

Thesis: When queried about the greatest commandment in Law, Jesus responded, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” We ought to love up, out, and in.

Support: Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34

I. Greeting

- a. Good morning!
- b. Happy Valentine's Day

2. Introduction

- a. The Golden Text of the entire Bible is **John 3:16**, “¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”
 - i. God's love for man expressed as the giving of his Son for man's salvation is the central theme of this book we have in our hands.
 - ii. The Bible is all about God's love for you, because God is love (**I John 4:8, 16**).
- b. You might be interested to know that the word love and its variants are used some 773 times in God's Word.
 - i. You can scarcely find a page that does not have this word written somewhere on it.
 - ii. There can be little doubt that love is important to God.
- c. During NT times, Greek speakers employed a variety of words to describe different aspects of love.
 - i. *Eros* was one such word.
 1. *Eros* has to do with sexual love. Our English word erotic is derived from *eros*.
 2. This word was commonly used at the time, but it is not found in the NT.
 - ii. *Philia* was also commonly used during the apostolic age.
 1. *Philia* is thought of as genuine affection, heart love, or brotherly love.
 2. Philadelphia gets its name from this word; that's why it is called the “city of brotherly love.”
 - iii. *Agape* is the most common word used for love within the NT.
 1. This type of love isn't merely an emotion.
 2. According to William Barclay, “*Agape* has to do with the mind: it is not simply an emotion which rises unbidden in our hearts; it is a principle by which we deliberately live.”
 3. Thayer says *agape* “properly denotes a love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem,” whereas *philia* “denotes an inclination prompted by sense and emotion.”
 - a. *Agape* is a love from the mind.
 - b. *Philia* is a love from the heart.



- c. *Agape* is godly love; it is the kind of love that God expressed when he sent his Son to die for our sins (**John 3:16**).
 - d. Consequently, it is the kind of love we are commanded (remember *agape* is a love from the mind; a disposition) to have towards everyone.
- 3. **This morning, because it is Valentine's Day, let us spend a few moments studying love, and in particular *agape*. Our main text is Matthew 22:34-40. Please open you Bibles to Matthew 22:34ff:**
 - a. ³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. ³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸ This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."
- 4. **Before considering our main points, it is important to understand what prompted this lawyer's (scribe's – Mark 12:28) question.**
 - a. The setting is the Passion Week.
 - i. Jesus was teaching, and the Jews were trying to trap him in his words.
 - ii. Obviously, they were unsuccessful.
 - iii. He had just silenced the Sadducees, so the Pharisees made a last ditch effort to trap him.
 - 1. One of them asked, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"
 - 2. This was a tough question.
 - a. The Law of Moses had 365 negative commandments and 248 positive commandments.
 - b. In all, it had 613 commandments.
 - c. Realizing that all of these commandments could not be kept perfectly, the rabbis spent their time arguing about which ones were "heavy" (more important) and "light" (less important).
 - d. They were particularly interested in the "heaviest" or most important commandment.
 - e. This was the question they posed to Jesus.
 - i. They must have thought to themselves that no matter how he answered, they would have reason to indict him.
- 5. **Jesus answered the question masterfully. He said the Old Law was all about *agape* (love). Our *agape* is to flow in three different directions. First and foremost: We are to love up!**
 - a. When asked the question, Jesus responds by quoting **Deuteronomy 6:5**, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
 - i. He continues, "³⁸ This is the great and first commandment."
 - ii. The great and first commandment is to love the Lord our God with our entire being.



1. We are to love him with all our heart.
 - a. Within this context, our heart refers to the seat of our emotions, our feelings.
 2. We are to love him with all our soul.
 - a. Within this context, our soul refers to our life, all of our being.
 3. We are to love him with all of our mind.
 - a. Our mind refers to our intellect, our thoughts.
 4. Mark adds we are to love him with all our strength.
 - a. Our strength refers to our talents and our energy.
 - iii. When Jesus says, “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,” casual Christianity is out of the question.
 1. God wants and expects all of you and all of the love you can muster from every part of your being.
 2. Moreover, this love must be balanced between your heart, soul, mind, and strength.
 - a. If it gets unbalanced towards the mind, the result will be a cold, legalistic religion.
 - b. If it gets unbalanced towards the heart, the result will be an emotional frenzy not rooted in truth.
 - i. John writes in **2 John 6**, “⁶ And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments...”
 - ii. Jesus himself said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (**John 14:15**).
 - c. If it gets unbalanced towards strength, we may do a lot of good deeds without the involvement of our hearts and minds.
 - d. As we love God, we must keep it balanced across these four dimensions.
 - iv. Brother Roper writes, “A laborer uses his hands. A craftsman uses his hands and his head. An artist uses his hands, his head, and his heart. A Christian uses his hands, his head, his heart, and his life for God.”
 - b. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength.
 - c. Remember, he first loved us.
 - d. First and foremost, we are to love up!
6. **Second: We are to love out.**
 - a. Jesus continues in **Matthew 22:39**, “³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - i. Jesus says the second great command is to love your neighbor as yourself, citing **Leviticus 19:18**.
 1. My neighbors are not merely those that live in my subdivision.
 2. My neighbors and your neighbors include all of humanity.
 - a. We are to love our brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - i. Jesus says in **John 13:34-35**, “³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one

another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1. Because God loves us, we are to love one another.
 2. By witnessing our love for each other, the world realizes we are truly Christians.
- b. We are to love our families.
- i. Paul writes in **Ephesians 5:25**, “²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”
 1. Husbands ought to love their wives to the point that we would offer our lives for theirs.
- c. We are even to love our enemies.
- i. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (**Matthew 5:44**).
- d. The parable of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:25ff**) teaches us that our neighbor is anyone and everyone that needs our help.
- i. As Christians we are to love and try to meet the needs of those around us.
- b. Because God loves us, we must love our neighbor as our self. We are to love out.

7. Third: We are to love in.

- a. In **Matthew 22:39** Jesus says, “³⁹ And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
 - i. A necessary implication in this command to love your neighbor as yourself is that you actually love yourself.
 1. On MTV, there is a silly, pseudo-reality show called *The Hills*.
 - a. I am sure Donnie and Dan watch it.
 - b. Anyways, Heidi Montag is one of the young ladies on the show.
 - i. She is a drop-dead gorgeous blonde.
 - ii. Here is what she thought of herself:

I was made fun of when I was younger, and so I had insecurities, especially after I moved to L.A. People said I had a "Jay Leno chin"; they'd circle it on blogs and say nasty things. It bothered me. And when I watched myself on *The Hills*, my ears would be sticking out like Dumbo! I just wanted to feel more confident and look in the mirror and be like, "Whoa! That's me!" I was an ugly duckling before.
 - iii. So, on November 20, 2009, she had 10 plastic surgery procedures done on her in one day.
 - iv. They pumped her up with so much Demerol (pain killer) that she almost died.
 - v. Still she thinks it was worth it.

- vi. Despite her looks and her career and her fame, it seems Heidi does not love herself.
 - vii. She is not alone. Many people are like her; many people do not love themselves.
2. I am here to tell you this morning that we are important, and we ought to love ourselves.
- a. We are made in the image of the Almighty God (**Genesis 1:27**).
 - b. Each of our souls is more valuable than all of the material possessions in the entire world.
 - i. Jesus asks in **Matthew 16:26**, “²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”
 - c. Additionally, Jesus died to preserve our souls.
 - i. In **I Timothy 2:3-4** Paul says God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 - ii. Would Jesus have given his life if our lives have little or no value?
 - I. Of course not.
- b. We should love ourselves, because God loves us! We are to love in.
- 8. Conclusion**
- a. Jesus concludes this section of scripture in **Matthew 22:40**, “⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”
 - i. The entire OT system depended on loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself.
 - 1. The first four of the Ten Commandments are summarized by loving the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength.
 - 2. The last six of the Ten Commandments are summarized by loving your neighbor as yourself.
 - a. The Ten Commandments themselves summarized the entirety of the Old Law.
 - b. So by perfectly doing these two things – loving God and loving your neighbor – you would perfectly fulfill the entire Old Law.
 - c. Jesus answer was genius!
 - i. It has always been about agape (love).
 - 1. It was under the Old Covenant.
 - 2. This fact remains true under the New Covenant.
 - 3. This will remain true even when Jesus returns.
 - 4. Love will endure forever, because God is love!
- b. God is love, and we learn from Jesus’ response that we are to be love as well. Our love ought to flow three directions. We are to love:
 - i. Up towards God.
 - ii. Out towards our neighbors.
 - iii. In towards ourselves.

9. Invitation

- a. Scripture tells us that only one man has ever exhibited perfect love towards God and perfect love towards others; only one man has ever perfectly fulfilled the righteous Law.
 - i. That one man was Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.
 1. Because of his sinlessness, only he is an acceptable sin offering.
 2. In him, we become the righteousness of God; we get credit for his righteousness (**2 Corinthians 5:21**).
 3. He was sent to die for us because of God's infinite love for us.
- b. We urge you to be put in him this morning:
 - i. Believe in Jesus (**John 3:16**).
 - ii. Repent (**Acts 2:38**).
 - iii. Confess Jesus is Lord (**Romans 10:9-10**).
 - iv. Be baptized (**Mark 16:16**).
 - v. Live righteously (**Revelation 2:10**).
- c. If you'd like to obey the gospel today, we invite you to come forward as we stand and sing.
- d. Let us stand and sing.

