

All You Need Is Love

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[0 : 00] Lord, we come to you this morning. We thank you for speaking to us. We thank you for being willing to give us this truth that is essential for life.

! We pray that as we come to it now, you will indeed grant us true repentance, indifference, forgive us for our indifference and our ignorance, and fill us with your Holy Spirit.

As we prayed earlier, to amend our lives according to your Holy Word. We pray that now again, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Did you know that the official rulebook of the sport of rugby has 174 pages, and no less than 220 laws and bylaws about how to play the game of rugby?

Now, I don't know who on earth knows all those laws off by heart. Probably some of the best referees, maybe they know most of them. But most of us don't know, even if we watch rugby or even if you play rugby, you don't know all 220 laws and bylaws.

But as long as you know the main ones, you can get by and you can enjoy a game or play a game. Well, I think a lot of people consider religion exactly like that.

[1 : 31] That God has given us these instructions, things that He wants us to do or not do in our lives, but there are so many and the Bible is so big and it's so complicated that really the best most people can do is at least try to get the main ones right.

Maybe that's why you're here at church. Maybe you genuinely want to please God. You realize that He's your Creator and you are accountable to Him and you want to please God, but the Bible is really complicated.

And so you're here because you basically want to know what are the main things I've got to do. What are the main things God wants from me? Because if I get the essentials right, surely that's enough.

Well, that is exactly the question that Jesus was asked in our passage this morning. Of all the things that God wants of us, what's the most important? And in Jesus' reply, we're going to learn a very important lesson for our lives.

Because in His reply, He actually teaches us something else. He doesn't give us one law to follow above all others. Instead, He tells us what is actually at the heart of all of God's law.

[2 : 54] Because only when we understand that can we really understand what God actually wants in our lives, what He's always wanted, and what it really means to be a Christian.

And so let's have a look at His answer and see what we learn. And the main idea we get from it, the main point that He makes in His answer that we'll see is this. It's that God wants love, not law-keeping.

God wants love, not law-keeping. Have a look at verse 36. Teacher, He was asked by this Jewish Pharisee, what is the greatest commandment in the law?

Now, He was asked by a teacher of the law. So it's not a genuine inquiry. These Pharisees already had their opinions. There was a great debate over this particular question.

In fact, in the Jewish law, they had counted, and there were 613 different laws and instructions that God had given the Jewish people. And so there was a big controversy over whether you should rank them, and whether some were more important than others.

[4 : 12] And so they bring this question to Jesus. But we already know from the weeks gone by, and the passages before this, that was their true intent. They want to trap Him. They want to put Him in a difficult position. And this question is intended for that as well.

Because basically, if you have to choose one command, if they force Jesus to choose one, they could then come back and say, but what about all the others? Aren't the other 612 also important? Surely God wants us to follow all the laws and not just one.

So they're trying to put Him in a corner, but of course He knows that. And so instead of playing their game and choosing just one law, what He does instead is He tells them what all God's law is really all about.

So have a look at His answer from verse 37. Jesus replied, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. And then verse 40 is important. He says, All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments.

[5 : 16] Everything God has said actually hangs on these two things. It hangs on it. So when we go camping, I take a hammock.

I love lying in the hammock on holiday. But I've got to find sort of two trees or two sturdy branches to hang it on. Because if they're not sturdy, what's going to happen? The hammock's going to fall and it's not going to work.

If they're not held up by these branches. That's what Jesus is using to describe these two requirements. Everything that God has said depends on them and flows out of these two requirements, which is to love God and to love people.

Every law ever given by God is therefore only there to help us to do these two things.

Everything He's ever instructed humans. Is to do these two things. To love Him and to love other people. That is all God has actually ever wanted from us.

[6 : 21] That is the reason He made us. To love. We have been, if you like, precision engineered to love.

A Ferrari is precision engineered to go fast. A Boeing is precision engineered to fly. A human being is precision engineered to love.

It's our purpose. It's what we were made for. And it's all that God has ever wanted from us. Okay.

So if that's true. Why do we need the law at all?

Let's just get on with loving each other. Right? If that's what we were made for. Why all this? Why? Just let's love. You'll often hear that. Just love. That's all what it's about.

Let's just love each other. Okay. So let's look around. How's that going? In our world. You see, not very well, is it?

[7 : 26] See, since the separation of God and humans in the fall, when we decided, and we can read about this back in Genesis, when humans decided that we were better off running our own lives our way, rather than listening to God, and we were separated from relationship with Him, since then we have actually departed from our purpose, and we've forgotten how to love the way we were made to.

And even at its best, our love today in our lives is limited to a handful of people that we like a lot. And that's it.

But you know what? That is way short of God's intent for us. God's intent for us is to love fully and extravagantly. And the reason for that, the reason that we don't, the reason that we fail to, Jesus actually shows us in His answer here.

He teaches us because of the relationship between our love for God and our love for people. He puts these together. And by putting them together, He's saying to us, you can only love people properly when you love God properly.

This is a very important implication of how He answers here. We can only love each other properly when we first learn how to love God properly.

[8 : 57] Look at verse 38 and 39 again. He says, of loving God, He says, this is the first and greatest commandment. And then He says, and the second is like it, love your neighbor.

So they're both important, but the one ranks above the other, because before we can love our neighbor properly, we need to love God properly. Why is that?

Why is it that we can't love people properly until we love God properly? Well, think about it. Think about it. If God is not first in my life, who is?

I am, right? If God is not first, naturally, I will be the most important thing in my life. And when I'm first, I'll never be able to love anybody else the way I should.

And that is why God's law, actually, if you think of the summary of God's law, He gave twice in the Bible to His people, the Ten Commandments, once in Exodus, once in Deuteronomy.

[10:05] Notice how it's ordered. If you know the Ten Commandments, you can see them up there, actually. They start with how to love God before they go on to how to love each other properly.

That's how they're divided. The first half is all about how to love God. The second half, how to love people. Because we can only love people properly when we love God properly. And the more we learn to love God, the better we'll be able to love the people that He has made.

And that is why, you know, I said earlier, we are precision engineered to love. That's what Jesus is teaching us here. But the only way we can do that, the only way you and I can be what we were designed to be, what we were made to be, is when we first do this.

Verse 37. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. In other words, totally. To love God totally. Where your heart desires God more than what He gives us.

[11:19] Where your soul, your whole of your life and your energy is devoted to the God who gave it to you. And where your mind prioritizes knowing God before anything else.

That is what our heart and our soul and our mind was made for. It was made to know and love this God first. The one who is the source of all that is good and glorious in this world.

That is what we were made for. And yet we don't love God like that, do we? Let's be honest. We don't love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind.

because our hearts, what do they do instead? They chase after created things. That's what our hearts want. That's what we're thinking about.

That's what we're chasing after created things first. Before the Creator. We chase after the things He made to satisfy us. That's where we look for our satisfaction.

[12:22] In the things of the world. Even though we know they never actually satisfy us. And yet we still chase them first. Our souls. What are our souls poured into in this world and in our lives?

What do we pour our souls into? We pour our souls into entertainment and hobbies and sports and screens and things that don't really matter at the end of the day. And our minds?

What are our minds devoted to? What do we use our faculties of learning for? Well, our minds are primarily devoted to learning about first and foremost the things that advance our career and get us money.

But very little do we spend our minds learning about the God who gave all of that to us. We are terrible lovers of God. And so how can we do this?

That Jesus is saying we need to do this thing that we were made to do. This thing on which all the other laws and instructions hang that God has always wanted from us how do we actually do it?

[13:31] How can we cultivate this in our lives? A true love for God if this is what we were made for and yet we don't do it by nature how can we do it? Well, I mean you can try to build good habits to remember to do this and yet yet we know that we fail even when we want to love God.

And I think most Christians do want to love God more and yet it's so hard. So how do we do it? Well, I think there is only according to my understanding of Scripture there is only one way for sinners to truly love God like this.

And it's this. It's to genuinely experience God's love for you first. I think that's why the whole thing is set up like it is.

And Jesus is showing that by saying this He's showing that we can't do it. By giving us God's law in such a distilled form it's so obvious that we fail to do it.

But remember where this is in the story He's on His way to the cross. He's on His way to die for us because we can't do this. And it's there and there alone that a human starts to experience fully God's love for them.

[15:05] And that's the only way that we can learn to love Him properly. Listen to what 1 John 4.19 says. 1 John 4.19 says.

We love because He first loved us. We love only because He first loved us. Which means that unless you embrace and truly believe and truly experience God's love for you then you will never love properly.

and the only way to be convinced of God's love for you is to believe what Jesus did for you. That's the only way because that is where we see it in its full force.

When we really come to believe that God who created this universe deliberately became a human became flesh in order to suffer His own wrath for your sin on Himself so that you can have the

eternal life that you don't deserve.

And all of that only because why? Why would He do that? Because He really truly loves you so much. That's the only thing that could cause Him to go through that for you.

[16:30] He really loves you. And when a person realizes that when a person comes to truly realize that about this God that He loves me that He gave Himself for me that He really loves me that's when a person changes.

That's when it all starts. That's when a person gets born again. That's when they start to submit joyfully to God's rule and that's when God's power comes into their life.

Have you come to that point in your spiritual journey yet? Have you realized that? Has that penny dropped for you?

And has it caused that profound change in your life yet? Because the reason we're here the reason we come to church on a Sunday morning like this is not to learn the rules but it's to hear the gospel so that one day as you come over and over again and you sit under this gospel message of what God has done for us in Jesus one day it clicks and you realize that God loves you that much.

Have you come to that point yet? because when you do when you do and if you haven't yet keep coming back until it clicks for you because when it does that's when you start to become someone who truly loves God above all other things not perfectly it's a journey that we need to learn and grow and help each other to do but when it clicks that's when the process starts and when that process starts of us truly learning to love God with all our heart and soul and mind then you know what happens?

[18:28] We also start loving the people around us because this is the second thing and the last thing I want us to see today in Jesus' answer is that love for God is seen in love for people love for God is seen in love for people look at verse 39 again Jesus says and the second is like it love your neighbor as yourself the second is like it Jesus was never asked for two did you notice that?

They just asked him for one law one command and yet he gives two why? Because you can't have one without the other God just as we've seen earlier you can't truly love people without loving God first also the flip side of that is that you can't claim to love God without loving people listen to one John we were in it earlier but listen to what he says in the next verse from what we read earlier so 1 John 4 verse 20 these are some important words we need to take on board 1 John 4 20 whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar for whoever does not love their brother or sister whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen in other words it's as simple as this if you don't love people then you don't really love

God no matter how many songs you sing at church why is that why is it impossible to love God without also loving people well we see actually John tells us a few verses before in 1 John 4 7 to 8 he says this dear friends let us love one another for love comes from God everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God whoever does not love does not know God because God is love that's a very profound statement God is love not just God loves but God is love it is therefore the very essence of who God is God it is what defines his very character and everything else flows out of God is and always has been in eternity past defined in his essence by love that's who God is and God made us you and me to be his image bearers to image him in other words we were meant and made to have love as the essence of who we are too it was meant to define who we are as humans as Jesus says to be people who love their neighbors in other words each other human being that we share this world with as much as we love ourselves I don't know about you but I'm really good at loving myself we're really good at loving ourselves actually even if you think you don't even if you think you struggle to love yourself the truth is no you really do love yourself we all love ourselves by instinct we make sure that our personal needs and concerns are met first right when we're cold when you're cold your instinct is what it's to put a blanket around you or to put a heater on because you love yourself that's an instinct to look out for your needs the moment they're felt when you're hungry what do you do what's your instinct to go to the fridge to get some food whatever to feed yourself when you're wronged what is your instinct it's to seek justice for yourself to be vindicated now think of that think of those instincts that we have for ourselves the instinct to look after ourselves and to make sure that our name is kept and to make sure that when we're hungry we have food now take that instinct this is what

Jesus is saying take that instinct and apply it to every other person on the planet imagine imagine every person had that instinct for every other person imagine what the world would be like that is what it is meant to be that is what God made it for that is the community that God has always

intended in his world for each person to have that instinct that they have for themselves also for every other person that is a perfect community and that is what God has intended for this world but we don't do it do we we are really bad at loving other people as much as we love ourselves because we are naturally selfish we naturally put ourselves first we don't even have to think about it and we naturally because we put ourselves first we naturally look down on other people and we talk negatively about other people behind their backs still speaking badly and skinnering and harboring enmity in their hearts towards others when they get home and they think horrible thoughts about other people that shouldn't be especially in a church it shouldn't be you know what this should be this shouldn't be a place that we skinner and that we speak badly and we think badly about other people this right here is a training ground to love people that we wouldn't ordinarily get on with that is why

[25 : 54] God has put us here together with people that we actually don't share a lot of stuff in common with that we wouldn't ordinarily even like and yet we learn to love because that is how God is training us and preparing us for the world to come that is how God trains us to be the people that he always intended for us that is why we here and that is also why let me add why doing things like social action is so important we have a social action ministry Dylan runs it that helps us to think about how we can practically love our neighbors outside of our church and especially people who are vulnerable and in need now different churches have different social action ministries!

to a greater or lesser degree and what's really sad is that some Christians see it as a nice to have ministry in your church if you can do it but it's not the most essential thing it's really just a means to an end of doing our mission and telling people the gospel so that they can be saved and of course that is one of the things we want to do in social action ministry because we in our church listen to what James 1 verse 27 says he says this religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this to look after orphans and widows in their distress that's what God wants us to do that's why we do it because God wants it God delights in seeing people learning how to love their neighbor properly because that's what he made us for that's what his people do not just as a means to an end we do it because that is we realize more and more what we were made for and getting involved in social action ministry is a way to train ourselves to love others the way

God wants it's how we grow in holiness social action ministry is not just for the people out there social action ministry is as much for you and me to learn how to grow in holiness and to learn how to love our neighbor as our self which we don't naturally do so take advantage of it get involved when Dylan runs new events and new initiatives to help us to help our neighbors don't just throw money at it and go okay I've done my bit get actually involved because it who Jesus came and died to make us a person who loves fully and extravagantly because they've experienced first hand God's full and extravagant love for them in Jesus have you yet let's pray oh

Lord Lord when we think about your love for us we are overwhelmed that you would set your love on creatures such as us and fallen sinful rebellious creatures Lord Jesus when we look at you and what you did for us Lord forgive us for for not seeing your love for us in that forgive us for not believing that and so we pray Lord would you open our eyes once more I pray for everyone in this church and everyone listening to this recording that if they have not experienced and grasped that amazing love for them that you would help them to Lord help them to realize that you are love and that your love has been focused on your people and Lord as we realize that as we embrace that would you help us to learn to love you with all our heart soul and mind and to learn to love our neighbors as ourself for your glory

Amen!