) When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, “Which command is the most important of all?”

This was a common discussion in the day of Jesus

There were **613 commandments** in the law of Moses (248 positives ‘do this’ ; 365 prohibitions ‘don’t do that’)

The argument was whether some were weightier and others lighter

Mark 12:29-31 Jesus answered, “The most important is **Listen, Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one.**

God is exclusively and uniquely God; This will be important when we talk about application

³⁰ Love 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.”

Jesus has pulled from two OT passages here-

1- The Shema (imperative from Hebrew verb ‘to hear/ listen’)

- The full Shema : **Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21, Numbers 15:37-41**
- The 3 passages would be carried in phylacteries (lil leather boxes devout Jews wore on the forehead & wrist)
(Remember Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for enlarging them to seem more pious)
- Every Jewish home had (many still do) *the Mezuzah* (little cylindrical box) fixed to the door of the house

2- Leviticus 19:18 which referred to the fellow Jewish person as their neighbor, but Jesus will expand this

Matthew 22:40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.

Mark 12:32-33 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.”

Remember the context of the last few passages (the Temple rituals)?

People have been doing all the right activities without the right heart (love for God & others)

Here’s what Jesus is getting at & what the Scribe agrees with:

Love is the measuring cup of our true spiritual condition

I point that out because we often make the measure of maturity:

Service (Martha); Morality (Pharisees); Knowledge (scribes); etc.

This had been God’s issue with the people since the OT

Hosea 6:6 For I desire faithful love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Here’s the Main Point I want to unpack with the remainder of our time, based on these 2 commandments-

Love God with your whole self and love your neighbor as another self

These two commands are **distinguishable** yet **inseparable**

We'll tackle them in reverse order

(V31) LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

The idea in their day and ours was- love those who love you & don't cause harm to the rest-

Scripture raises the bar

The question we need to answer: ***Who is my neighbor & how do I love them?***

When asked "*who is my neighbor*" Jesus tells the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37)

Man is robbed & left for dead; A priest & a Levite pass by but don't help; a Samaritan does

Luke 10:36-37 "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷ "The one who showed mercy to him," he said. Then Jesus told him, "Go and do the same."

Who is my neighbor? **Whoever needs me, wherever I am**

How are we to love our neighbor?

"as yourself"-

two wrong approaches

- "self-love is unbiblical"- no, self-hatred is
- "self-love is the whole point"- no, selfless love is

We need to see ourselves through the eyes of God who first loved us & calls us to follow in His steps

"...it will not be possible for us to love others if we are not resting in who we have become in Christ through faith in Him: a forgiven sinner, a child of the King, a son of God, a sinner bound for heaven because of the finished work of Christ on our behalf, a member of the body of Christ with special abilities (gifts) given to us by the Lord, an ambassador of the Savior, to name just a few of the blessings every Christian has in Christ. In other words, in Christ we are complete!"- J. Hampton Keathley, III

Ephesians 5:28-30 In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰ since we are members of his body.

Care for others as naturally as you care for yourself

You eat every day, you go inside if it rains, you don't walk into the middle of the freeway, etc.

All that comes natural, you don't even think about it. Love others that naturally!

To love my neighbor is to meet the needs of the people around me to the best of my ability and capacity

You cannot obey the first command to love God, without obeying the second command to love others

1 John 4:20-21 If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

(V29-30) **[LISTEN, ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE. LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH](#)**

It is foundational to begin with the character of God

We don't gather around a philosophy or a vague new age idea, we gather around a person.

Because God is not a mystical force like karma, but a being, He can love. And He does love...US!

And because He loves us, we love Him (1 John 4:19)

God's character is the foundation on which our love for Him is built

Psalm 18:1-3 I love you, Lord, my strength. ²The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock where I seek refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

³I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I was saved from my enemies.

The question we need to answer is: ***How do we love the true God?***

"all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength"

There is much discussion around the order of 'heart, soul, mind strength';

even about the differing wording from Matthew, Luke & O.T.

even about the choice of words translated from the Hebrew manuscripts and the Greek Septuagint

(for the sake of time I won't address each of the 4, but I do have notes which you can review online)

Despite the variations in specific language here, scholars agree that they cumulatively lead to the same idea: **Love the Lord your God with all that you are**

"The main emphasis is on their combined strength by which they stress the whole person"

"all" 4 times- the Greek means "whole, entire, complete."

David E Garland- *"God does not love only certain portions of us, but the whole person; therefore, we are to love God with our whole selves. God does not save us by fractions, and we are not to offer God a mere fraction of ourselves."*

So we love God with all that we are... the question remains- HOW?

(credit to John Piper's series of lectures, 'How do I know if I love God')

Many make the case that **love = obedience**. That's not completely wrong, but it's not completely correct

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commands."

Note: If- then (command keeping is the result of already having this love)

1 John 5:1-5 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of him. ²This is how we know that we love God's children: when we love God and obey his commands. ³For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands.

The mistake we make is stopping here, but the text continues-

And his commands are not a burden, ⁴because everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. ⁵Who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Here's what the text is saying:

Those who are born again, by believing in Christ, have conquered the world-

which means the new birth conquered our worldly impulses and has changed us. How?

Our command-keeping (obedience) changes away from being a burden!

Is it a struggle at times? Yes, it feels like dying because it is a dying to self.

But it is not merely a struggle that burdens us, but a struggle we joyfully and desperately engage with because we love God more than we love not being in the battle

So, obedience is a result of loving God, and a way to express our love for God- but on its own, apart from the motive of love already there, it's not loving God in and of itself

Here's how we love God: **To love the Lord is to see the glory of God, especially as revealed in the Gospel, and to value & delight in it as superior to anything else**

John 17:24, 26 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, so that they will see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the world's foundation...²⁶ I made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love you have loved me with may be in them and I may be in them." The best gift God can give us is Himself, to see His glory. Upon seeing His glory we are compelled to love Him

"God glorifies himself towards the creatures in two ways: by appearing to their understanding and, two, in communicating himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing in him, the manifestations which he makes of himself. God is glorified not only in his glory's being seen, but in its being rejoiced in. When those that see it, delight in it, God is more glorified than if they only see it." Jonathon Edwards

2 Corinthians 4:4,6 In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God...⁶ For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Loving God is treasuring His glory, revealed in the gospel through Christ, as superior to all other things

Paul was a great example of what this treasuring the glory of God looks like

Philippians 3:7-8 But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ

John Piper- *"Loving God will include obeying all his commands; it will include believing all his word; it will include thanking him for all his gifts. But all that is overflow. The essence of loving God is admiring and enjoying all he is. And it is this enjoyment of God that makes all of our other responses truly glorifying to him."*

To love the Lord is to see the glory of God, as revealed in the Gospel, and to treasure it as superior to anything else
When you think about what God has done to save you and I, and delight and rejoice in it, that is to love God

God wants every part of us- the clean and polished AND the stained and hidden.

I was reading in **Matthew 11** this week.

V27 no one knows the Father except those to whom the Son desires/ chooses to reveal Him.

Then in V28-30 Jesus goes from praying to the Father to making an invitation to who He wants to reveal the Father to.

And who is it??? ALL who are weary and burdened!

Mark 12:34 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.

He’s not far...but he’s not in yet.

To be in the kingdom, one has to go further than simply approving of Jesus’ teaching;
we have to surrender our love to Him and for others

Love God with your whole self and love your neighbor as another self

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

BULPEN-

Outline

- Context
- Text
- Who is my neighbor & how do I love them?
- How do I love God?
- Invitation

The Way Church Mission statement:

We exist to develop people that are becoming increasingly *God-centered* and *others-oriented*.

This seems to be a genuine question, but it's more than that; it's a great question

V28 Judaism had a tendency to expand the law (add rules to rules and rules to those rules), but also to compress the law (sum it up as succinctly as possible)

V32-33 inward sincerity > outward sacrifice

V34 a tension- he's not far off, but he's not yet in

In the next section Jesus addresses what this scribe may be missing

V33-

Proverbs 21:3 Doing what is righteous and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Hosea 6:6 For I desire faithful love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

1 Samuel 15:22 Then Samuel said: Does the Lord take pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? Look: to obey is better than sacrifice, to pay attention is better than the fat of rams.

See also Isaiah 1:10-20, Jeremiah 7:21-26

To love God and to love others is our greatest duty

To do anything else, outside of the boundaries of these, is to miss the mark

Loving neighbor

1 John 3:16-18 This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷If anyone has this world's goods and sees a fellow believer in need but withholds compassion from him—how does God's love reside in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.

1 John 4:19-21 We love because he first loved us. ²⁰If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹And we have this command from him: The one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

Romans 13:8-10 Do not owe anyone anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, **Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not covet;** and any other commandment, are summed up by this commandment: **Love your neighbor as yourself.** ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Love, therefore, is the fulfillment of the law.

Galatians 5:13-14 For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement: **Love your neighbor as yourself.**

James 2:8 Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, **Love your neighbor as yourself**, you are doing well.

Matthew 5:43-47 "You have heard that it was said, **Love your neighbor** and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don't even the Gentiles do the same?"

James 1:26-27 If anyone thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, his religion is useless and he deceives himself. ²⁷Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Devote all ourselves for all our lives

William Barclay- "But it is always easy to let ritual take the place of love. It is always easy to let worship become a matter of the Church building instead of a matter of the whole life"

The commandment is not just to obey God and don't harm your neighbor; Jesus goes beyond that- LOVE (the greatest of all affections) God with your whole being and your neighbor as yourself

At the time Mark wrote the temple was inaccessible for worship- either because the war had broken out and it was occupied by the romans or because it had already been reduced to ashes

The words of Jesus then would have been a comfort to early Jewish converts to Christianity because they would be secure that they could worship God outside of the temple rituals

Heart *kardias* = will & affection (center of thought and understanding & the seat of emotions & affections)

Soul *psychēs* = life & being/ unique identity & personality

Mind *dianoias*= reasoning/ deliberate conscious allegiance (Proverbs 3:5-6)

thinking about your faith is not shunned or something to fear; it is a requirement!

2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.

Strength *ischyos*= the capacity & resource of ability (Here ἰσχύς represents every physical, mental, financial, and societal resource under one's control. Devotion to God is not abstract; it is concrete stewardship of personal ability.)

"all" X4 is the Greek *holos* from which we get the word, holistic.

V30 Love= Agapao

John 14: 21, 24 ²¹The one who has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. And the one who loves me will be loved by my Father. I also will love him and will reveal myself to him."

²⁴The one who doesn't love me will not keep my words. The word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

God ought to be our source (reason for being), force (means for living, course (direction we're leaning)

Know God truly (v29), love God fully (30), love others (31)

These 2 commands become the source for our obedience to any other commands

To evangelize to the cashier; to give offering; to pray; to forgive; to share; to go to church

Think of it this way- it is the law that parents have to take care of your children. Do you? (yes) But did you need the law to tell you to? (no, because love compelled you)

Love for others can only grow out of the soil of love for God as it is fed and watered by fellowship with God in the streams of the Word

Psalms 27:4 I have asked one thing from the Lord; it is what I desire: to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, gazing on the beauty of the Lord and seeking him in his temple.

Philippians 3:6-8 regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.⁷ But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ. What kind of righteousness, under law, that is blameless, could be called dung? The same kind of command keeping that would have felt burdensome