Love the Lord Your God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 April 2024

Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Welcome to Through the Bible with Pastor Michael, a podcast from First Baptist Church in Mustang, Oklahoma.

! Here's Pastor Michael. As we continue our walk through the Gospel of Mark, and we're continuing in this very lengthy, detailed day in the life of Christ, we are still chronologically just a couple of days before the crucifixion, and there are so many conversations and things that take place on this day that are recorded for us in Scripture.
If you've been with us, you have a feel for how this day is going for Jesus. The debates, the traps, or at least the attempted traps, the questions.
It's just a constant barrage of these opponents of his coming after him. We have looked at the questions they gave him about what authority he had, about whether or not they should pay taxes to try to trip him up.
We looked last week at this exaggerated question in the Sadducees' mind about what happens if a lady is married to seven different brothers because they've all passed away and the issues of resurrection.
[1:36] And just one after the other after the other. Here come the Pharisees. Here come the Sadducees. Here come the Herodians. And now in verses 28 to 34, we get another question, another conversation that presents itself.

This one's a little unique though. A little bit of a different feel and motive, I think, in this conversation. We're looking at a question that is asked, which is a good question, a fair question, and a question that I think bears our careful study this morning.
If you want to take notes, you can make note of number one from verse 28, a question of significance. A question of significance.
It says, This is an individual person who comes up.
[2:47] We've had this barrage of questions. Verse 18 that we looked at last week. The Sadducees came up to Jesus. Their question was not sincere.

Their desire was not to learn. Their interest was merely to try to debate and argue against what Jesus taught and believed. But in verse 28, it's one of the scribes.
This isn't a group. This is just one. He doesn't seem to be hostile. The question seems to be legitimate.
The scribes were experts in the law in Jesus' day. They were mostly Pharisees. They were the lawyers, the teachers of the day.
And it says, One of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, here's the question of significance, which commandment is the most important of all?
[4:01] What is the first commandment, so to speak? This isn't an issue about chronology. He's not asking what is the first one that was ever given.

He's saying, which is the most important of all? The rabbis had contended there were 613 laws given in the books of Moses.
It's interesting. There were 613 letters of the Hebrew language in the Ten Commandments, and so they had came up with what they listed as 613 laws.
And the scribe is asking, which commandment is the most important of all? And maybe he was trying to get Jesus to give a controversial answer.
That's what everybody else was doing that day. Maybe, though, he was just weary from trying to keep all of the law and wanted some relief by just thinking, I can't keep all of it.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[5:09] Maybe if he tells me what the most important law is, maybe at least I can know I keep that. We're not given his mindset. We're not told his motive.

We're just told his question. It's a significant question. Which commandment is the most important of all? As a follow-up to the question of significance, secondly, Jesus gives an answer of clarity. He answers the question, and he gives him some clarity. And what you're going to see as Jesus answers the question is he's going to do three things.
First, he's going to build a foundation. And then once he lays the foundation, he's going to give a first answer, and then he'll give him a second answer.
The first thing Jesus gives in his response is to give this foundation. Verse 29, Jesus answered, the most important is, hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.
[6:23] This is the foundation. He's taking this man back to Deuteronomy 6, the passage we read just a few moments ago.

It's a passage known as the Shema. It's a word meaning to hear. Hear, O Israel. This was the cornerstone for the people of God in the Old Testament.
This past, the last two Wednesday nights, I've had the privilege of going up with our children in Awana, our two different age groups, and doing some time of Bible Q&A and just questions and answers with our students that they had about the church, about the Bible, about preaching, about God.
And one of the girls last Wednesday said to me, why is John 3, 16, the verse that most everyone learns first?
It's a good question. And the answer, I think, is that it's the verse that probably as much as any other summarizes the totality of what the story of the Bible is.
[7:29] Well, if you lived in Jesus' day before there was a New Testament, the John 3, 16, so to speak, for them would have been Deuteronomy 6.

Hear, O Israel. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. This is the verse they would have all known, all quoted, all recited, the foundation of their faith.
And this is something, the Shema, that Orthodox Jews would still recite today. Hear, O Israel. That phrase is familiar. It's how the wording of the Ten Commandments begins. The Lord speaks to Moses. Hear, O Israel.
The foundation to know what is the most important thing in life is that you must know something about who God is, and you must know His word. The Lord, our God, the Lord is one, verse 29 says.
[8:40] Yahweh is God's name, and His name sums up who He is. His name means, I am who I am. The scribe says, what's the most important commandment of all?

And Jesus says, let's start with this foundation. There is one God, and you must know the one true God. The Lord, our God, the Lord is one.
He's the God who has revealed Himself to us. We can know Him. His name, Yahweh, has been revealed to us.
If you were to ask me today, why did you marry Marcy? Why did you fall in love with Marcy?
I could tell you, well, I married her, I loved her because she loves the Lord, and that's true. Although, lots of people that I knew in college love the Lord.
[9:43] And I could say, well, it's not just that, it's also that she's, when we were dating, she was just, she was so smart, she was so gifted, she was so talented. That's true, but there were other people that are gifted and talented.

I could say, well, she's, she's so much fun, she's so joyful, we have so much fun together, and that's true, but there are other people in the world who are fun and enjoy as well. Eventually, I would just have to say to you, it's, it's not even any, just one thing, I would just say, it's, it's because it's Marcy. I loved her, I, I, I wanted to be with her because it's, it's Marcy, it's just the totality of who she is. I would just call upon the name to say, it's not one thing, or this thing, or that thing, it's just the totality of who she is, and, and that name represents her life, and her character, everything about her.
That's the foundation Jesus is reminding the scribe here. You can know the one true God, Yahweh, the God who has made himself known, the God who is who he is.
And there is only one God. Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one.
[11:13] If you don't know who the one true God is, it doesn't matter what commandment you try to keep, you'll never be at rest.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

You must know him. And, and I'm convinced this is why so many people who attend church regularly are so unhappy.
Because, if you find yourself trying to be religious, and trying to keep commandments, and trying to be pleasing to a God that you don't know, it's exhausting.
So, we start with this foundation. You must know the one true God. Not the God of your making. Not the God that's been fashioned by your thoughts, or your wishes, or your desires. You hear it said all the time in our world today, things like my God wouldn't do that.
[12:22] Well, because your God doesn't exist. We don't make up who our God is. You must know the one true God.

This is the foundation. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And with that foundation laid, now, in verse 30, he gives his first answer.
So, you must know the Lord, verse 30, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.
In other words, God is not something you slip into the cracks of your life. life.
This is to be your life. Everything about you is defined through how you see God.
[13:43] There is one true God, you must know him, and the one true God that exists, you are commanded to love him with everything. It's exclusive devotion, that's your heart.

It's obedience to his word, that's your will. It's affection and love for him, that's your emotion, everything about you.
Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your mind, and with all of your strength, everything about you.
And the point here is not so much about the individual parts of your life, the emphasis here is that you are to love him with your whole being, everything.
When you go back to the third verse that we just sang of the hymn, my Jesus, I love thee, and if you just say, I need some words that will give me some doctrine about life, and some preparedness for death, you just sang them.
[14:59] I will love thee in life, I will love thee in death, I will sing your praises as long as you lendest me breath.

Your life is just a gift from God and nothing else. The Lord has to give the gift of breath to you every morning. And as long as you lend me breath, the psalm says I will give praise to you.
But on that day, when the dew of death lies cold on my brow, on that day, when I'm taking my final gasps of air and I'm about to meet the Lord, the greatest thought on your mind as a believer will be if ever I have loved thee, if ever I have needed you, if ever I have depended upon you, as I take these final breaths, my Jesus tis now.
Because I not only know you, I love you with my heart and my soul and my mind and my strength. A mind that's been taught and trained and rooted in His word, a will that's been conformed, transformed into longing to obey His word, emotions, affections, not just cold knowledge, but a heart set aflame for the God that you've come to know and the God that you love.
[17:08] love. Jesus says, you want to know what the greatest commandment is? Here it is. Upon the foundation of there is one true God you must know, see to it that you love Him with everything you have.

Verse 31, He gives a second answer. He says, the second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.
There is no other commandment greater than these. In that answer, Jesus takes them back to Leviticus 19. When He says, love the Lord your God with everything you have, that's a summary of the first four of the Ten Commandments.
When He says, love your neighbor as yourself, that's the summary of the next six of the Ten Commandments. And with these two statements, Jesus has upheld the commandments given to God, from God, to His people, through His servant Moses, and calls them to have a life rooted on the foundation of the knowledge of who God is, and a love for God, and a sincere love for people.
That was the answer of clarity that Jesus gave. At this point, the conversation goes a little bit differently than some of the other ones have.
[18:43] I want to show you a third thing here, and it's a response of agreement. To this point, the antagonists keep coming up to Jesus, and He answers them, and they're just stunned into silence, or they quit talking because they know their motive was just a debate, and they've not won the

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

debate, and they just go quiet.

In this conversation, though, we see a response of agreement. Verse 32, And the scribe said to Him, You are right, teacher.
You have truly said that He is one, and there is no other besides Him. Verse 33, And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.
The scribe affirms that a love for God is a weightier matter than sacrifices. this is a bit of a different response than we've seen in other conversations that took place on this day.
The scribe says, You're right, teacher. You've spoken truly. You've reminded us that we are to love not only the Lord, but to love one's neighbor as himself.
[20:31] And the scribe affirms that loving God and loving people are of a weightier matter than offerings and sacrifices.

Let me just give you a brief overview of why the scribe says this. 1 Samuel 15, 22, Samuel said, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. Proverbs 21, 3, To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.
Hosea 6, 6, For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. And as was said in Matthew 12, verse 7, If you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.
The emphasis here is not simply on the ceremony that you do, but on the God that you love.
[21:54] the Bible does command us to gather together for worship in Hebrews. The Bible does command us to sing songs of praise to the Lord.

That's true, which means you could not be pleasing the Lord if you're not doing those things, if you're neglecting those things.
However, be quite assured, you can gather together and sing songs of praise and still not be pleasing to God at all.
Because ultimately, it's not just about gathering here on Sunday or singing here on Sunday. Those are good gifts from the Lord, expectations of God's people, but that's not the end.
It's a means to an end that we would love the Lord, our God with all of our heart, and that we would love each other as ourselves.
[22:58] The end goal of all of what we do in worship is that it would produce love in us. You realize if you're at church every single Sunday of your life and you don't love God, you don't have salvation.

if you're at church every single Sunday and sing every hymn and have notebook after notebook of sermon notes and you don't love people, that you're not living a life pleasing to the Lord.
And the scribe picks up on this. What the scribe says is based on 1 Samuel 15, Proverbs 21, Hosea 6.
You're right, teacher, you've spoken truly. There is one God, there is no other God besides him, and the goal of our life is to love him and to love each other, and that's a weightier matter than even our offerings and our sacrifices.
The scribe responds in agreement, which leads to a fourth and final point I want you to see, and that is a verdict of authority.
[24:27] A verdict of authority. Verse 34, 4. And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, you are not far from the kingdom of God.

right. This is a chilling response.
You are not far, but being near is not being in.
I would contend that most every person who will be in this sanctuary today, most everyone is not far.
you're not far because you have already had scripture read to you several times during this service that points you to the truth.
[26:07] You have already sung songs so rich, so full, so profound, your heart has already absorbed.

And for most of us, our lips have already said or sung the truth of the gospel. And in this moment, you are literally hearing with your ears the very truth that there is one God, and you must know him, and you must love him, and a love for God will be expressed by a love for people, and that what you

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

do with the truth of the gospel is the single most important thing of your entire life and eternity.
You are not far. But being near is not being in. of all the conversations we've studied on this busy day in the life of Jesus just before he goes to the cross, this is the only encouraging one.
It's the only one where the person asking the question seems to be sincere. where the person asking it seems to ask a fair question, respond with agreement, and even have a legitimate understanding of the Bible.
And Jesus said, you're not far from the kingdom of God. God. how could somebody know the Bible, respect Jesus, ask good questions, have good knowledge, be so close, and yet not be in?
[28:32] God. And I would contend to you that this is the condition of countless people who this very day will sit in churches.

So close. But not in. God. Because it's not just knowing facts.
It's not just respect. It's not just appreciation. It's repentance.
it's trusting in Christ. It's recognizing that we are sinners, but God in love gave his only son, Jesus Christ, that all who believe in him would not perish, but have everlasting life.
Trust in his name, believe in his name, cling to his name, rest in his name, not add Jesus to other parts of your life, not seek to say, how much do I need to know, how much can I obey, how much can I get away with, but to say, I want Christ, and nothing but Christ, and all of Christ, and by knowing Christ, I have everything I need.
[30:09] that's what salvation looks like. And my greatest fear are for those who would say, I read the Bible, I can answer questions, I respect the church, I even enjoy coming to church, and the music comforts me, and the preaching educates me, and the people encourage me, and they'd be so close.

but has there come a time in your life where by the grace of God you were brought from death to life?
Where the truth that you heard and the truth that you have sung has so captured your heart that you have been made alive with Christ.
You remember the man we call the rich young ruler? He had a similar conversation with Jesus, and he walked away sad.
What about this scribe? The text ends. After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.
[32:11] It's as if the Holy Spirit purposefully is saying the end of this story today doesn't center on the scribe. The end of the story will be what every hearer will do with the truth of the gospel.

could it be that today you know the Bible, could answer the questions, appreciate the church, sit with respectful reverence in the worship of God, but have never truly received the Lord's gift of salvation.
salvation. The Bible tells us that we are to repent and believe, to acknowledge not only that there is one God, but to believe in his name.
Can I remind you from the book of James, even the demons believe there is one God, and they shudder, James says. Would you this day acknowledge the truth that there is one God and only one God and that God the Father sent his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to live a perfect life in our place, to go to the cross as our substitute, to absorb the payment for our sin as our propitiation, and by paying the price for us being our ransom.
And this day, if you would believe in his name, trust in his name, rest in his name, not seek to add the work of Jesus to your work, but renounce your work, clinging only, not primarily, only, to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, believing he is the Son of God who was crucified, buried, and raised to life.
[34:55] the only name given under heaven whereby men must be saved. Would you today cling to his name, his life, his gift?

I don't long for you to be near. I long for you to be in. the name of the Lord is a strong tower.
The righteous run into it, and they are saved. Lord, we thank you today for your word, and pray that you would use it to convict us of sin, and to comfort us, to remind us of the salvation made available to us through the work of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
It's in his name that we pray. Amen. Before you're dismissed, just a couple of very brief things. One, if you have a question about how to know Christ, if today you have prayed to receive Christ, for any spiritual need or question you may have, would you please take that connection card and let us know what your need is, what your questions.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

We would love to follow up with you and do so in a situation where we've got time to open our Bible and allow you to do the same and to be able to talk and to visit. I want to remind you that the authority that we have in this church is not of ourselves.
[36:45] the only authority we have comes from God's word. In other words, I need you to recognize that what we're calling on you to believe and to do is not because a preacher said so, but because the God who made heaven and earth said so.

And I want you to recognize that at this church we're not perfect. but our Savior is. And our hope that we offer you is not a hope rooted in ourselves.
It's a hope given to us by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we can help you with that and pray with you through that, it would be our delight to do that and you can use that connection card, let us know your need, let us know your question, and it would be our privilege to be able to sit down with you and try to help you, not because we have all the answers, but because the word of God is our light and our salvation.
With that in mind, I want to invite you to come back tonight. We've got evening service at five. We've been walking through Psalm 23 for this semester, and we come to the end of Psalm 23 where David writes of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.
forever. And I want to show you tonight how the Lord is our hope, not only for this life, but for the life to come. I think you'll be blessed and encouraged as we gather back at five o'clock to worship and study God's word.
[38:26] I want to invite you to come and be a part of that. I love you, Dealer Church family. I'm thankful for you so much. Hope to see you at five o'clock tonight. God bless. You're dismissed. God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God God

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host