

“Know Christ, Know Love; No Christ, No Love” (Matthew 22:34-46)

For Your Life in Christ the Week of the Nineteenth Sunday after
Pentecost, October 23rd, 2011
Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)
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Introduction: Another test, another trap.

- A. Wave after wave of attacks had been unleashed on Jesus.
 1. 21:23, Sadducees and Pharisees as the Sanhedrin.
 2. 22:16, disciples of the Pharisees.
 3. 22:23, just the Sadducees.
 4. And now 22:34, just the Pharisees.
- B. Again a reminder to us who share the same sinful nature as the Sadducees, Pharisees, and their disciples. We must ask daily, “How are we questioning the Lord, trying to trap the Lord, and trying to test or tempt the Lord so that we can avoid His Word and His authority in our lives?”
- C. Let me just put it plainly: it’s as if the message the past several Sundays is “everyone hates Jesus!” Don’t be surprised therefore that anyone who treats following Jesus seriously will be in for it. Guaranteed. Join the club, misery loves company! In truth, however, we have a vital ministry to also encourage one another. I had a professor in seminary that ended his lectures saying, “Doesn’t Lutheranism get you down?” He was being sarcastic as he was reminding us to never rely on ourselves; what he really meant is that when you consider the flesh, the sinful nature, it is all despair and even hatred for God; but in the spirit, we know Jesus for who He really is and in and through Him we love and we learn how to live, but I’m getting ahead of myself.
- D. Here in our Gospel today the Pharisees were delighted that the Sadducees were put down by Christ, and now it would be a great bragging right if they could succeed where the Sadducees had failed.
- E. Their plan was simple:

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1. Have their representative expert in the Law of God ask Jesus what the greatest commandment was.
2. Jesus’ answer would be doomed for controversy. Why? Because the Pharisees had 613 laws: 248 affirmative laws corresponding to the parts of the human body and 365 negative laws corresponding to the days of the year for a total of 613 which was the number of Hebrew letters in the Ten Commandments.
3. In other words, once Jesus answered the question as to what the greatest commandment was, he would be pitting one commandment over 612 other commandments! It would be easy to criticize Him at that point and the Pharisees would make the most of their trap to accuse Jesus.
4. But the plan blew up in their faces! Jesus’ answer was so powerful that the expert in the Law appeared to begin to follow Jesus! In Mark’s parallel to Matthew (Mark 12:28-34), the expert in the Law was so caught off guard by Jesus’ answer that he ended up agreeing with Jesus and Jesus ends up complimenting him by saying, **“You are not far from the kingdom of God (Mark 12:34).”**

Part I: What Was Jesus’ Powerful Answer?

- A. Jesus did not hesitate to answer the question about the greatest commandment!

Matthew 22:37: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

1. All your HEART = Thought and will/Your COMMITMENT.
 2. All your SOUL = Sentiment and passion/Your DESIRE.
 3. All your MIND = Reason and intellect/Your THOUGHTS.
- B. Jesus presented that law upon which all other laws hung!

Romans 13:10: “...love is the fulfilling of the law.”

- C. But you can’t stop there. You see it’s easy to theorize how much we love God. We can sit in our chair in isolation and

think about how much our heart bubbles over with love for God, but the Lord isn't impressed with that, so He gives the second greatest commandment **which is inseparable from the first:**

Matthew 22:39: "And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

- D. You know the saying, "the proof is in the pudding"? Jesus is teaching that if someone really loves God, then they MUST love their neighbor. That's how you know.
1. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), love for God is demonstrated by love for neighbor.
 2. In Galatians 5:14 Paul says the whole law is summarized in one word, **"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"**
 3. James teaches the same thing in James 2:8.
 4. John is crystal clear:

1st John 3:17: "But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"

Part II: But Our Problem Is Obvious...

- A. These greatest commandments also overwhelm us in showing our sin. How we qualify our love! How we excuse ourselves when we withhold it! We have failed and we are guilty!
- B. As clear and as great as these laws are, when we approach them with any effort to justify ourselves, then we become like the Pharisees, we must be overwhelmed by the truth and we must shut our mouths. We must not love God very much at all, because just look at how we treat our neighbors!

Part III: So Jesus Is Merciful...He asks a Question too!

- A. It is amazing to note that this conversation we're studying here in Matthew 22 is the Tuesday of Holy Week. In a few days Jesus is going to be killed through the accusation of the people He was talking to in this scene.

- B. Why was Jesus talking to them? Because He loved them. He had one last chance to turn their hearts. The next time Jesus would see them would be in His trial that would lead to His crucifixion. Jesus knew it, but He didn't stop loving them. He didn't stop trying. How would Jesus possibly get through?
Answer: ***It had to be made plain to them who He was and if they would come to know that they would also learn how these great commandments are fulfilled and experienced!***
- C. The great error of the Pharisees is that they did not confess who Messiah really was.
- D. Jesus took them to Psalm 110:1:
Psalm 110:1: "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'"
- E. Then Jesus asks them that if Jesus is merely King David's son as the Pharisees maintained, then why does King David also call Jesus his **Adonai, his future almighty Lord?!**

Conclusion: When Christ The Lord Came He Brought Love:

- A. He loved the Father God. He fulfilled the Greatest Commandment.
- B. He loved all of God's creation, every single one of us! He fulfilled the Second Greatest Commandment.
- C. But even more when this love of God in the Messiah/Christ is yours (and it is) through His life, death, and resurrection for you, His love changes you!
- D. Being united to Christ through His love poured out through Word and Sacrament, filled with His Spirit, you now love because He first loved you (1st John 4:19).
- E. When you know how much you are freely loved by Christ, it becomes a new desire, a new constant goal and pursuit not because you must, but because you get to: "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...[and] love your neighbor as yourself." For one reason: you are loved by Jesus, the Son of David according to His humanity, **and** the Son of God according to His divinity.