

Capital Bible Church January 28, 2018
Sermon Notes Pastor AJ Miller
“Step One, Step Two:”
Mark 12:28-34

Step one, Step two

Read Mark 12:28-34

Our story begins with one of the scribes coming over to Jesus after hearing Jesus debating with other people. In the book of Matthew, this person is called a Pharisee and in the book of Luke he calls him a lawyer, or one that is an expert in the law. Either way, this person, who was about to ask Jesus a question, knew the law inside and out and had the intention of trapping Jesus. There were many people around at this moment because it says that the scribe came up and heard Jesus and others disputing questions. This was turning into a spectacle. Now let's be honest, Jesus was THE celebrity of that time. Anywhere he went, people wanted to see him, listen to him, talk with him. And whenever he came in town, the Pharisees and Sadducees were sure to be on the scene. Our story this morning wasn't the first run in the Pharisees and Sadducees had with Jesus. At any given moment, these teachers of the law were out to trap and make Jesus stumble in his answers.

Verse 28

The scribe asked Jesus, what was the most important commandment of all? In the KJV the scribe uses the word “first”. Which is the first commandment of all? The scribe was not seeking for the first law ever given, although we will talk about that a little later, but rather he was asking Jesus what command carried the most weight and dignity. Did you know that in Jewish culture at this time, the rabbis had counted 613 commandments in the books of Moses, in the first 5 books of the Bible. 613! Then they broke them down to 365 as prohibitions and 248 as commands. And then within the commands they separated some as weightier and lesser. So, in our minds, when we read this, it sounds like a simple question, however this was a loaded question. How could someone pick one command as the greatest when there was 613 possible?

Verse 29

If you sincerely call yourself a follower of Jesus, you will obey His words and follow His commands. Just like you cannot call yourself a bus driver, but then never drive a bus. The reason I say this is because Jesus cannot be any clearer when questioned on which commandment is the most important. Think about it, if you could ask Jesus one question, this is a pretty good one to ask. Jesus, what is the greatest commandment I should follow? Or another way, what should I measure my life against to make the biggest impact? Jesus's response begins in verse 29: “Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Here Jesus is telling us that there is one God, and only one God. Jesus says this for a reason. Now, the Jewish people would have known this because in their daily prayer and readings, this exact phrase was read from Deut. 6:4. Plus his response falls in line with the 10 commandments, with all of Judaism, and obviously with Christianity. There is one God. No others. Jesus by stating this is also touching on the fact there is a Trinity, the Triune God. When you look at all of Scripture, all of the New Testament and all of Jesus's teachings, and overlay it together, the Trinity jumps of the page. There is not 3 separate Gods but 1 being or essence with 3 equal persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

John 10:30 Jesus says “I and the Father are one.” Matthew 28:19 Jesus again says “Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” 1 God, 3 persons. And there are countless other places throughout Scripture that prove this doctrine.

Now to Jesus's response.

Verse 30

“And 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.” This isn’t random or without reason as to why Jesus said what he said. What Jesus just did is absolutely astounding. Jesus summed up the whole law, all 613 commands, into two headings, the first being “Love God”, or Step One. Step One teaches us how to grow reverence for God, in other words, it teaches us to take God seriously. You will hear me say this often because I don’t think enough pastors in America preach it anymore. Too many pastors today tell their congregation that God’s primary focus is to make you happy. But that’s not true. God’s primary focus is to make you holy. To make you like Jesus. Too many pastors smile and tell you it will be alright, that you can live the way you want to live, it doesn’t matter, but that’s not true either. One thing that every person proclaiming Jesus as their savior needs to do is evaluate themselves and discover, am I living like a follower of Christ? Is the process of sanctification, becoming more like Jesus, evident in my life? Too many pastors only preach the promises of God, and far too many don’t preach the warnings of God. There is a time and place for both. This morning, take stock of your life. Step One, Love God. But how do we do that? What does Jesus mean when he says to love God with our heart, soul, mind and strength?

The **heart** – Love God with all your heart because He is your God. As our Creator, preserver, provider and judge, he commands us to yield to Him all our hearts affections. To love him first, best and heartiest. To have no comparison to any fellow creature or ourselves. To wake up each morning and talk to Him, pray and pour out your love to Him. This hits home with me pretty hard because sitting down there is my beautiful wife. And I can’t imagine loving anything more than I love her. I don’t think I could love anything in this world more than Stephanie. But Jesus tells us, love God with all your heart, NOT SOME of your heart, or love God with what’s left, but to Love God with ALL your heart. There is a passage of Scripture that many people have difficulty swallowing and that is when Jesus is talking with some of those following Him. You can find it in Luke 9:57-62. Jesus says “57 As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” 58 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” 59 To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” 60 And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” 61 Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.” 62 Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.” This is a hard passage to swallow. To love Jesus with all your heart means to look to Him as your everything. Jesus wants all of you, or none of you. Be hot or cold, but do not be lukewarm. Be on fire for Jesus or forget about Jesus. Look at your life this morning. Because as much as I love Stephanie and would die for her, she can’t save my soul. I can’t save her soul. Only Jesus can save us. And only Jesus can save you.

To love God with your **soul** is to love God with all your life, to love him more than your life itself. He must be the air you breathe. All of who you are crying out to God. Get down off your throne and allow God to be where only He deserves to be, on the throne of your life. Stop thinking that you have everything figured out or that you know the best way to get out of your bad situation. Let me share a secret with you, you don’t know the best way to get out of your bad situation, unless you cry out to Jesus. Jesus alone needs to be on the throne of your life. Loving God with your soul is following His direction even when you can’t see the road. Peter loved Jesus with his soul, enough to get out of the boat during a storm and walk on the water with Jesus. As long as he kept his eyes fixed on Jesus, he was safe, even with the storm raging on around him. But the moment he took his eyes off Jesus, he fell. Peter is all of us. As long as we keep Jesus the focus, it doesn’t matter what the storm is doing around us, we are safe. Once we take our eyes off of Him, we drown. To love God with your soul is to love God with your life. To surrender to God’s will instead of our own.

Your **mind**, how are we to love God with our mind? We are to love God with our intellect and with all the powers of the mind, memory, thought, imagination, reason, discernment, logic, in one accord to bow at God's feet in adoration and love. Do you study Scripture? Do you think about God all day, every day? When was the last time you let your imagination run wild about God, or Jesus, or Heaven? When was the last time you daydreamed about what heaven might be like? I want you to concentrate, use your imagination, right now, think about what heaven might be like.

Wow! And guess what, the grandest imagination cannot compare to what heaven will really be like. Oh, what a day of rejoicing that will be, when we all get to heaven. I might have left you daydream too long. Come on back.

What about theology? Are you trying to learn more about theology and doctrine? Are you meeting with a mentor or friend to talk theology and understand more about who God is? R.C. Sproul said "Mindless Christianity is no Christianity at all. You can't love what you don't know." Love God with your mind. Study Scripture, memorize Scripture, talk theology and doctrine. I'm warning you now, there will be theology in my sermons for that exact reason. To challenge you intellectually. To get you thinking about God in ways you haven't yet. And if you don't have someone to talk to about all of this, come see me, my office door is always open. I love theology!

And lastly, **strength**. We are to love God in our actions and be obedient to His commands and will. If someone videotaped your week, and at the end of the week played it back for you, and after watching it, would you think of yourself as a Christian? Is there enough evidence in your actions to say, that person loves Jesus? Is God telling you to do something, start a ministry, become more involved in your church, serve at church, or whatever He is impressing on your heart at this moment, but do you keep denying Him? As you go throughout your day, your actions show where your love is aimed at. Are you obedient to God's will or are you in constant rebellion?

He is God and therefore we must love Him with our whole heart. God has the only right to your soul. He created you with His bare hands. And therefore, He must have the sole possession of your heart, affections and life. Since God is one, our hearts must be one with him and since there is no god besides him, no rival must be allowed with him on the throne of your life, including yourself.

To love God whole heartedly is related to the way we worship Him, how we view him. Do you come to church on Sunday for you or for God? Do you sing praises to God for who he is or are you nervous what other people might think? Matthew Henry said on this verse "Where there is a commanding principle in the soul, there is a disposition to every other duty." Simply put, when you have love for Jesus at the center of your heart and that love is governing your life, everything you do will be done according to that love. The love for Jesus and His Word becomes the standard you measure everything against. It's the lens in which you see the world through. It dictates and oversees your actions toward everything.

This commandment is first because in verse 31, Jesus says "and the second is this". The reason this is the first commandment Jesus said was due to a couple of reasons. First, from the viewpoint of time, the angels had this commandment before man was even created. It was upon Adam before Eve was created, however it is of first importance because there is no love to any other creature worthy of comparison with the love of our Creator. But none of us can love God with the perfect love He deserves. We are all fallen creatures. Salvation by the words of the Law are clearly an impossibility because every single one of us has broken the very first

commandment, you shall have no other gods before me. You cannot get to heaven by how well you kept the 10 Commandments. How many of us have put our job, sports, possessions, money or relationships before God? Hear me today, any thing you put before God, THAT is your god, THAT is your idol. Martin Luther said “Whatever your heart clings to and confides in, that is really your God.” But our hope this morning is that there was One, who was perfect in His obedience and when we put our hope and trust in Jesus as our Savior, His perfect obedience is imputed to all who trust in Him. Its through Jesus that we can love God the proper way.

Verse 31

Jesus tells us that the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. Step Two, Love your neighbor as yourself. Did you ever stop and think, why didn’t Jesus say “the second is this: you shall love your neighbor.” Jesus didn’t end it there because if he had, people would take that as Jesus giving us permission to love ourselves more. But he doesn’t. Jesus adds those two little words, as yourself. As you love yourself, that is how you are to love your neighbor. It’s no secret, you love yourself greatly. Let’s be honest. You always have your best interest at heart. We live in a ‘me, myself and I’ world. A world that has an attitude of ‘what have you done for me lately’. There is not a single person in this room that has not had moments where they put their selfish desires and motives above someone else’s, even if that other person would get hurt. We love ourselves.

But who is our neighbor? Jesus pulls Step One – Love God from Deut. 6:4. Jesus pulls Step Two from Lev. 19:18. The original Hebrew word used here has been translated in to English using these words “another, companion, friend, husband, lover, mate, neighbor, opponent, other and together”. From that list, who are those people? EVERYONE! Who is your neighbor? Who are you to love as yourself? EVERYONE you come in contact with. Everyone who God has put in your life in whatever capacity that is, you are to love them as you love yourself. To love your neighbor means to help your fellow man. It’s how we view others. It’s how we act towards others. Love is not a noun, it’s a verb. It’s an action, not just a feeling. One thing I do to show love towards my neighbor is if I see their trashcans at the street and I’m out there walking the dog, I’ll pull them back to their house. Just last night, we got home and our new neighbors were out in their driveway. We spoke briefly about the day and not 2 minutes later, he came over and asked if we wanted to join them for dinner. He knew the long day we had and that we probably didn’t have dinner made, so he offered. That is loving your neighbor. Simple things that show we care. Jesus shows how, with reverential fear of who he is, how we are to conduct ourselves toward our fellow man. We love our neighbor as ourselves because it is what Christ commanded. We are to love our fellow human being. Charles Spurgeon once said “If any man thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him; for you are worse than he thinks you to be.” Isn’t the truth. We all have secrets and things that only we know about. And there are things quite nasty about us that we don’t even know. But Jesus does, and if Jesus, who knows you better than you know yourself and knows all of your shortcomings and failures and sin, and can still love you and want a relationship with you, knowing all of your mess, how dare you not love your neighbor. If we really want to see the Church, both the universal Church and our local church here at CBC, change people’s lives and turn people to Jesus, start seeing people and loving people in the same manner that God sees and loves people. He loves you in your mess, love others in their mess.

Verses 32-33

The scribe responds to Jesus in verses 32 and 33. The scribe, this expert in the law, saw that Jesus was right and wise and agreed and affirmed Jesus’s answer to his question. At the end of verse 33 the scribe tells Jesus that loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself “is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” Many of the Pharisees and Sadducees thought that burnt offerings and sacrifices were the most important law because that was what made you clean in the eyes of God, before Jesus’s death and resurrection. With Jesus on the scene, things were about to change, and the scribe saw that Jesus was right. Yes, burnt offerings and

sacrifices were meant to honor God, but loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself was greater than a sacrifice. Because loving God is the root behind the sacrifices and burnt offerings. The way in which we view, feel or think about God and our neighbors will determine how we act towards God and our neighbors.

Verse 34

Jesus saw that this scribe was wise beyond many other scribes and told him that you are not far from the kingdom of God. This scribe was different. Jesus encouraged him. Loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself will bring you right to the doorway of heaven, but the entrance ticket is the blood of Jesus. Our knowledge of the law, the 10 commandments, the commands that Jesus gives us, Scripture as a whole, all of this leads to conviction of sin, to repentance, to discovery of our need of mercy and grace, and understanding that we are only justified because of Jesus Christ. We are declared righteous in God's eyes because of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Because of what Jesus has done, not what you have done. His blood justifies you. His blood atones for your sins.

Conclusion

But as Paul states in Romans 6:1-2 "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?" Once you except Jesus as your Lord and Savior, that doesn't give you a pass to live as you want and continue sinning. If you have made Jesus your Lord and Savior, you have died to sin, sin no longer has a hold on you and therefore if it doesn't have a hold on you anymore, how can you go on sinning and think its ok? A true follower of Jesus has a heart after God's heart, and that does not include sin. Begin to look at sin in the same way that God looks at sin. Paul is telling us to stop sinning! If there is sin in your life, that has you chained up, and it is dragging you down, only Jesus can break the chains and lift you out of that pit. You need to pray for Jesus to come and break those chains of addiction, lust, alcohol, gossip, pride. You can't break the chains yourself, but you can turn it over to Jesus and start living in freedom. Sanctification is the evidence of God working in you. Are you a good tree producing good fruit or a bad tree producing bad fruit? A fig tree doesn't produce bananas just like an orange tree doesn't produce potatoes. In the same manner, a Christian produces fruit that resembles Jesus's fruit, not the world's fruit.. The formula for living a Christian life, a life with Jesus on the throne as your Lord and Savior is Step One, Love God, Step Two, Love your neighbor as yourself.