

Cost of Discipleship - Part 3

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving God and our neighbors as a reflection of true discipleship and faith in Christ.

Duration: 23:25

Scripture: Matthew 22:34

Topics: "Cost Of Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the impact of television and media on society. He mentions a quote from Dr. McLuhan, stating that the most important thing about television is not what is seen on it, but the fact that it exists and can be instantly viewed around the world. The speaker then turns to Matthew chapter 22 and Ephesians chapter 4 in the Bible. He focuses on the commandment to love God with all one's heart, soul, and mind, and emphasizes the importance of loving one's neighbor as oneself. The speaker highlights the need to spread the gospel to every person and to care for the well-being of others.

Transcript

You turn please to Matthew chapter 22, and while you're doing that, find and perhaps put a piece of paper or your finger or the ribbon in your Bible in Ephesians chapter 4. We shall be there shortly. Last evening we began a series of messages on this portion, Matthew 22, 34 to 40. The great commandment, or the first and second commandments, I think you can really see them as one, and we'll endeavor to do that tonight.

Last night we considered the 37th verse, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. I'm just going to review briefly, for you that were not with us, the Lord Jesus said of these two commandments, or on these two commandments, hang all the law and the prophets.

By that I would see that he was saying that unless we understand the direct implications and the proper inferences from these two commandments, we do not adequately understand the law or the prophets. We saw that the word love, as it's used in the New Testament, and particularly here, does not have to do with emotions, sensibilities, or feelings. Rather, it has to do with the purpose, the volitional choice.

We established the definition of sin, that in its essence, sin is the supreme choice of the life to please oneself, to gratify oneself, to satisfy oneself. That in its essence, sin is the supreme choice of the life to

please oneself, to gratify oneself, to satisfy oneself. It is selfishness.

We saw that the word love really has, really has as its definition in a biblical context, the seeking or the purpose to seek the highest good and blessedness and joy, satisfaction and fulfillment of another. Therefore, to love oneself is a commitment or a choice that one makes to seek their own pleasure and joy and satisfaction, the gratification of their appetites and the fulfillment of their ambitions, without due and proper regard for God and his will and intention and purpose, and without due and proper regard for the rights of others. The essence of sin, the crime of sin, is that at the age of accountability, we committed ourselves to this as a ruling principle of our lives, to please ourselves.

Now, we may not have done it in any formal declaration of war against God, but it was done in effect. It was done subtly. It was done with purpose.

It was done consistently. All have sinned. All have repeated the choice made by Father Adam and Mother Eve when reaching that age of accountability, saying, this is how I will live.

I will do what I want to do. I will please me. I will decide how to be happy.

I will decide what I'm going to do with my time and my life and my body. I'm going to be boss. Now, the text says, thou shalt love the Lord thy God.

That is, thou shalt seek the highest good and blessedness and happiness and joy and satisfaction of God. Everything in the law is for the purpose of revealing that we have committed this crime because the law is said to be the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It just checks all the examinations we've filled in, all of our attitudes and actions and words and deeds, and it proves that we have indeed become criminals before God with this crime of sin.

Therefore, this is not the natural attitude of man. To love God, therefore, is not that which people do automatically. If it's done, then there has to be a turning from, a change from, a renunciation of, another policy and another principle and another reason for being.

Thus it is that Christ said, except you repent, you will perish. Now, repentance in the scripture means a change of mind in terms of attitude, in terms of purpose, in terms of intention. From that supreme choice, I'm going to do what I want to do to something different.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? So it implies repentance, and more than that, it implies faith, faith in the finished work of Christ, faith in the person of Christ, because the God with whom we have to do is the God who became flesh and dwelt among us. So to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind and soul means that at any point in time we renounced ourselves, our right to rule. We said this, with this we are through.

We renounced the God whose minions and servants we were, the God of this world, and committed ourselves to Jesus Christ, receiving him as Lord and as Savior, believing on him. And in so doing, there then is the evidence that we have, we must have, of genuineness in this. And so we move on to the next verse.

This is the first and the great commandment, and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Now remember our definition of love. Love is the choice or the commitment of the will, the purpose.

We've already spoken of one aspect, where the purpose to please God, to satisfy God, to seek his blessedness and his joy and his happiness, his fulfillment, as far as we're concerned. Now, he said, the only evidence that you can present to yourself and to others that you have truly come to the point where you have repented and believed, where you have been passed from death to life, is in that the effect of this change is going to be felt by your neighbors. How are you going to prove to God that you love him? Well, you say, I can do it because I know my heart.

Well, well and good, and God knows your heart. But God is also concerned that others should be able to tell that this change has taken place. Some feel that if they know the plan of salvation and can recite it, that they've given all the evidence that they need, that they're born of God.

Others say that if they can testify to an experience that they've had at some time in the past, this satisfies them. But the word is just a little different. The Lord knoweth them that are his.

Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Now, how is this going to be done? What's going to be the evidence that you love God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul? What's going to be the evidence that you seek the highest good, and blessedness, and well-being, and satisfaction, and fulfillment of your neighbor, even as you do for yourself? A few moments ago I said the essence of sin is self-love. Now I'm turning around and talking to you about a proper self-love.

There's an irresponsible and iniquitous self-love that we've called sin. Then there is a proper kind of self-love, because thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But what's the word love again? Let's define it.

To seek the highest good, and blessedness, and happiness, and well-being, and satisfaction, and fulfillment of yourself, consistent with seeking the highest good, and blessedness, and happiness of God. So there is a self-love. In other words, God does want you to be concerned about you.

You are important to him, and it's very, very necessary for you to understand the thin line, if you please, between an improper self-love and a proper self-love. For instance, you ought to want for you such, uh, such blessings as freedom to walk the streets without fear of attack and bodily harm. You ought to want for you the right to work where you choose to work, and to keep the proceeds from your work, so that you would have for your need, and the needs of others, and for the perfect work of God.

You ought to want an opportunity to develop your, your potential, to train yourself so that you could use your time to the maximum reward and the greatest good of others. You ought to want for yourself an opportunity to obtain food, and clothing, and shelter by your own efforts, so that you can live with dignity and with poise. You ought to want for yourself enforcement of contracts, so that when you make a promise to someone, they, they are protected against you.

There's going to be someone to enforce that contract, and when you give your word, people can feel secure that you're not going to defraud them. By the same token, you ought to want that that same enforcement applies to you, and when someone gives their word to you, that society in general, realizing that so much of our, our commerce and our life depends upon promises that people make, that these promises will be enforced, and we will be protected from each other. You ought to want an opportunity to hear the gospel, and to commit yourself to Jesus Christ, and then to propagate that same gospel, and that faith in Christ, without interference from the law.

These are blessings that we take for granted, but you ought to want them. You have a perfect right to want them. There's only one thing, when you have written down that full long list of things that you have a right to want, to ensure your happiness, and your joy, and your fulfillment, and your blessedness, there's just one thing.

You've got to write my name right next to the whole list. Do you understand? You've got to write your neighbor's name, not just mine, but anything you want for you, you must want for him. This is what he's saying.

Certainly it's right for you to want things for yourself. But everything you want for you, you have an obligation to want for your neighbor. So that's going to make it a matter of some concern as to how long that list becomes.

If you really believe that everything you want for you, you have to want for me, if I really believe that everything I want for me, I have to want for you, then we're now coming to a place where there is a new dimension in society, a new dynamic in human relationships. And this was that irresistible power of the gospel that Gibbons in his decline and fall of the Roman Empire said shook that empire until it crumbled and cracked. It couldn't withstand this kind of an introduction of life, that where one had partaken of the divine nature, they wanted for everyone what they had a right to want for themselves.

Now, if we understand that, then we've got another problem. Who's our neighbor? Who's our neighbor? Well, you say, the people whose land adjoin mine. Well, that's interesting.

I was down in--my brother is a miller, has a flour mill down in South Carolina, and I went out one day to talk with an old farmer. He said, you know, my daddy, he weren't greedy, none at all. He just wanted all the land that was right next to his.

Well, that gets to be a pretty big piece if you keep at it long enough. Who's your neighbor? Who's your neighbor? Well, I guess you could say it's the one whose land is right next to yours, but I don't think that's an adequate definition. I think that we've got a whole new, whole new thing for us.

You know, when that television set came along, it kind of snuck up on us, and it was a long time before we realized what Marshall McLuhan said in his book, *Understanding Media*. You don't have it and you see it on a pocketbook rack sometime, especially you preachers, and you missionaries more particularly. You better buy it, because Dr. McLuhan says the media is the message.

He says the most important thing about television isn't what you see on it, but the fact that it's there, that you can see instantly around the world. During the recent World Cup soccer matches, more people watched those soccer matches at the same instant than have ever watched any other event in human history, because it was beamed by satellite around the world. It was not just the company gathered in the large stadiums in Europe.

It was all the other multitudes around the world that saw it. The media is the message. The impact of that, I think, for me was brought home on Christmas Eve in December 68.

You recall our astronauts were in the capsule and going around the backside of the moon for one of the first time, and one of these men, very thoughtfully, for my sake at least, had put his television camera up to the porthole. They were in just such a posture that through that little porthole they could see the dead, dark, vast wasteland of the moon landscape. And then out beyond it was the horizon of the moon.

And over that horizon, suspended out there in the midnight blackness of empty space, was a little spaceship. You could see it gleaming there with the reflected light of the sun. And we were looking at our spaceship, the one we call Earth.

And I studied that picture then, and I've studied it since. And you know, I can't figure out what's home and what's foreign on that. It's just beyond me.

I can't tell where one continent begins and another leaves off. And I think that night we saw the world the way our Heavenly Father sees it, as just a spaceship with a limited amount of oxygen, and a limited amount of water, and a limited amount of space to grow food, and a limited amount of fuel, and seemingly an unlimited passenger list. Doubling the passenger list every thirty-five years.

When Christ said, go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, they should have run right out and done it, because that was the easiest time to do it. There were only about 150 million people in the whole world then. In 650 A.D. it got up around 250 million.

And 1650 A.D. it got up to 500 million. You see, in those days it took a thousand years for the passenger list to double. But in 1650 A.D. things began to change.

It only took 200 years to go from 500 million to 1 billion, 1,000 million. Now, that occurred in 1850. 1850 we had 1 billion neighbors.

But then, in 1850, things were really changing. Colonial governments had put down intertribal warfare, introduced some measure of health, and from that time on medical knowledge began to double about every ten years. So it only took 80 years to go from 1 billion to 2 billion.

Nineteen hundred and thirty. But by 1930 medical knowledge was doubling about every five years. And so in 19--took 26 years to add another billion.

It took until 1850 from the beginning of time to get the first one. It only took 26 years to get the third one. 1930 to 1956.

But by 1956 the world--we found out the world's population was doubling every 30 to 32 years. Now, if you want to take that, just go in with that, will you? Take 32 to 56, and you come up around the year 1990 and there'll be 6 billion, and by the year 2000 there'll be 7 to 7 and a half billion, let's say 7 and a half. And by the year 230 there's going to be 15 billion, and let's take it once more.

Hold on to the seat in front of you, will you? By the year 260 there'll be about 30 billion people. Now, you want to go once more? I haven't got the nerve. But the astounding thing is the demographers tell us there's not much chance of that rate of population growth deaccelerating until around 260--2060, 2060 years.

So it looks like we're going to have an awful lot of people on this little globe, this little passenger plane that we're in, this spaceship we call Earth, and they're all neighbors of yours. That's right, they're all your neighbors. Now, one of the astounding things that we have to face is that we've known for a long time that we had to carry the gospel to every creature because he told us.

He said, go and preach the gospel to every creature. But you know it gets to be a little bit sticky and a little bit difficult when he says, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, thou shalt seek his blessedness and

happiness and joy and satisfaction and fulfillment and well-being, even as you do your own. That whatever you want for you, you've got to want for your neighbors wherever they are, your fellow passengers.

Gets to be a problem, doesn't it? Well, that gives you the scope of the implications of this. Now let's go and make it very practical, shall we? If we've said to love our neighbor means that we seek his highest good and blessedness and well-being, what does it mean not to love him? Well, I've asked you to turn to Ephesians chapter 4, and I'm suggesting we begin our reading here with verse 17, because it's going to help us to understand this. Paul has just given this wonderful testimony that he's given, that the Lord Jesus has given evangelists and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry, until in the work of the ministry is witnessing.

We're all part of this task group force of the Lord Jesus to get the out to all of our neighbors. And he said that we are to be built up into an edifice or a building that Christ is going to occupy. And then in verse 17, he changes a little.

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