

THE REAL JESUS
A Series on the Book of Mark
“It’s All About Love”
Mark 12:28-34
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New City Church of LA
Speaker: Kevin Haah

I. Introduction

Welcome to New City!

We are in the middle of a series called THE REAL JESUS. We’ve been looking at the Book of Mark to get a picture of the real Jesus. We are now in Mark 12. We’re at the last week of Jesus life before his crucifixion. For the last few weeks, we’ve been looking at the questions the religious leaders brought upto Jesus. We’ve looked at their question about his authority. We’ve looked at their question about resurrection; we’ve looked at the question regarding politics; and today, we’re going to look at a question about the law.

What is the most important commandment? Have you thought about that? There’s a lot of dos and don’ts in the Bible. In fact, the scholars at the time of Jesus found 613 units of law, separate categories of dos and don’ts in the Bible. You thought there were only 10 commandments! There are tons more.

If God can just give us what He wants us to do in one simple statement, what would it be??

Read Mark 12:27-34

The passage tells us (1) the Great Commandments—to love God and love people; and (2) the only way we can actually obey the Great Commandments—where we get the power to love God and love people.

II. First, this passage tells us the Great Commandments.

- This was not a new question. Jewish rabbis asked this question all the time. The rabbis at the time of Jesus broke down all of the laws in the Torah into 613 units—613 separate commandments. They discussed whether all of the laws have equal weight or whether there is one law or two laws that have an overriding principle. If you asked most rabbis at the time, they would have answered in a similar way. Every

Jew memorized the *Shema*, which is the first part of what Jesus said: It comes from Deuteronomy 6: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” Jesus added all your mind. The point is that we are commanded to love God with everything we are and have.

- Jesus added the second: “Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.” This comes from Leviticus.
- When we think about the word love, it means all kinds of things in our culture. I love Vietnamese food. I love running. I love your haircut. The way we use the word is sometimes pretty screwed up: “Hello I love you won’t you tell me your name?” by Jim Morrison. I love that ultimate cheesy romantic movie line: “Do you love him?” or “But, I love him!” As if we really know what that means. What does love mean?
- So, in this context, how are we to understand what this command means?
- In English, we only have one word for love. In Greek, there are four words for love. One is *storge*, which is used for love among family members. *Phileo* means affectionate friendship love. *Eros* is romantic or erotic love.
- Here, the Greek word that is used for the word love is *agape*. Agape means ascribing worth to someone at a cost to yourself. It means self-sacrificial love. It’s not a casual word. It is not based on how one “feels.” Rather, it is based on a choice to put the other person and what is best for them ahead of our self. That is why, in another passage, Jesus can tell us to show agape-love even to our enemies (Matthew 5:44). No matter how we “feel” about someone, we can still “choose” to bless and serve them. Similarly, no matter how we “feel” about God on any given day, we can still “choose” to worship and serve him with all of our being.
- Agape-love describes the unconditional love that God has for us. The Bible teaches us agape love by showing us Jesus. 1 John 3:16 says: “This is how we know what agape is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.” We are to repeat towards God and others what God has done for us. That’s what agape is.
- God’s dream for humanity is this. God is perfect love. He not only agape loves, he is agape. He is love. God lives in community of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. (this is hinted at in verses 35-37) They agape love one another for eternity. We are

made in the image of the Triune God—the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. One of the main ways that we are created in His image is that we are also created to be in community. Our essence is relational. When we live by ourselves, we go against our nature. God’s dream is to bring us to the dance of the Triune God. They agape one another and he calls us to agape with them. It is a beautiful relationship. This is the dream of the Kingdom of God. That’s why God wants us to agape Him and agape people.

- Now, Jesus said that agape fulfills the whole law. If we love, we obey the whole law. In Matthew’s version of the story, Jesus said that the whole law hangs on these two commands. It means that if you love God and love people, you have done everything that the law commands. Everything else in the law is a commentary on how to love and what it means to love.
 - So, 1 Corinthians 16:14 says: **Do everything in love.** It seems like what the Bible is saying is that everything we do must be done to express agape love. If you are arguing with someone about doctrine, and you are not expressing love, you might want to think about losing the argument and expressing love instead. Everything must be done in love. You don’t love in order to get approval from God.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:14 says: **it is the love of Christ that compels us.** Everything we do is compelled by the love of Christ.
 - Colossians 3:14 and 1 Peter 4:8 say: **Put love above all else**—above all doctrine, above all virtue, above all traditions. Love is the single most important doctrine. To not love like Jesus loved is a heresy. Throughout history, millions of people were tortured for having the wrong doctrine re baptism, or pope or whatever. But tell me who is the greater heretic: the one who was killed because of a wrong doctrine or the one who kills because of a wrong doctrine?
 - 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says that **nothing has any value unless it is done out of love.** You can speak in tongues of angels, you can prophesy, you can do miracles, you can preach the word of God, but without love, it is useless! It is

worthless! It's religious junk! It is not manifesting the beauty of the Triune dance of agape love, then it is not of the Kingdom of God.

- Galatians 5:6 says: **only thing that counts is faith energized by love.**

Nothing else counts for anything!

I can go on and on and show you passages after passages about love. Love is everything.

But, there are things that choke our ability to love. These are idols, alternate gods in our lives. All of these gods hinder our ability to agape-love. We need to revolt against these things so that we can be free to love:

We revolt against self-centeredness: we can't express love to God if we are absorbed with me and we can't express love for others if we are absorbed with me. We use God and others.

Materialism: getting some element of our worth by wealth. When we hoard resources, it is greed. If you are getting life and significance from material things, to that extent, you will express love with those things, and they are deceptive! The story of a poor widow is a great example of a person who gave everything she has for God. She did not place her security in her money; she placed her security in God.

Religion: When you try to get your own beauty by trying really hard, you'll get stuck. Also, you will end up embracing a god less beautiful than the real God. When you try to serve God who is less than beautiful, you are going to get life from elsewhere.

Racism: getting life from your ethnicity. It hinders manifesting agape love for people of other ethnicities.

We revolt against the idol of nationalism: we get our worth and security by being an American rather than getting it from being children of God. This will hinder us from demonstrating agape love for our national enemies. Jesus died not only died for our sins,

but for the whole the world. If Jesus died for all people, some people have allowed nationalism to trump agape love. Are you getting life and worth from being an American? I guess some people want a Jesus that hates the national enemy as much as we do instead of the God of love.

This is the kingdom of God. We manifest the beauty of the kingdom of God and revolt against all that hinder the manifestation of that beauty.

III. Second, how can you actually agape-love God and people? Where do you get the power to love like this?

- The interesting thing about this passage is that the teacher of the law knew the law, just like a lot of people, but he didn't have the power to make it happen in his life. That's why Jesus said, you are not far from the Kingdom of God. He didn't say bingo, you are IN the kingdom of God. He was close but no cigar. He knew the right answer but he couldn't actually live it out.
- The teachers of the law knew what they had to do but ultimately failed. They like to look like they were all together but they became hypocrites in the process. Look at verses 38-40:

38As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, 39and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

- The only way you can love God and love people is if you experience God's love in your life first. 1 John 4:19 says: **we love because he first loved us**. He loved us and died for us when we were yet sinners. We didn't do anything to deserve his love. He loved us first.
- An important factor that leads us to experience God's love in our lives is our sins. We need to understand that we are messed up. We have to stop denying our

messiness. If we see our mess, we will be amazed by the one who took our mess on his shoulder to forgive us of our sins.

- Jesus didn't just die on the cross to forgive us of our sins, but he also gave us his standing in front of God to us. That's why 1 John 3:1 says: **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that's what we are!”**
- We are so loved by God that when God looks at us, he sees his son. Just as he said to his son when he was baptized: you are my son whom I am well pleased.
- So, the gospel gives us a new identity, and this identity is not based on our works or our performance, but it is based on what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

Do you know what this means?

- You don't have to have power over people to know that you are somebody. You are somebody because you are God's son or daughter.
- You don't have to get approval from other people in order to know that you are somebody. You are somebody because you are God's son or daughter.
- You don't have to have a lot of money to know that you're somebody. You are somebody because you are God's son or daughter.
- You don't have to have gone to a great college and work in a prestigious company to know that you are somebody. You are somebody because you are God's son or daughter.
- You don't have to be physically beautiful to know that you are somebody. You are somebody because you are God's son or daughter.
- You are able to get life, get your worth, get your value, get your significance, get your identity from God as a gift to you. You receive it. The gospel doesn't just give us salvation in the sense that we are saved and forgiven. It gives us worth and value. We don't have to try to prove ourselves to anyone. We are approved and valuable because of what Christ has done for us and given to us.
- When you get life from God, your natural response will be that of gratitude. You will see the character of God. You will see how much he loves you.
- Then, he fills you up with the Holy Spirit in your life. When you repent of your sins, and you are clothed with Jesus, you will also be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Something happens. When the spirit of God comes into your life, something happens.

- You want to have a deeper relationship with God. You seek God for the pleasure of his company, and not for what he can do for you. He has already done everything you need. This relationship with God is powerful. The more you get to know God, the more you love him, and the more you love him, the more amazed you get.
- Then, your heart will change. Your life will change. And this will overflow into loving people. You will bear the fruit of the spirit, the first of which is love.