

Do You Love God?

Mark 22:34-40

³⁴Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

1 John 4:1-7

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Sermon Summary

What are you convicted about in your life? It is interesting how selective we are in regard to what sins we allow the Holy Spirit to bring real and true conviction. There is a natural tendency in all of us to limit His conviction to the things others are most or more guilty of, such as homosexuality, abortion, drunkenness, driving while intoxicated or texting, pre-marital sex and so forth. To put it another way, there is a tendency to isolate conviction in ways that benefit us by costing us little to be against them. What we fail to see is how much it is costing others as we hone in on the speck in their eye while being utterly oblivious to the log in our own.

Jesus was quite clear that it is the log, not the speck that we will have a strong tendency to ignore altogether. This is evident if we consider our conclusions about other classes of people. We can see the non-motivation, that we conclude is laziness, among the poor. However, we can live a lifetime without really being convicted to the point of deep repentance over a middle to upper class idolatry of material things, education, and work. Yet, Jesus is not easy on these, our sins.

If it is the log that we are most blinded to, and love of God and neighbor are the first and second greatest commandments, it is highly likely, if not inevitable, that the log we most ignore is a failure to love both God and neighbor. Let's consider these failures and see how God's love for us is the only true power to love.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Why is it so much easier getting busy with Christian deeds or service as opposed to loving people? What is the difference? How does one feel who is the object of a good deed in place of being loved?
- 2) Discuss this, "When we attempt to get life out of our Christian service, we act as if Jesus' work was deficient and there is something we can and must add for God to love us. Thus the focus is squarely centered on me and, because it lacks love, 'I am nothing' and 'I gain nothing (I Cor. 13:2-3).'"
- 3) What must we trust God for in order to truly receive His love? Hint: what did Jesus accomplish for us in his life? Death?
- 4) Love is a fruit of the Spirit, not a work of our determination or flesh. How is love produced in and through us? How might love be a product or fruit of repentance and faith?
- 5) How would your life be different if you loved your neighbor? What would it take to trust God to begin to move in that direction? What are your biggest fears about doing so? What else could God do to earn your trust to walk by faith, not sight?

Memorize

For next week, memorize:
¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 5:14

Article to Read

The Gospel and the Poor
 by Tim Keller
[WEB LINK](#)

Extra Reading

When Helping Hurts
 by Steve Corbett and
 Brian Fikkert
[WEB LINK](#)

*Divided by Faith:
 Evangelical Religion and
 the Problem of Race in
 America*
 by Michael Emerson and
 Christian Smith
[WEB LINK](#)

Needs of Our Memphis Neighbors

- 23.1% of people in our city live below federal definition of poverty compared to 13.2% nationwide (increase of 2.6% since 2000)
- 37.6% of all children live below poverty level (compared to 18% nationwide). 45% of all children raised by a single mother live in poverty.
- The overall graduation rate in the Memphis City Schools is approximately 60%; the dropout rate is approximately 33%
- Infants are dying in Shelby County at the rate of 14 per 100,000 live births. That is approximately the same level of infant mortality as the country of Zimbabwe.