



June 10-11, 2017  
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Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church

## *Beyond These Walls: Commandment*

### *Matthew 22:34-40*

This is the second to the last weekend of Beyond These Walls, and we are on page 52 in your journey guide. If Pastor Mark doesn't already have you fully convinced, know that the excitement is palpable here for next week's celebration. We are hopeful to have commitments to pay off the remaining \$5 million dollar mortgage over the next 3 years so that we can release funds for ministry, loving our community like we never have before!

If you were not with us last week, we want to give you the same opportunity we gave the rest of the church. You'll find in your bulletin the Beyond These Walls commitment card. Visitors, there are no expectations of you here, but if you consider this your church home, and if you weren't here last week, I want to invite you to fill out this card and bring it forward here to these purple baskets at the end of the service. You'll see as we study today's passage that the heart of Beyond These Walls is the desire to be history-making disciples that heed Jesus' commandment to love God and love neighbors. Participating by financially giving to this initiative is an act of loving God, and it's an act of personal sacrifice as we love our neighbors.

Our first goal with the Beyond These Walls initiative is—say it with me—100% participation. I trust you have prayerfully been considering how to grow as a disciple in your giving. I just want to share about some of our process. Pastor Mark asked last week, "If others gave at the level of sacrifice that you are committing to, would we meet our goal?" And I can say confidently, if others gave as we are, we would! We are cutting back this year in our family budget because the church is graciously letting me go to half time so I can be at home more. So our budget is going down, but we didn't want our giving to decrease, either to our church or to our own family "beyond our walls" ministries. But we are all in! So we are giving an annual pledge. As our percentage of giving rises, we are excited to see how God's kingdom rises! So please, even if in your own home budget you already give "Beyond These Walls," please join us at your church in being all in and give above and beyond your current offering. Indicate on this card on the back what you are committing to and in what timing. That will help us.

We've spent this journey in the book of Matthew looking at touchstone moments when Jesus walked the earth and *his* disciples, these ordinary fishermen, became the disciples that would make history. Today's passage is when the disciples heard Jesus talking to a lawyer trying to trap him. Jesus gave the guiding commandment of what it means to be one of God's people. If you're willing to receive it, this command will guide you into the most freeing, grace-filled, history-making life, and the fullest expression of all that God wants for you.

What was Jesus' answer to the question, "What is the great commandment in the Law?" Say it with me, *"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 a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

“*You shall love*”—Jesus says it twice! So that means it’s really important. You shall love God and a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor. You shall love! We can make life with Jesus complicated with a giant list of things God wants. But Jesus says the great and first commandment is this! Love God. Love God. With all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is such a beautiful and convicting command.

Let’s start with how this is beautiful. *God’s desire is that every moment of your life is connected to his love.* God wants above all else for you to love him with all your heart! You might say that’s egotistical. I think it is if you see God off in the distance disconnected from you, nose up, or sneering down on you, demanding your love and adoration. And I know some people see it that way. But if all your dad wants for Father’s Day is your time, would you call that an ego trip? No! It’s just because he loves you and only wants that mutual time and love together. But really—love is the greatest gift a parent and a child share.

I’ve formed a morning ritual with Reed (at least on the mornings I’m proud of). The ones when I wake up before him and have already had coffee and done battle with the slugs on my dahlias—then I go in all smiley, look down on the face of that baby, and say, “Good morning, Reed! Momma loves you!” And then I pick him up and snuggle him and the three blankets that have to come out with him. I heard myself saying one morning this week, “I could not love you more.” I’ve realized just how much I say that to him. Oh, I could not love you more. I mean, I probably could love him more. His favorite word right now is, “Nnaaaaaooooow” in a really slow, drawn out way. But I love that kid. I hope every moment of his life he is deeply sure of my love for him.

Our heavenly Father is so like that. There’s not a moment of your day that God wants separated from the love you share with him. Do you know you can love God when you wake up? It’s not ridiculous to say, “Good morning, God! I love you! I could not love you more!” That’s what it is to love with all your heart.

You can love God with all your mind—all the time! Do you know that God invites you to love him when you’re at work? I know a woman who is a landscape architect. Do you see that in a designing session, she can love God with all her mind, and he can love her? She’s looking at the plants the *he designed*, after all. So when she delights in them and finds the right combo that makes a school safe and beautiful—do not think that’s a shared moment of love? That’s not ridiculous! That’s loving God with all your mind. It’s such a beautiful command, isn’t it? It brings eternal purpose to every single moment of your day. That’s the beautiful part.

Then here’s the convicting part—loving God is the great and first commandment, which means **God’s desire is that every moment of your life is connected to his love.** That moment at the end of the day. With the beverage of choice in your hand. Looking at the TV. God wants to be in this moment, too. Have you ever thought of that? Love God with all your heart and with all your soul. There’s a way to rest and have leisure full of the love of God. Do the TV characters you love, do they drive you toward God? Or do those themes separate you from him? It’s *possible* for this to be a loving God moment! And he wants it to be.

I want to encourage you this week to love God with all of who you are. So jot down one of these things to try: 1) Have a Reed moment. Wake up and say, “Good morning, God! I love you!” Or 2) Have a work moment. Set an alarm on your phone at a random time that says, “God wants to brainstorm this moment with you!” Or 3) Have a leisure moment. Put a sticky note on the edge of your TV that says,

“God wants to sit with you.” Invite God to join you, that every moment of your life would be connected to his love.

Jesus gives a second command. He was asked what is “THE great commandment,” but he pairs it with what he calls “the great and first commandment” with a second that “is like it.” They’re parallel commands to love. “*You shall love the Lord your God... And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” What’s the first question that pops into your mind when Jesus tells you to love your neighbor? My guess is, it’s who is my neighbor? I know this is our first question because it was mine! And when I asked my LifeGroup about this passage, it was theirs! *And* it was the first follow-up question of the lawyer. Luke tells us that, “desiring to justify himself, he asked: And who is my neighbor?”

In Luke 10, Jesus goes on to tell the lawyer the story of the Good Samaritan. It’s the story of the man who gets beat up by robbers and left on the side of the road to die. The pastor and the religious person just walk on the other side of the road. But the Samaritan throws some coins on him so he can take care of himself and keeps on going. No wait, that’s not what happens! He has compassion. He binds up his wounds. He puts the beat up man on his own horse, takes him to the hospital and stays with him 2 days, pays for all his medical expenses, and then comes back to check on him. And Jesus asks, who then was the neighbor?

Here’s what’s interesting to me about that follow up. Jesus doesn’t answer the lawyer’s question or ours —who is my neighbor? He doesn’t tell us who we need to love right here! Jesus tells us *how* we are to *love* our neighbor. Just look at how the Samaritan loved.

Love cost the Samaritan the comfort of his horse, his time at the hospital, his money, and his friendship to follow up. Jesus is pointing out the *all-encompassing, cost-to-yourself* nature of love. That’s a bit overwhelming, isn’t it? To some degree, I think it’s supposed to be! Remember last week’s story Jesus told of the camel going through a needle? What did Jesus say, “With man this is impossible *but* with God, all things are possible.” Jesus wants us, his disciples, in the business of the impossible. When it comes to sacrificial, costly love, it is impossible for us. Except. With God.

Jesus repeats this command to love your neighbor when it’s just he and his disciples. Actually, it’s right after this first and great commandment is given. Jot down, though, the phrase he adds. This is in John 15:12. He says, “This is my command, that you love one another as I have loved you.” Love “**...as I have loved you.**” How have the disciples seen Jesus love? By coming as God in the flesh to show us who God is and how HE loves. By having time for the crowds, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, washing their feet. And the next day, by dying for them. The next verse, “Greater love has no man than this; that he lay down his life for his friends.” This agape love we are called to is a love of sacrifice. At great personal cost. It’s the love Jesus has demonstrated to us. And it’s HIS LOVE that he desires for us to be connected to. I so want you to walk out today understanding that God loves *you* with sacrificial love.

Disciples of Jesus know love because God loves them first! They’re the only ones who carry a history-making mark in the world: LOVE. And so only those who follow Jesus and who know his love are able to make history. It seems impossible, but with God it is possible! As Jesus has loved you, *you shall love your neighbor as yourself.* Sacrificially. At great personal cost. Not merely tossing money at need. But offering car and home; extending friendship and time; traveling together through pain; following up.

I find this such a beautiful and convicting commandment. I am so convicted that it is with those closest to me that I so often fail to love impossibly, sacrificially at personal cost. Yet God met me so tenderly

and with such grace about his desire for me to love. He changed me. I am not the same person today that I was on Monday morning. God gave me a love-filled moment when my sin met the incredibly powerful Spirit of God.

It was Monday morning. Larry had been gone for a chunk of the previous 3 weeks, and solo-parenting is hard! So I wanted a break! And all these thoughts flooded my mind. Give me a head nod if you've had any of these: "That is so not fair. Don't I deserve... I guess I'll do *that*, too." I hate saying these out loud because these are not love moments. These are moments separated from the love of God. It's sin. I had been in this Scripture for weeks. So it was deep enough that I could see these were lies! That's so important! That ongoing time in God's word. Then by intentionally calling this passage to mind—choosing to love God with all my soul and all my mind—allowed me to do battle with those lies.

My sin wasn't just internal— it was against Larry. God's command is, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But Monday morning, I didn't consider that *Larry* might want a break. Now if I had been the one traveling, what would I have appreciated when I came home? Dinner to be made. House to be relatively clean. A morning to sleep-off the time change. And had I loved my neighbor— in this case, my husband— as myself, I would have sacrificed! But my sin separated me from God and Larry. So let's just say we had bad communication that morning. So I walked out of the house. I let the Spirit show me the lie of those patterns of thoughts. I asked Jesus to let me love him (Jesus) with my mind. Then I specifically recalled everything I was grateful for in my husband. Gratitude is a powerful combatant against selfishness. Then I dropped off Reed for Monday morning out, ran with a friend who spoke truth to me, griped at one of Larry's friends which I had to ask Larry for forgiveness for later—I'm just telling you how this really is—and somewhere in all of that, Jesus worked a miracle. Seriously, that afternoon, I was full of joy when I scrubbed down furniture. The same day that I had screamed, literally screamed, about cat puke, same afternoon, joyful at the opportunity to serve my family. How does that happen?? By myself, it's impossible! But bring your sin into the light of God's love, and it is transformed!

There are too many moments of my life, your life, separated from God's love. And we are missing the invitation to share impossible, sacrificial love with our neighbors.

*"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 a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*

I nearly lost the repetition of *you shall love* which is the most critical part of this text. When I study, sometimes I miss the mountain for the mole hill, and I get stuck in these itty bitty words.

But I was glad for one mole hill I found. It's the word "depend." It's the same word as the word, "crucify." Because both mean "hang on." Jesus hung on a tree—was crucified. And here in Matthew 22, all the Old Testament—that's what Jesus means by all the Law and the Prophets—the Old Testament "hangs on" these two commandments. The Message says, "These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them."

Here's a nail in this cross. The image here is that the two commandments are this nail. These commands to love God and love neighbor are hammered into a really secure stud, this secure place of God's love for us. If you look at every place in the Old Testament that we are instructed to love God or love neighbor or love stranger or love parent, they are often followed with the words, "For I am the LORD your God who delivered you out of slavery." We only love because he first loved us. So his command for

you to love is firmly hammered into the absolute truth that there is a God in heaven who has chosen and loves you.

And then on this nail, on these two commands, “hang” all the Law and the Prophets. So imagine I write on this piece of paper everything the Old Testament says about the best way to live, the best way to honor God... Meditate on God’s word. Fight for justice. Pray. Feed the hungry. Morals. All this hangs on how you love God and neighbor. If you take out a fierce, solid love for God. It all falls to the ground. If you take out a Spirit-filled, sacrificial love of neighbor that is rooted in how deeply God loves you, then your ethic of justice falls to the ground.

Let me invite you—if you live with a giant list of what God wants for your life, a list of "should and should not"—ask if they are hanging, dependent upon your love for God and neighbor. Invite grace into your striving. If you struggle with loving God and neighbor as I did this week, look deeply at how secure you are in God’s love for you! Don't let your sin or Satan steal one more moment from you. God's desires for every moment of your life to be connected to his love.

This communion table is an invitation to receive God’s love. We invite all you who love Jesus to come and receive communion. As you take it today, invite God to reconnect you with his love. We will love as Jesus has loved us. Hear the sacrifice and the love in the words of Jesus.

On the night he was betrayed, after dinner he took bread. Having given thanks he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: “Take and eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also, he took the cup after supper. Having given thanks, he poured it saying, “This is the cup of the covenant, poured out in my blood, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.” And whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes again.

Communion.

So as I send you out, remember, worship doesn’t end here. Love God. Love neighbor. God’s desire is that every moment of your life be connected to his love. And you can even continue in worship today by bringing forward your commitment card if you haven’t already. You could continue in worship by receiving healing prayer in the Prayer Chapel right now, just around the corner. Or you could come back for lunch and join this community in the First Step class. Let’s be a people who love God and love one another.