

FIRST THINGS FIRST Sunday School- May 25, 2014

Unifying Topic: THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Lesson Text

I. Love Your Neighbor (Leviticus 19:18)

II. Love And Serve God (Deut.6:4:9)

III. Obey The Greatest Commandments (Mark 12:28-34)

The Main Thought: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:30-31, KJV).

Unifying Principle: In societies that traditionally value individual achievement, it is assumed that people will look out for their best interests before the interests of others. What safeguards exist to counter such narcissistic inclinations? When Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 6:4-5, He reminded the disputants that tradition had already determined which commandment was greatest.

Lesson Aim: To review Old and New Testament texts that teach us about the love that God commands people to show.

Life Aim: To live a life understanding and exemplifying the law of love in the order that God commands: Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord.

6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:

6:5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

6:9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

12:29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

12:31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

12:32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

12:33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

12:34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

HISTORY:

Leviticus Chapter 19¹ deals with the sanctity of law. The regulations given here aren't arranged in any particular order, but that which ties them together is their relationship to the Ten Commandments. Moses was to speak to the congregation letting them know that God is holy and His people are to be holy.

1. Be holy (vv. 1-2)
2. Honor to parents (v. 3).
3. Honoring the Sabbath (v. 3).
4. Avoiding idolatry (v. 4).
5. God's instruction for worship (vv. 5-8).
6. Consideration of the poor (vv. 9-10).
7. Robbery, deceit and falsehood (v. 11).
8. God's name is not to be lightly used in oaths (v. 12).
9. Employer is warned against taking unfair advantage of the employee (v. 13).
10. Care for the helpless (v. 14).
11. Righteous judgments (v. 15).
12. Warning against tale-bearing and ill feelings toward a brother (vv. 16-18).

LESSON:

Leviticus 19:18 Love Your Neighbor

¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/leviticus-19-1/>

19:18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord. God's law to His children was: "*thou shalt not*" get back at, retaliate nor hold ill-will against any Israelite; any of their own people. Just because something was done toward them, they were not supposed to avenge it. Romans 12:19 "*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, "Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."* They were to bless their own people as they themselves were blessed. God's commandment is love. Romans 12:20 "*Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*" They were to love their neighbor as they loved themselves. In turn they were following after God which meant they honored and revered Him as Lord, for He is Lord!

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Love And Serve God

6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:— This was to be their confession. This confession is still practiced by many Jews today—"*Jehovah our Elohim Jehovah is one!*" This commandment is called the Shema.

Shema is a Hebrew word meaning "hear." The Shema is a prayer that is recited daily by observant Jews to remind them of their call to remain loyal to Jehovah God. They had *little half oval plates by their front door inside which is the Shema.* Some interpret Jewish law to require a Mezuzah on every doorway (*doorpost*) where a piece of parchment (*often contained in a decorative case*) inscribed with specified Hebrew verses ("*Hear, O Israel*")—*the first two words of a section from the Torah or Shema.*

They were to hear and understand this key point because they were about to enter a land with many gods and goddesses. This was to be an important insight for the nation of Israel, that He is One God. Some have tried to deny the "*Trinity*" because of this verse, the word "*one*" (*Heb 'echad*), means "*compound unity.*" They had to remember that the Lord their God was the only One true Lord; One God!

6:5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Other than teaching the Commandments, Statutes, and Judgments, one of the last sermons or teachings of Moses' life told to the Israelites was one of importance, so that the fear of God would be implanted in their hearts. Moses wanted to be certain that the people would consider God's say-so, before taking any action. Why does God command us to love Him with all that we have and all that we are? - Because He deserves no less, and because He pours out His blessing on those who please Him. Love is the act of our Will. It is a choice; submission of our actions unto God. This is the first commandment! We treat God as He treats us—with love—with all our heart, soul, and might! When we love God we can serve Him by serving others.

6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:— The above words spoken by Moses were a commandment from God to the people in which they were to adhere and keep in their hearts. The intent is that the Word of God should be hidden in a person's heart and constantly be a source of devotion and obedience to Him. Luke 6:45 "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*" Proverbs 4:23 "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*" By having God's Word in the heart, will give us access to His thought and Will on a daily basis.

6:7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. The Israelites were to keep these commandments in their hearts, teach them diligently to their children, talk of them when they sit in their house, when they walk by the way, when they lie down, when they rise up. ²Children are a heritage from God and this is God's way of preserving the family into the next generation. That legacy will remain long after our personal achievements have been forgotten. The commandments were to be the subject of conversation, both inside and outside the home, from beginning of the day till it ends.

6:8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. To have a constant reminder of the commandments, the Israelites were to bind them as a sign on their hand, and frontlets between their eyes. They literally did this by tying "*phylacteries*" (*boxes containing these verses*) to their hands and foreheads with thongs of leather as to not forget His commandments. Today we are to continually meditate on and be directed by God's Word.

6:9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. The Israelites were to write the commandments on the doorposts of their houses and on their gates. They also attached a small container of Scripture, called a "*mezuzah*" to the front door and on every door in the house. Each occupant touched the mezuzah reverently each time he or she

² <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/2011-01-22-How-God-Views-Children/>

passed through a door. ³The writing on the gates and the posts was speaking of them being constantly before them, wherever they went. It was a sign that the house was to be a sanctuary for the Lord and a place where the Word was loved, obeyed, and taught.

Mark 12:28-34 Obey The Greatest Commandments

12:28 And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? – The Jews had accumulated hundreds of laws—613, by one count since the Ten Commandments. The Sadducees had already come to Jesus earlier believing not in the resurrection and questions Jesus, wondering if a brother dies and leaves a wife behind whose wife will she be. Now at this time one of the scribes, an interpreter of the Old Testament Law comes to Jesus after hearing them reasoning together and recognizing that Jesus had answered them well, begins with a question concerning which is the first commandment of all. ⁴Since the Sadducees couldn't trip Jesus up, he thought he would see if he could. He knew God had given the Ten Commandments, and he was seeing if he could get Jesus to say that they were unimportant.

12:29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: – Jesus begins to answer the scribe by going back to what the scribe knows already about, the Old Testament—Deuteronomy 6:4 "The Lord our God is one Lord." He quotes the first part of the "*Shema*."

12:30 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. Jesus' answer leaves the scribe with no doubt as to who is to be first in their lives, which is the first commandment—love God. He also shows him how to love God. First of all, He must be Lord. He must be the most important Person in our lives. The heart is mentioned first, because it is the center of our being, and we are what our heart is. Our will is involved with the soul. The mind controls our thoughts. And our strength helps us to be zealous about Him.

12:31 And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. The second commandment is quoted from the Old Testament again that the scribe is familiar with—Leviticus 19:18, which emphasizes love for one's neighbor. He's still talking about love. When we love God first, He teaches us to love others. Our focus everyday will have to be: do I love God? Because if I treat my neighbor badly, I would have to wonder if I truly love God? A genuine love for God is followed by a genuine love for people. Jesus ends this discussion with there is no other commandment greater than these. I can't even get to the third commandment until I submit to the 1st and 2nd. These are the most important ones of all.

12:32 And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: – Well the scribe couldn't help but agree with Jesus' answer calling Him Master, because he understood the Old Testament teaching, that there is one God and that there is none but He. Well he couldn't trip Jesus up.

12:33 And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. All the heart, all the understanding, all the soul, and all the strength are yielded to love God first, which leads us to love one's neighbor as we would love ourselves. This love is more than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices one can give.

12:34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question. When Jesus saw that the scribe understood; he had a mind of his own and just didn't blindly follow the religious leaders of his day; he knew that it was more than the burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus let him know that he was not far from the kingdom of God. It meant that he was facing truth honestly and not just stuck on the demands of the religious sect. Well, after that, no one else asked Jesus any more questions for the questions did not stomp or trip Jesus up.

SUMMARY:

Vengeance belongs to the Lord, therefore, God's commandment was that we are not to seek vengeance; nor bear any grudges, but instead we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves—the second greatest commandment. (Lev.19:18).

³ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/deuteronomy/08.html>

⁴ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/mark/25.html>

The words spoken by Moses to the Israelites lets them know that the Lord their God is one. They were *"To hearken to, observe, and take notice of, that God is one, and is to be loved in the strongest manner that possibly can be"*. In hearing those words, they were to keep them in their hearts and to be diligently taught to their children in every way possible (Deut.6:4-9).

A scribe approached Jesus asking which is the first commandment of all. Jesus replied by offering what was familiar to the scribe. There were no other commandments greater than these two commandments—love the Lord with all thy heart, all thy soul, all thy mind, and all thy strength, and also to love thy neighbor as thyself. The scribe then came into agreement with Jesus knowing that this commandment was more than offering burnt offerings and sacrifices on the altar of the Temple. The scribe called Him Teacher and Jesus let him know that he is not far from the kingdom of God because he understood Jesus' answer. None other questions were asked after that point (Mk.12:28-34).

APPLICATION:

If we can remember first things first, we will be able to stay on the right course. God's commandment to love Him and our neighbor began in the Old Testament and still continues throughout the New Testament. He is our Lord; He is One God and does not change! Love will always be His commandment and His central focus! This is just a reminder for us.