

Mark 12:28-34. Christ Replies to a Scribe Concerning the Greatest Commandment.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

The greatest commandment is to love God and love others, and without love, all services to God are worthless.

Scripture: Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:28, Luke 10:27, 1 Corinthians 13:1, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Love For God", "Kingdom Living"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the importance of love as the root of all acceptable obedience to God. Despite the Scribes' attempt to entangle Jesus with questions, He emphasizes the commandment to love God and love others above all else. Jesus commends a Scribe for recognizing the truth about love, stating that he is not far from the kingdom of God. Mortimer challenges the congregation to examine their hearts and ensure that their actions are motivated by genuine love for God, as even the most extravagant offerings are worthless without love.

Transcript

It is not surprising that the Scribes admired the Lord's answer to the Sadducees, because they believed in the resurrection. They showed their admiration by exclaiming, "You have well said." Yet they did not give up the hope of entangling the divine Teacher by questions; and one of them made this inquiry, "Which is the first commandment of all?" The Scribes often disputed with each other on this subject, and some asserted that to offer a certain sacrifice, and others that to keep a certain fast, or to repeat certain prayers, or to bestow certain alms, was the service the most acceptable to God. How much the Lord's reply must have surprised them! Instead of selecting any one command as greater than the rest, he pointed to the root of all acceptable obedience, Love. He made only one distinction, and that was with regard to the objects towards whom love is to be exercised. These objects are "God and man;" and as God is infinitely greater than man, love to Him must be infinitely more important than love to man. Yet where love to God is found, love to man will always follow; but it will be a love very different from that selfish, capricious, and partial love which unconverted men feel for their friends and relatives.

The Scribe, who asked the question with the evil design of tempting the Lord, (as Matthew declares,) was convinced by the answer, and expressed his sentiments with cordiality and candor. He did not speak hypocritically when he said, "Well, Master, you have said the truth." No other of our Lord's tempters ever showed such readiness to receive instruction, and such frankness in avowing his convictions. He, who

knew his heart, encouraged him by this commendation--"You are not far from the kingdom of God." He did not say, "You are in the kingdom of God." He did not say, as once he said to a weeping penitent, "Your faith has saved you." He did not say, as once he said to a dying thief, "You shall be with me in Paradise." Yet what he did say was very encouraging. In a world in which so many are as far from the kingdom of God, as the east is from the west, it is encouraging for a sinner to hear that he is not far from it. It is God alone that can draw a soul even to its borders--and it is our hope that if he bring it thus far, he will bring it farther still. To perish at the very barrier that separates death from life would be dreadful indeed. The shipwrecked mariner who perishes in the waves when in sight of the shore, seems in a more pitiable case than one who had not so nearly reached his native land and his beloved home.

Are we convinced that without love all the services we can offer to God are worthless? Even a human creature would not be pleased with our gifts, if he KNEW that we did not love him, and that we presented them only with the view of gaining a reward. And will God be pleased with interested services? How much has he done to win our love? He has given his only-begotten Son to die for our sakes. Is not that enough to melt the hardest heart? There can be no greater proof of the natural wickedness of the human heart than this--it finds it difficult to love God--to love the most lovely Being, the most gracious Benefactor.

Let none of us be satisfied with feeling we ought to love God. As soon as a spark of real affection for our heavenly Father is kindled in our hearts, then we are in the kingdom of God--then we are safe, then we are happy. Not so happy as we shall be when we love him more; but happier than the most prosperous worldling who does not love him. Our love can never entitle us to eternal life; Christ's blood can alone do that; but it affords a proof that we are the children of God, and that we shall dwell with him forever! for "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that LOVE him." (1 Cor. 2:9.)

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/favell-lee-mortimer/mark-1228-34-christ-replies-to-a-scribe-concerning-the-greatest-commandment/>

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