

The Next Most Important Commandment

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[0:00] Matthew 25, beginning in verse 31. When the Son of Man comes to his glory, in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.

! All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another. As a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, he will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me in. I needed clothes, and you clothed me.

I was sick, and you looked after me. I was in prison, and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?

[1:08] When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The king will reply, I tell you the truth.

Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you who are cursed, and to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, and you did not invite me in.

I needed clothes, and you did not clothe me. I was sick and in prison, and you did not look after me. They also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger and needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?

And he will reply, I tell you the truth. Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

[2:21] Well, we're back in Matthew chapter 22 this morning. And in verse 36, we find that this expert in the law comes up to Jesus and says, Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?

And Jesus replied, Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.

And so we saw last week that every day, all our days, the thing that's at the top of our to-do list for the day is to love God with all that we are.

It's always the most important thing that God wants from us, our wholehearted love. But now notice that Jesus gave this expert more than he asked for.

He comes asking only for one great commandment. What's the greatest commandment? But after giving it, Jesus went on to say in verse 39, and don't go to sleep yet, and the second is like it.

[3:31] Love your neighbor as yourself. We're seeing that Jesus gave this expert more than he asked for. He asked, what's the greatest? Singular command. And Jesus says, Love God with all your heart.

And the second is like it. He says, love your neighbor as yourself. All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments. So he came asking for one, and he's given two.

Love your God and love your neighbor. And in so replying, Jesus gives us our first lesson for today. And it's that these two commandments belong together.

They are inseparable. Jesus puts them together and wants us to think of them together. Jesus says, the second is like the first.

They're similar. They're both commands to love. And they're both summarizing commands. Because on these two commands, you can hang every other command in the Bible.

[4:33] You can hang the whole scripture on these two commandments. So let me try to demonstrate this morning why these two commands cannot be separated. We saw last week that God says to us, if you love me, you will what?

You will keep my commandments. All right? And a whole lot of his commandments have to do with loving our neighbor. Don't they? So we see immediately the connection between loving God and loving our neighbor.

If you love God, you will love people because he commands you to. And love obeys him. So the greatest commandment includes the second greatest commandment.

You see, I can't say, I love God, whom I do see, or whom I haven't seen, even while I'm hating my brother, who I do see. The Apostle John says, if I make that claim, I'm a liar.

No. To love God is to love my brother as well. The two are inseparable. They're connected. They're Siamese twins.

[5:51] They're joined at the hip. A wholehearted love for God will always express itself in a selfless love for my fellow man.

Now, what if Jesus Christ were to physically appear to everyone during your lifetime 20 times? But he would do so dressed incognito so that you would never know that it was him.

All you knew that was from the time you were born to the time you died, 20 times in your life, you would confront the Lord Jesus in the flesh. It might be the guy with the flat tire on your way home from work.

It might be the lady with four kids at the doctor's office who's obviously struggling and in need of help. It might be the person in front of you at the checkout booth at a store. It might be the new kid at school or a lonely shut-in desiring friendship.

20 contacts with Jesus Christ during your lifetime. Wouldn't just knowing that make us more sensitive, more aware about loving people around us?

[7:05] After all, it could be our Lord. It could be him. Now, let's put away our imagination then because we want to deal in the real world.

We want to deal with reality, not the pretend world. And frankly, I find reality is even more staggering than my imaginary scenario. The real thing, what really is happening as you make your way through life is downright amazing.

Matthew 25 tells us that at the final judgment, it will be shown that there were not just 20 times, but hundreds and thousands of times in our lives when we met up with opportunities to help Christ's people.

And in that day, Jesus will tell us that what we did for the least of these his brothers, we did to him. To him.

He counts it as if he were the one who was here on earth in some sort of need that you ministered to him in love. He was the hungry one.

[8:16] He was the thirsty one, the sick one, and you loved him. Such is his union with his people, joined with them, that what is done to them is done for the Lord himself, and what is not done for them is not done to him.

Jesus is saying, when you love them, you're loving me. These two commandments belong together, loving God and loving neighbor. Here, it's the believing neighbor.

It's what we find in Hebrews 6.10. God is not unjust. He will not forget your work and the love that you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

You have shown love to God when you love his people. You remember after Jesus' resurrection, John chapter 20, Peter's denied the Lord three times, and Jesus appears to him in the 12.

What's the question on Jesus' mind? What is it that he puts to Peter? Do you love me? Do you really love me? Three times he asks, and Peter says, yes, Lord, you know I love you.

[9:36] And what's Jesus' response? Then feed my sheep. Tend my flock. Feed my lambs. Do you see it? If you love me, then tend to them.

If you love me, Peter, then love them. Serve them. Shepherd them. Now, of course, there's a special application here to Peter who was one of the apostles and had a special calling that the Lord was reaffirming for Peter.

But the principle is there for all of us, isn't it? Jesus is saying to us, if you love me, then love my people and serve them. I'm not physically there on the earth for you to visit me, to feed me, to help me, to serve me, but my people are there and whatever you do to them, I'll take as done to me. So, last week's sermon is spilling over into this week's sermon. What it means to love God is now being fleshed out and we're seeing it means loving your neighbor.

These two are connected. We have this principle illustrated in an Old Testament example. To say that David loved Jonathan is a great understatement.

[10 : 55] He really, really loved Jonathan, didn't he? Those were two that were one in spirit and there was a problem. Jonathan died. He was killed in battle.

So, what does David do about his love for Jonathan? Well, he says, are there any relatives that I could show kindness to, the unfailing love of God to, for Jonathan's sake?

And Ziba says, well, yes, there's one who's lame on both feet down in Lodibar, Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. Send for him. And he comes before David and falls at his feet and David said, don't be afraid for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father, Jonathan.

I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather, Saul, and you will always eat at my table. And so David loved him for Jonathan's sake. And Jesus says, love my people for my sake.

Love them for my sake. So God is saying to us, if you love me, love my people. And I will remember and reward it as done unto me.

[12 : 13] I say, should that not increase our sensitivity to the needs of God's people around us that we should serve and love as we are doing it as unto Christ.

Now, let's look more closely then at this second commandment in Matthew 22. Love your neighbor as yourself. The second greatest commandment is love your neighbor as yourself.

And we'll start with the last two words, as yourself. All right? What does that mean, to love your neighbor as yourself? We have so psychologized the Bible, God's very own words today, that we actually hear of Christian counselors and preachers using this command to teach that before you can learn to love your neighbor, you must learn to love yourself.

Have you heard that? So we have gaggles of professing Christians out there trying to improve in the area of loving themselves. ourselves. What's wrong with this picture?

Well, what's wrong is we don't need any help in that category. We're all doing just fine. Every single one drawing breath today is doing just fine with that.

[13 : 33] What we need help with is loving ourselves less and loving others more. Amen. And so Jesus just assumes in this statement, indeed, as he gave this command in the Old Testament, that we all are in love with ourselves.

That is the great assumption of the text. We're all in love with ourselves and I tell you that is no false assumption that Jesus is making.

I'm forever thinking about myself. I'm forever loving myself and doing what I want to do when I'm cold. I say to myself, here's a blanket. Be warm.

And when I'm hungry, I get myself something to eat. And when I'm thirsty, I find something to drink that I like. And when I'm tired, I put myself to bed and my love and my commitment to myself is strong.

It's automatic. It's quick. It's all embracing. And we're all real good at loving ourselves. So Jesus is coming to us in this commandment and he's saying to us, now learn to love others the same way that you love yourself.

[14 : 48] Love your neighbor as yourself. Think of his needs as your own. Think of his wants as yours. So, when Paul writes to the Philippians in chapter 2 and verse 4, he says, each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Look to their interests as you look to your own interests. And a few verses later, he says of Timothy, I have no one else like him.

He's one of a kind who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. Paul, why are there so few in that club who have a genuine interest in the welfare of others?

Well, he tells us because everyone looks out for his own interests. The reason Timothy is one of a kind showing interest, genuine interest in others is because everyone is so consumed with their own interests.

Philippians 2, 20 and 21. The assumption now is being spelled out plainly. Far from helping us to love others, this is part of the problem.

[16:13] We love ourselves and so we're focused in on our own interests, absorbed with ourselves, our needs, our desires.

And that causes us to be far too forgetful of others and their concerns. John Owen says that the thing that makes loving our neighbor so difficult is our self-love.

This principle of self-love which, quote, makes a man's own self, his own center, the beginning and end of all that he does.

So we love ourselves too much to be concerned about the needs of others around us. We love ourselves too much to actually forget about ourselves for a while in the overwhelming concern for my brother, this person, and therefore really minister to them.

Self is always calculating what's in it for me. What's in it for me? What will I get out of it? So I'm listening to the radio and an advertisement breaks in, trying to convince people to donate their blood.

[17:26] That's a loving thing to do, isn't it? But why should you do that? Why should anybody do that? I mean, think about it. Why should you take precious time out of your day to drive over to some center, to a blood bank, to sit there, to let them poke you with a needle and suck blood out of you for free?

Or maybe a cookie. That's a hard sell. Why should people do that? How are you going to convince people who love themselves to do that?

That's what the advertiser was up against. And so you do it with this punchline at the end of the ad. You'll feel better about yourself.

You'll feel better about yourself. love. I gave today, see? See my sticker, I gave today. I feel better about me. We're so stuck on ourselves that even our charity, even what we do for others, is made to turn on whether or not it makes me feel better about me.

You see, that's the problem. We love ourselves too much. So the third lesson that we have this morning is that true love forgets about ourselves out of genuine interest, concern for others.

[18:55] We get caught up in the desire to see them enjoying some good, having some benefit, and we pursue that to the forgetfulness of ourself for the moment.

And I ask John, when have you ever loved your neighbor as yourself, as much as you love yourself?

When have we ever been as concerned about others as we are about ourselves in that last disagreement that you had? Were you as concerned with what the other person wanted as you were with what you wanted?

When deciding what to do with my evening hours, who did I consult first? My desires or someone else's? My needs, my wants, my concerns or others?

When deciding how to spend my paycheck, what did I check in with? Me and mine or others and theirs? Young people, how often do you think about what your parents want from you when you get home from school?

[20:00] Or do you just immediately think about what I want to do tonight? It's natural, isn't it? It's automatic. it's all embracing. It's us.

Indeed, that is what sin is. It's to be stuck on ourselves. So love your neighbor as yourself. Well, that's no small thing being commanded.

The standard is much higher than you may have ever realized to love another human being as you love yourself. Maybe you're wondering now this morning, can this really be what Jesus is saying? Can you really mean that? I mean, that's pretty radical. Think of the consequences of that for a minute. Can this be for sure?

Well, let's follow him and see. Let's follow him right up that hill far away on an old rugged cross. And let's see him laying down his life so that you could live eternally.

[21:08] Let's see him suffering the curse of God for sin on himself so that you might enjoy the favor of God forever. And we come away and we say, yes, he means what he says.

Loving others. Forgetful of ourselves, our ease, our desires, our wants, and our pleasures, and putting others in front of us. So let's put away this nonsense about trying to improve in the area of loving ourselves and get on with the Christ-like business of loving our neighbor as we already love ourselves.

Now, something funny takes place when people start to feel the pinch of that commandment. And it starts clicking with them. Oh, that's what it means.

you know what they do at that point? They either surrender and confess themselves sinners and cry for mercy, or they do a lot of backpedaling. And they try to interpret the passage a little bit different, put a different twist on it.

They look for a backdoor, a way out from such demands of love. And so in Luke 10, there's another expert. There's a lot of these experts in the law, aren't there, in the gospel.

[22 : 27] These are the know-it-alls. And he hears this command from Jesus, love your neighbor as yourself. But he wanted to justify himself. That is, he wanted to come out looking good in front of that command.

So what did he do? Well, let's, who's my neighbor? You see? He'd like to define neighbor as just a few buddies that are just like him and love him.

He loves them, and so he's fine with this command. So who's my neighbor? Jesus? Remember Jesus answers in the parable of the good Samaritan.

The needy person across your path is your neighbor. No matter who it may be, stranger or not, no matter the differences between you and him, it might be as far as Samaritans and Jews difference. So this is the fourth lesson. Who are my neighbors? who am I to love according to this second greatest commandment? Well, we start with this. Husbands, your nearest neighbor is your wife.

[23 : 34] And wives, your nearest neighbor is your husband. The duty of loving others as yourself starts at home. It's a family commandment.

It includes parents and their love for their children and children for their parents and boys and girls for their brothers and sisters. True religion, if it's any real religion, is home religion.

It works at home. And so that's where loving neighbor begins. But then secondly, it moves on out beyond our family to the whole family of God.

The whole family of God. The brothers and sisters in Christ, fellow believers, love, what did we just see? Love shown to God's people is love shown to him.

First, John hammers home this duty to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. It's a priority. But then neighbor, thirdly, reaches beyond the people of God to all people, including the lost.

[24 : 40] Galatians 6.10 says, therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers, especially to the family of believers, not exclusively so.

So, love will reach beyond the family of God to the lost, to all people. Did you ever think that evangelism is a form of loving your neighbor as yourself?

If what I do with the gospel determines whether I live forever in hell or live forever in heaven, would I not want someone telling me about it?

And maybe just getting in my face a little bit more about it and not just being brushed off so quickly but lovingly to keep coming back at me for the love of my poor soul.

To love your neighbor as yourself is to evangelize. Yes, neighbor is reaching further than perhaps we thought of it.

[25 : 54] Home, family of God, all people, the lost. But then Jesus stretches neighbor even further. And this is what blows these experts out of the water. He includes enemies, even enemies, doesn't he?

Matthew 5, you remember in the Sermon on the Mount, these scribes Pharisees, these experts had so shrunk and restricted the meaning of neighbor. Who is neighbor?

Who do I have, who am I duty bound to love as I love myself? They had so shrunk the meaning that they put the bar down real low so that it was an easy thing to love your neighbor.

Because it's the good guys, it's the guys that love me and I love them and we have all these things in common so they're my neighbor and I can handle that, I can manage that and justify myself in front of this command.

And so Jesus, the only law giver, corrects their perversion of his law and he says in Matthew 5, 43, you have heard that it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

[27 : 02] Now that's not found in the word of God, that's the perversion of the religious leaders of Israel. They so described neighbor as to exclude enemies.

love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your father in heaven.

Haven't you noticed that his son shines on the fields of the unrighteous as well as the fields of the righteous? And haven't you noticed that he causes the rain to fall on their fields as well as yours? Now you be like your father in heaven. Love your enemies. Yes, loving your neighbor involves neighbors who are enemies in our lives.

And do more than the pagans and tax collectors, Jesus says, who only love those who love them. So how do you love an enemy? Jesus tells them by meeting their needs, by praying for those who persecute you.

[28:11] There's two good examples of ways to love your enemy. Do good to them. It's what Paul says, if your enemy's hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him something to drink.

Meet their practical needs. And Jesus says, pray for them. I think this praying for people has got to be one of the most underrated forms of love on the planet.

It is a and it applies not just to enemies. It applies to the lost, to your family, to the family of God. Are you kidding me?

That you would actually go before the one who sits on the throne of the universe that controls everything that concerns me and you would mention my worthless name before that throne?

Oh, that's love. Thank you for praying for me. Pray for your enemies. That's one way to love people. You love them with your prayers.

[29:10] You plead with God those best gifts that only heaven can give to people. So loving your neighbor as yourself means family, family of God, all people, even enemies.

Well, there's no way around it, you see. There is no back door, no way out from the demands of love. The fifth lesson is what does loving your neighbor as yourself look like then?

How can I know how I'm doing with this second greatest commandment? Well, the Bible doesn't leave us with generalities. It gets very specific, doesn't it? Like praying for them, like doing good to them.

Those are very specific. Feeding, clothing, and so on. But I'd like for us to think of the Bible's answer to this question. What does loving your neighbor look like? Through four different lenses. Let's look at this in four different ways. They're all excellent ways, and we should be doing each of them. First of all, you can turn to first, and I don't want you to do so now, but you could, and I would encourage it this week, you could turn to 1 Corinthians 13.

[30:17] That's a love chapter, isn't it? We call it that because it's all about love. And what you would find as you read 1 Corinthians 13, you would find what love is and what love is not.

It is patient and kind, it is not proud and rude and self-seeking and so on. And you would also find what it does do and what it doesn't do. It rejoices with the truth, always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres.

It doesn't boast. It doesn't keep records of wrong, it never fails. So that chapter yields much fruit in this question of what does love look like?

Memorize those verses in 1 Corinthians 13. But a second way to answer the question is to study God's commandments. Study God's commandments, those having to do with people, and there's lots of them.

Remember, all the laws and commands hang on to commands. Love God, love your neighbor.

There's a whole lot of commandments hanging on loving your neighbor. Study them, and in studying the commands of God, you are studying what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

[31:30] So in Romans 13 through 9, Paul quotes some of the Ten Commandments and says, and whatever other commandment there may be, they are summed up in this one rule, love your neighbor as yourself.

So whatever the commands are, they're summed up by loving neighbor as self. So they're commentary on what it means to love your neighbor. So when you're studying the commandments, you're having love exegeted.

You're having love explained and applied in the nitty-gritty of give and take of real life. Study God's commandments. And Paul goes on to say in Romans 13, 10, love does no wrong to its neighbor. Love does no wrong to his neighbor. It doesn't take his life, the sixth commandment. It doesn't take his wife, the seventh commandment.

It doesn't take his things, the eighth commandment. It doesn't take away his good name, the ninth commandment. And it doesn't even covet what he has, the tenth commandment.

[32:44] He's rather rejoicing that he has those things. And he's happy for him that he has them. You see how love is the fulfilling of the law.

That's what Paul says. So study 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, study all the commands of God having to do with people. And then thirdly, run to the golden rule.

Run to the golden rule. And it'll show you what love looks like in everyday situations. Matthew 6, 12, so in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.

For this sums up the law and the prophets. It's really another way of saying love your neighbor as yourself. This is another way to look at that.

It will lead us to the same conclusion. But it's a little bit different way to look at the question. The golden rule now.

[33:43] Now this requires a little bit of imagination. imagination. I'd say using the golden rule requires some imagination. You've got to think outside of the box of yourself.

And that's our biggest problem. That's why the golden rule doesn't get applied very often because we're always thinking of me and mine. But in order to apply the golden rule you've got to think out of that box. You've got to step outside and you've got to put yourself in the other person's shoes and think about them from their perspective.

it. And things do look differently don't they outside the box over here than they do from in here.

The golden rule forces that upon you because you are supposed to think about what you would like to have done unto you in this situation. Think about that.

Imagine that. If I was in this situation how would I like to be treated and then go and do likewise. So let's try it. Your wife introduced the bumper of her car to another car in the parking lot at the mall and the result was damage and dollars and you're a bit hot under the collar and the costs and all and the inconvenience of fixing it and you're ready to read a mild form of the riot act to her.

[35:07] Okay. But then you step outside the box for a minute and you think what if that was me and I had just wrecked our car.

How would I like to be treated? I don't know about you but when I mess up I appreciate people cutting me some slack. I appreciate experiencing mercy.

Then go and do likewise. Go and do likewise. That's what the golden rule teaches us. Put yourself in their shoes and do what you would want done to yourself.

That's loving others as you love yourself. I don't know if churches do this anymore. I suppose some do and I'm not saying it's a bad idea.

They have missionary cupboards or missionary barrels. They're called different things where things are collected to send to the missionary. That can be an eye opening experience.

[36:12] I remember hearing once of the collection of old tea bags. Yes, that's what I mean, old tea bags. You heat up your water, you drop the tea bag in, you wait for three minutes for it to seep there and then you take it out and you squeeze it.

But you know there's still some flavor left in that tea bag. So we won't throw it away. We'll take it to church and send it to our missionary. Can you imagine the excitement of missionaries receiving the barrel on some foreign field?

Madge, come quick, look. What is it, Irv? Well, they're used tea bags from home. Quick, put the pot on, let's heat up some water. I wonder whose mug this was floating in before.

somehow it doesn't seem to rise to the standard of loving others as we love ourselves. When you shop for tea for you, do you ask the grocer for the used tea bags?

No, you want the ones fresh from the pack. Now love your neighbor as yourself. Ask yourself, get out, somebody needs to step out of the box and say, what would I want if I was a missionary on the field?

[37:27] Well, the applications are endless. That's why Jesus says, so in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.

So the golden rule will help us in seeing what love looks like. But then lastly, fourthly, you can read in God incarnate what this love looks like.

God incarnate. God is love, the Bible says. And he came up close to us in Jesus Christ that we might see what love looks like.

Jesus was love incarnate. He was love in our skin. And to follow him around in the four gospels is to watch love in action.

It's to see Jesus loving people. It's to see what it means to love your neighbor as yourself. And Peter was with him those three years of ministry.

[38:29] And he summarizes all of those three years of ministry in this way when he's talking to Cornelius' household. He says he went about doing good. And that sums it up.

That's what love is. It's so interested in the concerns of others that we go about doing other people good. God. And that was Jesus wasn't it?

Wherever he went he left behind a trail of good deeds. He left behind people who were better off for having met him.

So there's Nicodemus that self-righteous Pharisee. Boy was he better off for that midnight conversation with Jesus. Or that woman at the well who had some words with Jesus.

Jesus. She went home thanking God for that encounter. The grieving widow in name going out to bury her only son.

[39:29] Blind men, lame men, lepers, the lost, the lonely, the sick, the poor, the hungry, the downtrodden, the vile tax collectors. Even his own disciples who were so slow to believe, so proud, Jesus loved them.

And we get to read that in the Gospels. We get to be a little mouse in the pocket of one of the disciples and follow Jesus around and see what love in our skin looks like.

And then go and do likewise. So the folks that live next to you are to be better off for having you as their neighbor. And your parents are to be better off for having you as their son or their daughter.

And the students in your class and the teachers and the coaches and the person with the locker next to you is to be better off for their contact with you. Who's better off?

Are there even some enemies of yours that are better off because they've received kindnesses in return? Kind words? Who's benefiting from your loving acts?

[40:45] Oh, give me a faithful heart, likeness to thee, that each departing day henceforth may see some work of love begun, some deed of kindness done, some wonderer sought and won something for thee.

And you see, the Lord Jesus is not only our example to show us what love looks like. He's the one who lives inside of His people by His Spirit so that we can bear this kind of love to the world.

The only thing that is stronger than my self-love is God's love. And when Jesus comes to live inside of me, I have God's love in me.

and it starts teaching me and it starts rebuking me and it starts correcting me and training me to love others, starting in the home, the family of God, all people, even enemies.

It's Christ in you, His power, His love oozing forth into the world. love. So there's four different ways to learn what love looks like.

[42:10] They're all equally biblical in the sense that we find them in our Bibles, use them all, but make sure you get to the fourth, make sure you get to Christ, make sure you follow Him around, because all virtue flows from Him.

And the Bible says that as we behold Him and we contemplate Him, that something happens, that we are being transformed into His likeness from one stage of glory to another.

And that's what we get to do with our Bibles and Jesus. It was Jesus last night with His disciples before His arrest and crucifixion, love.

And He had a lot to tell them before He left them, but you know, He said a lot about love that night. In John 13, verses 34 and 35, He told them, a new command I give you, love one another, as I have loved you, so you must love one another.

By this, all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. You see, love was the distinguishing mark of the Savior's life.

[43:25] love, and He says that this is no less the identifying feature, the identifying mark of all who are His disciples. The world will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

You'll have this likeness to me that will cause people to make the connection between you and me. By this, all men will know that you're my disciples. This forgetfulness of self to minister to the needs of others.

So all men knew the disciples of Adolf Hitler by the swastika. And all men know who are the followers of the Amish religion by the distinctive garb and the buggies that they drive.

And all men know the disciples of Jesus Christ because they love one another. They love one another. And they say, where have we seen this kind of love before?

I've seen it somewhere. Oh, that's right. It was like we saw it in Jesus of Nazareth. These folk must belong to him. How visible is your resemblance to Jesus life and love?

[44 : 37] What is it that defines you? When people hear your name, what's the first thing in their minds? He loves people. She loves people.

By this, all men will know that you're my disciples, that you love one another. I say we need to follow Jesus around and meditate upon him in the Gospels.

And what we see as we follow him is him loving people. And yes, that's an example to us. And yes, by his spirit, that is our power to love others in that way.

But thirdly, when we see Jesus going around loving people perfectly, he is fulfilling all righteousness so that he might have a righteousness to give to me.

You see, we come to a passage, passages like we've read this morning. They're, they're hard shooting passages. I mean, the passage we read in Matthew 25 just simply says if you don't love God's people, you're not a Christian.

[45 : 48] It's just as plain as that. You're going to hell. And we read these things to love others as ourselves and as Christ. And what do we do when we start to feel the pinch again?

Well, we either come and cry mercy or we start backpedaling and try to justify ourselves and to find a way out. Well, there's no reason to find a way out.

Jesus is the way in. Jesus is the answer to our problems. You see, he perfectly loved everybody in his life that he might have a life of no sin to put to our account when we trust in him.

So there's Jesus going around and, oh, look at them now, smashing the crown of thorns into his skull. If he just cursed them once, I wouldn't have a savior.

If he didn't love his enemies, then I wouldn't have a savior. What do we need to get into heaven? We need righteousness. We need somebody to have made it through this life beginning to end without sin.

[46 : 52] And in the gospels, we're seeing Jesus slugging it out, loving his neighbor as himself, that he might then have a righteousness to give to me when I come and say, oh, Christ, I do not love you with all my heart and I do not love my neighbor as myself.

Have mercy on me. And he does what? He puts all my sins onto his account and he places all his righteousness, all his loving neighbors onto my account so that God sees me as righteous before him.

That's the gospel. That's the good news. And so if we feel the pinch of the law, this second great commandment, let's realize that Jesus has fulfilled all righteousness by perfectly loving neighbor that we might flee to him and be saved.

Look to Christ. Calvin says, by faith, the godly live by what they find in Christ rather than by what they find in themselves.

Don't know what you found in yourself this morning. I know what I found, but I like what I find in Jesus. Let's turn to him in prayer. Lord, these are your words.

[48 : 08] You are the only lawgiver, and you're the one who has commanded what is absolutely reasonable and right to command from us. And we confess, Lord, it is our sin that we do not love you by loving people, and that we love ourselves far more than we've ever loved anyone.

So please forgive us of our sins. and cover us with your blood and righteousness and free us from our sins and fill us with your own spirit that oozing out of the pores of our mouth and our hands and our pocketbooks and our daytimers might be the love of Christ for people.

We ask it to his praise that people might see that we're his disciples and come to know him. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.