

⁵ You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning;
⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

¹³ Turn, O LORD! How long? Have compassion on your servants!

¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad
all our days.

¹⁵ Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil.

¹⁶ Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.

¹⁷ Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands—
O prosper the work of our hands!

Matthew 22:34-46

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷ He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴² “What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” ⁴³ He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴ ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet”’?”

⁴⁵ If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” ⁴⁶ No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Special Music

All Creatures of Our God and King

Chris Harris and Lynne Walker

Weekly & Arganbright

[Video - <https://youtu.be/vgOt3vj-fu8>]

Sermon

“Good Question”

Isidor Isaac Rabi, a Nobel Prize winner in Physics and one of the developers of the atomic bomb, was once asked how he became a scientist. Rabi replied that every day after school his mother would talk to him about his school day. She wasn't so much interested in what he had learned that day, but how he conducted himself in his studies. She always inquired, "Did you ask a good question today?" "Asking good questions," Rabi said, "made me become a scientist."

So, have you asked any good questions lately? Questions are an important part of life, and all of us live with questions of faith. What should I do? How should I live? What is God up to in the world, and in my life? Questions can lead to learning, or scoffing. Questions can lead to change, or stagnation. It all depends on the question.

Once again today's Scripture begins with a question. Many of the religious leader have been coming at Jesus with questions that were meant to entrap him. Now it is a lawyer, a religious legal expert, who comes with a question. "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Matthew notes that it was meant to test Jesus, but not necessarily to trap him, because this kind of questioning was quiet common among the theological schools of ancient Israel. There were so many commandments (613 to be exact) that people naturally tried to find a way to summarize them, order them, or prioritize them. And by knowing Jesus' answer they could button-down his theology and practice, and use it to dismiss him or support him.

Whatever the reason for asking it, the lawyer asked a good question, a real good question. And without flinching Jesus had an answer for him, and for us. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it- You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

That's it in a nutshell. Love God, love your neighbor. That is the key that unlocks the door of the kingdom. That is the hinge on which everything else in the Scripture rests. Now that is pretty radical stuff. If you think about it, it gives a very profound spin on every other statement or command. "You shall have no other God before me." Love God, plain and simple. "Do not take the name of the Lord in vain." Why? Out of love for God. "Keep the Sabbath" Set aside a day for sharing the love of God. "Honor your mother and father, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not covet." Why? Because we are to love - our neighbor.

All the Bible, all the rules, all the stories, all the prophecies, all the theology is seen in a new light when you begin with love. The word of God, the whole history of the people of God, is the story of Love. It is the story of the promise of love, the failure to love, the hope of love, and the victory of love.

It is all so simple, isn't it? And yet, it is so hard. Jesus gave us this summary, not because it was so obvious to us, but because it so often alludes us. And even when we think we've got it, living it is another thing all together. At least, if we are honest with ourselves it is.

We say we love God, but when was the last time you pursued that love with a passion? When was the last time you hungered for God's presence as the Psalmist said "as a deer pants for flowing streams, so longs my soul for you, O God. (Psalm 42:1) My soul thirsts for you... as in a dry and weary land where there is no water?" (Psalm 63:1) Have you spent time in prayer, every day? Have you read the Bible, cover to cover, more than once? Have you ever gone away on a spiritual retreat, just to spend time with God?

Now add to that the other side of Christ's command. How are we at loving others? We may find ourselves with lots of friends, with a good, loving relationship among those who are for us. But what happens when they fail us, or annoy the bigemini's out of us, how well do we love then? And how do you love those who are not so lovable? How do you love drug addicts - or drug pushers? How do you love abusers and cheats, How do you love power mongers and liars. How do you love all those people with different values and lifestyles and politics? Not so easy, is it?

So how are we to take Jesus' command seriously? How can we truly love God and our neighbor? Good question. First of all we need to remember that it is possible only by the grace of God. Only as we experience God's love can we love in return. We have to be open to a love that is so profound and deep and different that it radically transforms us. And secondly we need to remember that these two commands are not separate commands - they are one. They are two sides to the same coin. As John, the Apostle of love, has explained to us - "We love, because God loved us first. But if we say we love God and don't love each other, we are liars; for those who do not love their brother or sister, who can be seen, cannot love God, who cannot be seen. And the commandment God has given us is this: "Whoever loves God must love one another also." (1 John 4:19-21)

So how do we love? How do we so devotedly love God, and so fully love our neighbor? Well the first thing we need to consider is what this love is. And it is not the positive warm feelings that may arise, on occasion, in our hearts. This love is agape love. It is a full-out commitment rather than a comforting feeling. It trusts God even when we are frightened. It reveres God with honesty and openness. It honors God with a growing faithfulness and service. This kind of love takes God seriously, and seeks to live fully for God. And it's counterpart, loving others, finds equal expression in respect and trust, honesty and openness, faithfulness and service. It is a love that reflects the love God has for us, and it reflects the commitment and character of Christ.

So what then does this love really look like? That is a fair question. And one that can only be answered with real life. And so I share with you this story from young man named Jim- in his own words.

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, "Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd." I had great a weekend planned - parties and a football game with my friends the following afternoon, so I shrugged my shoulders and went on.

As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward Kyle. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye. As I handed him his glasses, I said, "Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives." He looked at me and said, "Hey thanks!" There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude.

I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. Before then, I would never have hung out with a private school kid. We talked all the way home, and I carried some of his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play a little football with my friends. He said yes. We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same of him.

Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, "Boy, you're gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!" He just laughed and handed me half the books.

Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor, and I was going for business on a football scholarship.

Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. And now he had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak. Graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than I had and all the girls loved him. Boy, sometimes I was jealous.

Today was one of those days. I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, "Hey, big guy, you'll be great!" He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. "Thanks," he said. As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began. "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach... but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story."

I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. "Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable." I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his Mom and Dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize it's depth.

Jim goes on to say, “Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life, for better or for worse. God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way. Look for God in others.”

That was one young man’s conclusion. “God puts us all in each other’s lives to impact one another in some way.” Jesus would have said “this is the greatest commandment. Love God with all your heart, and soul, and mind. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Any questions? Amen.

***Hymn**

Help Us Accept Each Other
Fred Kaan

Chris Harris

[Video - https://youtu.be/8-f9q_SPskI]

1. Help us accept each other
as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother,
each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us
and bring us to believe:
we are ourselves accepted
and meant to love and live.

2. Teach us, O Lord, your lessons,
as in our daily life
we struggle to be human
and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people,
for all - not just for some,
to love them as we find them
or as they may become.

3. Let your acceptance change us
so that we may be moved
in living situations
to do the truth in love;
to practice your acceptance
until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness
and laughter's healing art.

4. Lord, for today's encounters
with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance,
for justice and for bread,
we need new eyes for seeing,
new hands for holding on:
renew us with your Spirit;
Lord, free us, make us one!

Joys and Concerns

As you meet with God in prayer, please lift up the joys and concerns shared through the Trumpet Blast. God is eager to be your help and strength, to listen to you and meet your needs. Prayer is a gift we can always use.

Prayers of the People

Great God, we are awed and humbled by your great love for us. We rejoice that you created us in your image for the purpose of love. We thank you for Jesus Christ, who came in love to restore our bond with you and one another. We thank you your Spirit who teaches us and

guides us into the loving people you intend for us to be. O God, love is not easy, and we fail so often. And so we turn to you now seeking your guidance and strength to follow your holy way.

And so, we pray for your church and for this congregation. Open our hearts to the presence of your unfailing love, deepen us in our commitment to your way of love, and give us the wisdom to know how to make your love real here among ourselves and among the world

We pray for all who lead the peoples of this world. Grant them genuine compassion and committed faithfulness, that they may serve your loving purpose in establishing peace and justice among the nations. And we pray for all who are in need today. Grant your strength to the suffering and oppressed, your hope to the laboring and the disheartened, and your guidance to the struggling and the lost. Extend also your healing to the ill, your comfort to the sorrowful, and your aid to the needy. And grant that we, who know your unfailing love, may be empowered to become your hands and feet of love to all our neighbors, whatever their need.

We thank you, Gracious God, for the many gifts of love you have granted to your people gathered here. We thank you for ____, and we ask your continued care for ____, and for all those prayers that remain on our hearts.

We praise you, O God, for your faithfulness, your love and your abiding presence in our lives, through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer (sins)

Choral Response [Video - https://youtu.be/lAivVHv_mbc]

Offering

God has blessed us with the bounty of earth, the joy of love and the strength of faith. God has summoned us as his servants, entrusting us with the message of God's love, and the labors of his kingdom. With grateful hearts we dedicate our offerings to that holy purpose. Let us pray.

Giver of all good gifts, we seek to give as you have given to us. We want to live out the love Christ, within our congregation and with all whom our lives touch. Here we rededicate ourselves with this offering. Use them and us in ways that will bring honor and glory to Christ, and peace to this world. Amen.

Doxology [Video - <https://youtu.be/5I7PEGUPAXQ>]

***Common Commission**

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the

weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

***Benediction**

Go now into the world,

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow
for each other and for all people...

May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be pure and holy
in the presence of our God and Father. 1 Thes 3:12-13 NIV adj

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, Amen.

Postlude

Plenty Good Room
Donald Moore

Lynne Walker

[Video - <https://youtu.be/eLESG3ehKsQ>]