**“The King’s Answers: What Matters Most to God?”**

**Matt. 22:34-40**

**(Notes based on the sermon by Pastor Steve Massey, Hayden Bible Church, 2/16/25)**

 Some people see God’s laws as just a collection of rules. (Q1) They get to pick and choose which of those rules matter most to them. But Jesus said, when asked which commandment was the most important, that what God really wants is for us to love Him supremely, with all that we have. Where there is love toward God, there will be obedience to Him from the heart, and an outflow of love to others. Such love is the sum of God’s law.

 The three questions of the last three weeks have all been traps: they wanted an answer that would anger the Romans or an answer that would cause Jesus to lose favor with the people. Today’s question is still a test, laced with malice. The lawyer probably wanted an answer that would focus on one law so that he wouldn’t have to worry about the other 612 laws listed in the Torah. Legalism always reduces your relationship with God to a list of do’s and don’ts. But God’s grace in salvation does not diminish the importance of following the law (Matt. 5:17-19). Look closely at Jesus’ answer in Matt. 22:37. “**YOU** shall love the Lord your God with **ALL** your heart…” God wants all of you devoted to Himself. He demands a love that dominates my emotions, directs my thoughts, and energizes all I do.

 In 1970 I was on a 14-hour flight on an El Al 707 jet on my way to Israel. As the sun came up in the east, the aisles were filled with orthodox Jewish men rocking back and forth, reciting “The Shema” (Deut. 6:4-5). Jesus’ answer to the scribes was nothing new to them. William Hendriksen put it this way: “… Men should love God with all the faculties with which God has endowed him.” (Q2)

 Jesus continues in Matt. 22:39-40 by saying that “the second is like it…” Love of God and love of neighbor always travel together when they are genuine. Loving God is not some intellectual exercise… it is about putting love into action. Loving God ALWAYS has an impact on how you live life. So, examine yourself. Who/what do you love most? God showers His loyal love (hesed) on you so that it will spill over onto others. I am definitely not talking about a religious segment of your life that is disassociated from all other parts of your life. I’m not talking about theology; I am talking about a love relationship with God. There is one true God who reveals Himself through nature (Rom. 1:19-20), through your conscience, through His Word, and most of all, through His Son, Jesus. Carefully consider your response to this incredible gift of Love.

 Now read Mark 12:32-34. In Jesus’ response to the lawyer, “not far” is really not a compliment! “Not far” only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades! Telling the man he is “not far” is like telling the Kansas City Chiefs they were “not far” from winning the Super Bowl!!! Don’t be that guy! He should have fallen on his knees in repentance, asking, “Lord, what am I to do? I know I don’t love God with every fiber of my being.” God called him (and you) to repent of that failure and accept His grace and forgiveness. Jesus hung on that cross to make you right with God. True love toward God is a response to His love for His people (John 3:16; Matt. 1:21; Jer. 31:33). Who are His people? Those who acknowledge their failure to perfectly love Him, repent of that sin, and then try their hardest to follow Him.

 Does God increasingly direct your thoughts and actions? Love of God doesn’t erase God’s law, but that love writes it on our hearts (Ps. 119:97; John 14:15; John 15:12). Love of others is the outflow of our love for God. This love causes us to look at our neighbors as desperately needing God’s love. God’s law is not a list of 10 (or 613) commandments; it is a new heart that desires to love and worship Him. Those who love God cannot be happy without God. We want to see Him honored in our lives and in our communities. We want to share Him with our friends and our neighbors. Loving allegiance to Christ touches every area of our lives.

**QUESTIONS**:

1. If God’s law is not just a collection of rules, what is it?
2. We are to love our God with our heart, soul, and mind. How else do we love and honor Him?
3. Paul David Tripp (New Morning Mercies) often talks of vertical love (for God) and horizontal love (for others). Why do you think Jesus grouped love for God and love for neighbor together?
4. What does it look like to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind in daily life?
5. How can you GROW in sincere love toward God and others?

**“I Serve a Risen Savior” (Ackley)**

I serve a risen Savior

 He’s in the world today.

I know that He is living,

 Whatever men may say.

I see His hand of mercy;

 I hear His voice of cheer;

And just the time I need Him He’s always near.

**He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!**

**He walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way.**

**He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!**

**You ask me how I know He lives?**

 **He lives within my heart.**

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian,

 Lift up your voice and sing

Eternal hallelujahs

 To Jesus Christ the King!

The Hope of all who seek Him,

 The Help of all who find,

None other is so loving, so good and kind.