

Ingredient 2, Passion - Matthew 22:34-40
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

I find it amazing when little events “just happen” to line up. Got a great example this week. It just so happened that this week’s New City Catechism question and answer are from our text and perfectly align with our sermon on discipleship. Question 7 from the NCC asks, “What does God’s Law require? The answer, from the lips of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 22:37-40 states, “That we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves.” In fact, Jesus went on to say that all of the other rules, laws, and commands in the Bible hang on the commandment to love. What did He mean by stating that this was the most important commandment, and that all the rest of the Law must be connected to this command?

I think it is because Jesus knows that we are duty bound guilt motivated people. Religion tends to be so appealing because the functional question of religion is, “What must I do?” We are looking for the simple list that lays out my duties and requirements, the things I must do to gain the attention and approval of the god or gods we serve. This makes sense because we live in a world of lists in which our approval is based on performance. Our jobs, schools, and often even our family and marriage relationships are wrapped up in gaining approval through the fulfillment of a list of duties, and the feeling of inadequacy and guilt when we don’t fulfill the requirements. Why would we look for anything less in our religion.

Yet, the call of Jesus demands something completely different. Jesus is turning religion on its head and telling us that being His disciple begins with something completely different, something radical. Jesus tells us that God is not so much concerned with our activity as He is with our affections, He is not first and foremost going after our actions, He is after our hearts. A follower of Jesus is going through a radical heart change that overflows in love for God and therefore love of neighbor. But the command to love someone seems, well, a bit insane.

In fact, in most cases, if someone commands us to love them we would recognize that person as a self-centered narcissist. The command to love is an expression of some deep need in the one loved that must be fulfilled by others focusing their attention on him or her. This is not on any level what is happening in the Scriptures. And the reason is because our discipleship does not begin with our own love for God, it begins with God’s unconditional, self-giving, abundant, always pursuing love for you and me. Central to knowing the character of the True and Living God is the understanding that our God is love. God is the supreme lover, and His love has been showered on us in an infinite number of ways. His love is displayed in God creating us and placing us in His beautiful world full of so many wonders and joys. It is found in His patience with us in spite of our rebellion and sinfulness. God’s love is made known as He speaks to us and makes Himself known. God’s love is fully exhibited in the incarnation and cross of Jesus, and God demonstrated His love for us in this, that Christ died for us. And that love has been applied in our redemption, adoption as His children, forgiveness of sins, and in His giving us a family.

It really is utterly amazing that God continually uses two metaphors that help us understand our relationship to him. First, God is shown in Scripture as the loving husband who never stops pursuing His bride. Even if she leaves Him to become a prostitute, God will not give up on her (see Hosea), and His pursuing covenant love for her is what changes her. Second, God is the benevolent and perfect Father who continues to love His children. Even if they leave home and squander His gifts, He never gives up on them, and runs to greet them in grace when they return. What I want you to notice here is that these both are highly relational interactions, where the God is the lover and we are the recipients. And the proper response to being so deeply loved is to love. In this case, to realize that God’s love is what changes us, and the only true response to this love is to love back. God doesn’t need our

love, but we need His love and our joy and hope is wholly wrapped up in loving God, experiencing Him, and enjoying Him forever.

This is where discipleship must begin. We can do all of the activity of being and making disciples, and yet create cold-hearted duty bound people who begin to believe they deserve something from God. But when I begin by realizing that I deserve nothing except justice, yet from His love I receive every good and perfect gift from God. More importantly, God has given me Himself to me as friend, as Father. How could I not love Him back, and how could I not erupt in worship and joy in His presence. And when this joyful love becomes the motivational center for my obedience and faithfulness, well, it changes everything. I no longer pursue spirituality out of a sense of duty hoping to gain God's approval, rather I work from His gracious approval which creates the desire to know and experience Him more. And this is why all of the other commands and duties for the Christian life hang on the hook of our love for Him.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1 Corinthians 13	1 Corinthians 14	1 Corinthians 15	1 Corinthians 16	2 Corinthians 1	2 Corinthians 2	2 Corinthians 3

Reading from this past week: Matthew 22:34-40

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: I Corinthians 6:19-20

Family Worship

Song - *God So Loved*

https://youtu.be/jasoo3UDSwY?si=gLkEo2YtGgwkSz_-

Gospel Project

Unit: Peter's Ministry

Story: Peter Continued to Preach

Big Picture Question: Why does God command Christians to tell others about Jesus?

Answer: We tell others about Jesus so they will hear and believe the good news.

Scripture: Acts 4

New City Catechism

Question 7: What does God's Law require?

Answer: That we love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Verse: Matthew 22:37-40

Scripture

Matthew 22:34-40

- Who loves first, God or me? Why is it important for us to know this with certainty? What are some of the glorious and grace filled ways God has loved us?
- What does it mean to love God with all that we are? How do we display this love?
- Why would Jesus connect loving our neighbor to loving God in these commands?
- Why do we need to realize that the activity in our discipleship must begin with our affection for God? What can happen when our duties are disconnected from our love?

Prayer

*Pray that we would love God with all that we are and that God's love would be the motivation for all that we do.

*Find ways to praise the Lord for all that He is and give thanks for all He has done.