

A GREAT COMMANDMENT FOR THE NEW YEAR

(Matthew 22:34-38)

...This Tuesday will usher in a brand new year, 2008. Often people enter a new year making all sorts of resolutions involving changes to be made. Often these include weight loss, money spending habits, and exercise. Yet, there something far greater than any of those.

...Last Sunday we considered how our God is not only the greatest LOVER, but also the greatest GIVER of all. Each one of us must appropriately respond to God's love, by loving Him supremely. We are to love the Giver, and not the gifts!!

...Jesus was in His final days of ministry when he was asked a number of questions in hopes of trapping Him. His answer to the third and last question provides us with what ought to be the whole substance of our lives.

THREE QUESTIONS HELPING US TO OBEY THE GREATEST IMPERATIVE OF LIFE. So that we might give ourselves to this in the New Year.

I. What Is The Greatest Commandment of Life? (vv. 34—37a)

- A. It was not: "the golden rule," "to your own self be true," "keep the law."
- B. Rather, it was "love the Lord your God." (v. 37a) A future tense used as a command.
 - 1. This was not new to the Jews...Deut. 6:5 ...
 - 2. The Pharisees formulated 613 oral laws based upon the 10 Commandments. They spent great deal of time debating which one was most important. (365 negative/248 positive) Since the Law had 613 letters, they developed 613 oral laws explaining it.
 - 3. Jesus' reply cut to the heart of the issue and summarized all of life. He called for a willful, personal choice to Love the Lord.
- C. There are many things in life that call for your love, you must resist these so you can love Him. ...the love money, the love of pleasure, the love things, the love of self and the love of the world all compete for your love. If you fill your heart with these, you will have no room for Him.

II. How Are We To Love The Lord Our God? (v. 37b)

...In a word, we are to love Him with the totality of our being. For God's wholehearted love for us must not be answered in a half-hearted way. Jesus unfolds the manner of this love:

- A. We are to love God with "all our hearts."
...this refers to the center of our being. It is where our thoughts, words, and deeds originate.
...Others call this the "seat and center of the inner life." (Proverbs 4:23)
- B. We are to love God with "all our souls." The word "soul" has a variety of meanings, here it probably refers to our feelings and emotions.
- C. We are to love the Lord with "all our minds." This refers to our thinking, to our intellectual life. It also refers to our attitude and disposition.

...In summary, we are to love the Lord with all of the faculties with which God has endowed us.

III. What Are Some Practical Ways To Measure Our Love For The Lord?

...in a word...the person who truly loves the Lord with all his being is the one who trusts and obeys Him.

...Such a person demonstrates his love by:

- A. By meditating on God's glory. (Psalm 18:1-3) "I love you Lord...my rock, refuge, fortress..."
- B. By trusting in His power. (Psalm 31:23) "Love the Lord...He preserves the faithful..."
- C. By seeking daily fellowship with God. (Psalm 63:1-8) "earnestly I seek You..."
- D. By loving God's Law. (Psalm 119:165) "great peace have they who love your law..."
- E. By being sensitive to how God feels. (Psalm 69:9) "zeal for your house consumes me..."
- F. By loving what God loves. (Psalm 119:72) "The law from your mouth is more precious..."
- G. By hating what God hates. (Psalm 97:10) "let those who love the Lord hate evil."
- H. By grieving over sin. (Matthew 26:75) "Peter...went outside and wept bitterly..."
- I. By rejecting the world. (1 John 2:15) "Do not love the world or anything in the world..."
- J. By obeying God with all your heart. (John 14:21) "who ever obeys my commands...loves me."

...Our wonderful God loves us with a divine love of Fatherhood, so we are in turn to love Him as His devoted children in Christ Jesus. May 2008 be the year that you grow deeply in your love for the Lord our God!

LESSONS FOR OUR LIVES: