

The Necessity of Love – Teaching Notes

(Matthew 22:34-40; 4/18/10)

Introduction: A key idea in today's lesson is that Jesus taught that loving God and loving our neighbors, as we love ourselves, are the foundation of the teachings of God's word. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to live by God's word.

Body:

Read Matthew 22:34-36

I. The Plot Laid. There was tension between Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees. A lawyer came to Jesus with a trapping question. The question was about which law was the greatest.

Applications –

- **The devil's use of people.** Notice in vss. 34-35 that the religious leaders were trying to cause trouble for Jesus. Some of them probably thought that they were right and Jesus was wrong. This crowd was used by the devil to carry out his wicked agenda. *Let's make sure we don't allow the devil to use us in his wicked agendas.* The more title and influence that we have in church, the more the devil wants to use us. We should prayerfully study and obey God's word with the support of other disciples of Christ, to help us stay in our rightful places. The Bible teaches us to follow leadership, as long as it doesn't contradict the Word of God (see Heb. 13:17; Acts 5:29, 38-39).

- **Trapping questions.** Notice in vs. 35 that the question raised was designed to trap Jesus. There are still people who use questions and comments to trap the people of God or to get us to say things that can be used against us. *Let's be careful how we respond to the questions of people.* On one hand, our Pastor teaches us how to respond to some basic things that we should all be able to answer (i.e., Membership Orientation). But then there are times, when the best answer may be no answer or a request for the person who is asking to join you in prayer about the answer.

Read Matthew 22:37-40

II. The Critics Silenced. Jesus responds to the question. Loving God with all that we have (i.e., heart, soul, and mind) is the first commandment. Loving others as we love ourselves is the second commandment. All of the laws and prophecies hang on these two commandments.

Applications –

- **Loving God.** Notice in vss. 37-38 that loving God with all that one has is the chief commandment. Instead of arguing about the differences among heart, soul, and mind, the greater point is to love God with all that we have. If this love doesn't move us to give at least 10% of our income, to worship with enthusiasm, and to prayerful study the Bible with a mind to obey then our love is lacking. *Let's work on loving God with all that we have.*

- **Self love.** Notice in vs. 39 that in order to love one's neighbor as one's self that a certain amount of self love is required. The writer of the Sunday School commentary said that "We do not need to be reminded to love ourselves; that comes naturally." Our Pastor takes issue with the commentator. Self love cannot be assumed, when a people have been programmed to think that they are ugly, inferior, and prone towards deviant behavior – as is the case with African Americans. Consequently, Black believers need some extra work on self love, so we can carry out the second greatest commandment. *Let's work on self love.* This kind of love works on stewardship of health, stewardship of wealth, and learning of one's history.

- **Loving others.** Notice in vs. 39 that the second greatest commandment is to love one's neighbor, as one loves one's self. One cannot be a disciple of Christ and hate one's neighbor. The worst person has some image of God in them. We are challenged to love them, whether we fell like it or not, because God commands us to and because there is some image of God, in the worst of humanity. *Let's work on loving our neighbors.* This kind of love should be known for evangelism, services, empowerment, and reforming systems that lead to the oppression of others.

- **Interpretive norm.** Notice in vs. 40 that all of the rest of the laws and prophecies of the Bible are based on the two chief commandments. The "interpretive norm" of the Bible is to love God, ourselves, and others. That is, when we are answering the question, "What does the passage mean to me?," it should have something to do with loving God, ourselves, or others. If it has nothing to do with these matters and, God forbid, it goes in the opposite direction, we can rest in knowing that we have some more prayerful studying to do, in order to discover what God is trying to get us to see. *Let's seek God's will for our lives, as we prayerfully study His word.*

Conclusion: Let's work on obeying God's word. God has much for those who obey His word.