



It's All Connected By Love

Week of January 3, 2020

Opening Options (Choose One Or More):

- How has God blessed you this week?
- In what ways were you a blessing to someone this week?
- What's one new Truth that you've learned this week about God?
- What is one thing you are looking forward to or hoping for in 2021?

Intro Discussion Questions:

- *What is the most challenging question you have ever asked someone or that someone has asked you?*

Read Sermon Summary:

A week before his death, a scribe (teacher of the law) asked Jesus an extremely heavy question: What is the greatest commandment? He genuinely wanted to know unlike some of his other teacher colleagues who were trying to trap Jesus in his words. Jesus' response was simple, but full of significance for Christians today. In a nutshell, he said the greatest command is all about experiencing real love for God and people. People can know about God and have relationships with others, but REALationships are only possible through the agape love that God gives us through Christ Jesus. It is only by embracing that love that we can truly live out his great commandment to love God in return and have his love manifested in us and given to others.

Background/Context

- **Read Mark 12:38-40**
 - The scribes (Jewish teachers) had disconnected themselves from that which was most important. They became selfish and wanted prestige, honor, and status for themselves. They took what wasn't theirs and abused their authority.
 - But it is from this group of teachers that one scribe comes genuinely, without malice, and asks Jesus, "What is the greatest command?"
 - **Ask Question: Jesus condemned the scribes in these verses. Do you see this attitude in the church today? Do you see it at times in yourself? How can you correct the situation?**

Read Main Scripture

- **Mark 12:28-34**

The Main Points

- **The Great Commandment is all about REALationships**
 - Jesus answers the scribe's question by quoting two Old Testament verses, Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18.
 - The verses in Deuteronomy comprise what is called the Shema (The Lord is One, Love the Lord Your God), which is a confession of faith that devout Jews recite twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening. When reciting this verse, there is an affirmation that there is only one true God, and he is the God who chose Israel to be the recipient of his covenant-love. There is no other before him or beside him. He is one. And you would think that would be enough, but Jesus doesn't just leave it at that command. Instead he adds another (Love Your Neighbor as Yourself).
 - If you notice, there are three relational components to the relationships that Jesus mentions here. The first is The Lord Your God, the second is your neighbor, and the third is yourself. But what Jesus makes clear is that the love binding each one together is what makes the relationships REAL.
 - In Matthew 22:40 Jesus says, "All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Just picture the great commandment as a coat hanger with all of the books of the Old testament hanging on them. There is none greater than these.
 - **Ask Questions: Why is it important that God is "One"? Why do all of the commandments hang on these two?**
- **REALationships are connected by Agape Love**
 - We have one word for love in English, but it is used and applied in many different contexts. The New Testament was mainly written in ancient Greek. And in the ancient Greek speaking world, there were a few words that were used for our English word love.
 - *Eros*. This type of love is deep desire, passionate aspiration, and sensuous longing. It often has a physical or sexual connotation. It was used often in other writings, but not in the New Testament.
 - *Storge* which is the kind of affection found in a family. This is the type of love a child would have for parents or a parent for a child. It is also a word not found in the New Testament.
 - *Philia* which describes different types of love, but mainly brotherly type of love toward another. Philadelphia (city of brotherly love) gets its name from this word. It is used roughly 60 times in the New Testament.
 - *Agape* was used most of all in the New Testament. The verb and noun are used around 250 times. This is the word that Jesus used to describe the love for God and others in REALationships.
 - **Ask Question: In what ways do you see the word love used in our English context?**
- **Read 1 John 4:15-17 - This Scripture gives us a glimpse into Agape Love**
 - Verse 16 - God is Love - it is one of his attributes. His love is uncaused, it doesn't make sense and is unreasonable to us by our standards. God's love is unending, unlimited, unchanging, unconditional, and uncomplicated. It's just who he is

- Verse 15 - God's Love is Experienced through Jesus - Jesus recognized that he answered wisely, but what did he say to him? "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Here's the deal, you can know what the great commandment is, but the reality is, the great commandment will not save you.
- Verse 17 - God's Love is Made Complete in Us - For the day of judgement to lead us into eternity with him, and so that we can live like Jesus in this world.
- ***Ask Question: How have you experienced God's Agape love in Your life? In what ways has God's Agape love transformed you to live like Jesus in this world?***

Application Questions

- **What are some barriers that are keeping you from living out the Great Commandment in your life?**
- **What is one way you can show love for God in a practical way this year?**
- **What is one way you can show love for your neighbor (anyone who is in your path) this year?**

Closing In Prayer

- Ask Question: What is the greatest challenge you are facing? Is there some way our group can help?
- Pray together over those requests.