

ALL WE NEED IS LOVE**Matthew 22:34-40**

Intro: In 1965 Jackie DeShannon sang, *What the World Needs Now Is Love Sweet Love*. And it was true. Two years later Beatles, John Lennon and Paul McCartney (but mostly Lennon) hurriedly wrote a song for Britain's contribution to the first live global television link in June of 1967. The pair pondered the idea of what the world needed to hear, and they decided that the entire world needed love. It was simple. It began.

Love, love, love

Love, love, love

Love, love, love

And ends with

All you need is love

All you need is love

All you need is love, love

Love is all you need

And that's about it. Although, truth be told, there are a couple verses of banal and empty lyrics in between a repetitive,

Love, love, love,

All you need is love

Love is all you need.

The lyrics were true as far as they went and certainly in the ears of the world. Lennon certainly believed in the power of love. In fact he thought that it was more powerful than God, because he apparently didn't believe in God. It was his loss since he didn't understand that God is the one who makes real love possible. 58 years after that international broadcast, the need is still here and the world is still waiting.

Jesus said something about this in our text for this morning. Listen,

(Read Matthew 22:34-40)

This interchange is recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke and they are extremely similar. In this particular account the religious leaders were trying to catch Jesus in some kind of trick so that they could put him out of business. It seems that it had become a bit of a competition between the Pharisees and the Sadducees and teachers of the law, referred to in the ESV as lawyers. A few verses prior to this Jesus handed the Sadducees their lunch in his response to their trick question. Seeing this Pharisees step up with their attempt as they push one of their members to him with the question, "*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?*" Matthew 22:36

They were attempting to make him choose sides in a big debate that was going on at the time. This debate was "Which is the most important law in the Ten Commandments? They knew that if Jesus chose a side, somebody had to get mad at him and this could chip away at his incredible popularity. It was pretty ingenious, but Jesus was smarter than that – and he had the truth. He didn't even go with the Ten Commandments. Instead he went with Deuteronomy. *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.* Deuteronomy 6:4. This, with the authority that only God the Son could claim, he pronounced *This is the great and first commandment.* Matthew 22:38. But he wasn't finished, he went on with another commandment from Leviticus (Leviticus 19:18) *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* Matthew 22:39b. He wasn't even quoting from the Ten Commandments, but he told them with great authority that *On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.* Matthew 22:40

And they couldn't argue with it. They really wanted to but they couldn't.

We can't argue with it either. In fact, I can't preach this enough. Ron Sprunger often talks about a pastor that he knew over near Youngstown who was known as the Love Pastor – because his soul sermon topic was love. And his church thrived, and people's lives were blessed. But I'm talking about more than that, I'm talking about how hate has taken over so much of our culture's discourse. We need love and it needs to start with the people of God. Yes, that's us.

We need the reminder

- The Church, which should be taking the lead on this is failing at it. Too many people who call themselves Christians are failing at having the kind of love that Jesus not only exemplified, but also required of his people.
- And lest you think that my nose is too high in the air, and I have this all sewed up, I agree with Suzanne de Dietrich, who asks, "*Who of us loves God with all of his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, that is with his whole being? Who of us does not secretly love himself more than he loves his neighbor? Thus, the law, when reduced to these two commandments is more than ever our condemnation. It shuts us up to the mercy of God, to a life entirely renewed, which only his Spirit can create in us. It is the Pharisees' refusal to confess their bankruptcy and impotence which shuts them up to an awkward silence.*" They simply had no response. They were experts in the law, and they preached it, but they didn't practice it. We are the followers of the very same Jesus who set the Pharisees straight and yet we are guilty of the same hypocrisy.

We need to practice what we preach

- Yes, we need to look at ourselves. There are no excuses.
- In the Luke 10 passage that records the same account, the questioner, a lawyer as in Matthew, tries to justify himself by then asking *Who is my neighbor?* And Jesus replies with the parable of The Good Samaritan. We are very familiar with this, but let me just refresh our memories a little bit. It is, of course, the account where a Jewish man has been robbed and beaten by bandits and left naked in the ditch along the road. Two very religious men come walking by and ignore him because they're afraid of the bandits that already did this to this poor guy, and probably they just don't want to get involved. They were only concerned about themselves. Then along comes a Samaritan. Samaritans were the traditional enemies of the Jews, and he did everything he could to care for this injured Jewish man and restore him to health.
- F. B. Meyer commenting on the Luke passage writes, "*Notice how the master answered the inquiry, 'Who is my neighbor?' He said in effect: the question is not, who will neighbor you? But whom will you neighbor? You ought to ask, who wants my help? Neighborhood consists, not in what you receive, but in what you give. It is independent of race, creed, and the ordinary sentiment of pity. Love overleaps all these distinctions and risks its very life in order to render help. In fact, this parable is a very poem of love. It is to be compared to first Corinthians 13*". Meyer goes on to comment our text for this morning, with the fact that Jesus implies, "*Here is the scripture in a nutshell, the whole range of human duty in a portable pocket form.*"
- Truly . . .

All we need is love

- It's interesting that the parallel Mark passage (Mark 12:28-34) has a slightly different take. For one thing, the questioner seems a little bit more sincere and seems to be really looking for truth. And Jesus's response has the word strength added to say, . . . *you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength* Mark 12:30.
- Our lesson in love begins with loving God with all we have.
 - The heart stands for our emotions. I have a heart up on the screen as our background and we put heart emoji's on texts that we send to our beloved.
 - The soul stands for our will and who we are.
 - The mind is for our intellect
 - And strength is for the energy it takes to love.

We can't feel love sometimes but we power through on the intensity of the fact that love is actually an action more than a feeling. I tell couples who come to me for premarital counseling that marriage is work because love is work. But it's good work. But there are times when we think our marriage is over because we don't have a feeling of love, and that's when the strength of love powers us through to a greater plane of love.

- But as I already mentioned, these same religious leaders who were trying to catch Jesus with a trick question would have quoted what the Jews knew as The Shema every morning, *Here, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.* Deuteronomy 6:4-5. And with Jesus's words here he was reminding them of what they

had completely neglected to do. It was just rote for them. They weren't thinking about the very words they could repeat with half their brain tied behind their back.

- The trick question was turned back on them and they knew it. G. Campbell Morgan writes *“It was the king's revolution of his understanding of the meaning of the law. What is law? Relation to God, expressed toward the neighbor. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. The second is like it, kin to it, belonging to it, the outward expression of it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. John afterwards wrote about love, and unfolded this great philosophy of Jesus Christ, teaching us that if a man say he love his brother, and leave him hungry, he is a liar. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and now shall love thy neighbor as thyself. The principal and law is love.”*
- Morgan was taking a little license with that passage from 1 John 4, but what he does say there is *If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.* 1 John 4:2-21. The powerful wording is still there – all we need is love, and if we're not loving, we're missing the calling of the followers of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion: Let me wrap this up with John's words earlier in 1 John 4: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation (which means the turning away of punishment) for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.* 1 John 4:7-12.

It's got to start with us – even if no one joins us, it's still true that all we need is love. Amen.