

Bumper Video – Leslie Kiley

Every time I hear Leslie's story I'm reminded of God's amazing, unfailing love. I'm also reminded of our calling to love others as He has loved us – which has been modeled so beautifully for us by the people of church!

But loving people is not always easy to do is it – especially when they don't want to be loved or put expectation on the kind of love they will receive. I think that's why Jesus made sure he placed loving others behind loving Him – ***to love someone w/ less than the love of Christ is to not love at all.*** Until we get our relationship w/ Him in correct alignment, we'll never truly be able to love others the way He loves us. And even then, it can be incredibly painful to love people to the truth. Honestly, I've never hurt so much as to try to love someone to Jesus who only wanted a different kind of love.

Insert – As we begin this AM, I want to invite you to open your hearts and minds to what God wants to do in your life and in our midst today – **OPENNESS**

I've heard it said that money makes the world go round. While this might be true I believe that it is love that makes the trip worthwhile.

But not just any love will suffice! And sadly, too many people have gone looking for love in all the wrong places only to discover a perversion of love that leaves them empty, scarred, and abandoned. Yet should a man go looking for love in all the right places, he would find a virtue that would elevate him to a place of fulfillment, hope, and healing that he could never imagine – a love that exceeds circumstances and brings satisfaction to the soul. This is the kind of love God wants to give to us all. Yet this kind of love does not come on our conditions – but His conditions.

Last week we began a series of lessons on the (4) most vital teaching of Christ regarding *knowing* God, *loving* God, *following* God, and *servicing* God. It'd be fair to say that these are the primary teaches of Christ's ministry. In fact, the vast majority of His teachings area one of these (4) areas. Last week we looked at Jesus' call to *come, take, and learn* to find rest and salvation, this AM, we're going to look at the commission to *love* God and *love* others in His name. (**text**)

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" Jesus answered, "'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God w/ all your heart and w/ all your soul and w/ all your mind and w/ all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

“Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him w/ all your heart, w/ all your understanding and w/ all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions. Mark 12:28-34

Known by most of us as the **Great Commandment** – we find in the Gospel accounts (3) separate testimonies of the same event. Matthew focuses on the conditions that the Pharisees/Sadducees were trying to trip Jesus up to arrest Him. Luke focuses on what it looks like when a person loves God w/ all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength – they love people the way Jesus loves them – including the parable of the Good Samaritan. And Mark’s gives us remarkable insight into the heart of the teaching. In all (3) accounts, Jesus is conversing w/ the religious leaders of His day providing them w/ clarity of who He was (Messiah) and why He had entered time and space – to seek and to save the lost. And they were struggling to grasp how long and high – how deep and wide was the love of God.

Now if you remember from last week – this was Jesus’ yoke – His interpretation of the Law and the prophets – the Torah, Talmud, and Mishnah. Jesus summed 613 rules into 2 – love God and love people as God loves you.

What you may not know is that when confronted w/ this question Jesus quoted what many scholar's would say is the most important text in the O.T. Certainly, no passage in the Bible is more recognized in Israel even to this day. It happens to be the 1st portion of Scripture every Jewish child commits to memory. It is one of only (2) prayers Moses commanded the Israelites to recite in the Torah – it is called the Sh'ma. And it just so happens to be the very Scripture found in the phylacteries of the Pharisees on the foreheads.

Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever. And you shall love the Lord your God w/ all you heart and w/ all your soul and w/ all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets b/w your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. Dt. 4-9

This is actually a very humorous moment in the Bible – slap stick. You have to grasp the scene – a Pharisee asks Jesus a direct question, yet the answer was written right on his forehead. So what exactly is this passage about? It is about loving and honoring God. It is about having Him in the correct place in your life. It is about true worship.

The concept of worship has taken a major beating in the modern church. We've made worship what we do on Sunday and we've defined it by the music we play. We even call the music portion of our gathering worship. But worship has little to nothing to do w/ music – it has to do w/ the heart.

Worship is about our minute-by-minute alignment w/ God. It has to do w/ where we have placed our mind's attention, heart's affection, will's ambition, and life's actions. Worship isn't something we do on Sunday – it is something God desires 24/7/365 as we do life – he wants our whole life and person centered in alignment under the shadow of His wing.

But how we've made it so much less. How we've majored on the minors and chosen preference over passion, style over substance, truth over untruth – and we're not the better for it.

This AM I want to be simple and succinct. **Life is about loving God and allowing His love in you to love others the way He loves you.**

I LOVING God

Hear, Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever

This 1st statement is about (2) marvelous and essential truths.

A ACKNOWLEDGEMENT – of who God is

Moses and Jesus were declaring that Yahweh is the one only true God. There are no other living Gods.

Now considering throughout history there are untold nations who have embraced a pantheon of gods, what we learn and understand is that man by nature runs to any and all idols and ideas that afford them the opportunity to live as they please – and this still happens today. We substitute our manmade idols and ideas for obedience to the One true God.

So who is God to you? Is He your genie in the bottle who makes your life what you want it to be when you rub the big Book or is He the Sovereign Creator who you've aligned your life under believing He is the One and only true God.

B ACCEPTANCE – of what God has done

The 2nd activity of loving God requires our acceptance of what He has done.

It is the conscious embracing that we are sinners separated from our loving Creator who understand and accept that our only hope is the grace gift of God in Christ who came to rescue us from the power, pain, and penalty of sin. We have no hope apart from God's initiative to love us through the cross. *He accepts us not as we are but in light of His grace.*

C ALIGNMENT – of my life to His life

You shall love the Lord your God w/ all you heart and w/ all your soul and w/ all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be for frontlets b/w your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

From the moment I rise to the moment I lay my head on the pillow at night – my driving motivation and consumption is Christ. Whether I'm at work or at play – I strive to be in alignment w/ God.

I was speaking w/ Jamie this week about this concept – he suggested the idea of a car out of alignment.

- 1 – **Pulling** – Pulls to the world
- 2 – **Wacky Wheel** – Tilted away from Scripture
- 3 – **Wheel Wear** – Life wear – ragged on the edges
- 4 – **Turn Return** – Lack of conviction/repentance
- 5 – **Shaky Wheel** – A shaky life w/ shaky decisions

Alignment requires:

- 1 **Consciousness** – keep His truth before you
- 2 **Instruction** – it must be taught to be caught
- 3 **Discipline** – personal responsibility
- 4 **Vigilance** – *guard your heart...*

II LOVING Others

Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

What does it mean to love your neighbor? It means to love others in the same manner that Jesus loves you.

Whether it was the Peter after his denial of Christ or the woman caught in adultery – Jesus never loved people to the detriment – no matter how difficult the issue. Jesus always loved people to the truth.

In our current society of PC – people have come to believe that if you don't agree w/ their beliefs, actions, or issues then you hate them. If I do not embrace your way of life, then I'm against you. But this is not true.

To love someone, truly love someone, requires not that you turn a blind eye but that you love them to the truth. Sometimes this is a tough love, but let me assure you, it is almost always tougher on the person giving the love than receiving it.