



Sermon Notes from 5 January

The Great Call to Love (Mark 12:28-31)

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Mark is one of four books that details the historical accounts of Jesus' life. The Bible is full of commandments given by God. We read from Mark 12:28-31 of Jesus responding to the question: 'which is the greatest commandment of all?'

3 things we derive from this great call to love

1) The revelation

Jesus' call to agape love provides revelation that is important for us. This call comes as a response to a question posed to Jesus (Mark 12:28) by the Sanhedrin (Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes) who wanted Him dead. They asked the questions with the intention to trap Him (Matt. 22:34-35). Jesus answers from the law of Moses (Deut. 4,5 & Lev. 18,19), something the Jews were familiar with (Mark 12:28). Jesus declares love (agape) as the greatest commandment, starting with a love for God. The emphasis of the Christian faith is a distinct love for God as a relational being. Jesus did not emphasize doing good deeds, but love. He calls people to love God as a distinct relational being who has made Himself known through His name revealed in the bible - *Yahweh*.

We alone, of all creatures, are created in the image of God. God has a name, and that is why we have a name. The ultimate reason we have names is because of our intrinsic relationship with God as His image bearers. Love yearns to call upon the object of love by name. Our distinct love for a personal God with a name overflows into a distinct love for His image bearers with names.

2) The conviction

Jesus seeks to bring about conviction through His words. He calls for people to love God volitionally, emotionally,

intellectually and physically, and to love their neighbour as they would love themselves (Mark 12:30-31). Jesus was addressing the scribes who were fixated on external acts of obedience. Agape love undergirds all other commandments of God (Matt. 22:40). Without love, you are not sincerely obeying; Jesus exposed the scribes of this (Matt. 23:23). The scribes, consumed with loving themselves, did everything not for God's name, but their own (Gen. 11:4). Self-righteousness cannot be found in agape love. The conviction Jesus brings is the humble recognition that declares first and foremost that we have not obeyed well in love for God and others.

3) The fulfilment

Jesus, instead of just giving two separate commandments, gave both one after another. Both commandments, because they are so interlinked and interwoven, feel like one. Jesus was the answer! He came to live and die as the fulfilment of the most important commandment of all. None of us could have obeyed it, but Jesus did. Nothing was spared in the expression of obedient agape love; unto death for the glory of God. On the cross, Jesus hung in agony and pain for the salvation of His neighbours. He displayed agape love - the most gracious gift offered to the neighbours of the nations.

For all who have accepted Christ, we no longer need to depend on our self-righteousness. We are received by grace through faith! Through the redeeming work of Christ, we are able to love God and people with the deepest, purest motivation of Christ-like agape love!