

Matthew 22-01-02a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the second day of January 2022 and we continue our study in the Gospel of Matthew. We're at the closing portion of chapter 22, Matthew chapter 22.

We're looking at this final section beginning in verse 36. Jesus has been questioned by the religious leaders of the day and is providing answers and he is about to ask them a question. I can't think of a better time to ask a question than at the inception of a new year.

So that's where we will pick up this morning. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study and we'll begin. Father, it is a great privilege and a wonderful encouragement to know that you are our Heavenly Father.

You are with us. You have made provision for us and as we enter into a new year with all of its challenges and with its opportunities, we are sustained by your grace. We are interceded for by our Savior.

We are enabled and empowered by your Holy Spirit. We are energized, cleansed, and instructed by your word. We have so many things going for us and despite the strangeness that surrounds us, we are fully equipped for every good work.

We have all of the pieces of armor that we need and we're grateful for the expressions of your love toward us in so many ways over the past year and we look forward to their continued sustaining power in the coming year. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together that your Holy Spirit will help us see where it is pertinent for us, where we can make application of it, where it will inform our decisions, guide our priorities, and as we renew our view of our goals and our opportunities in this coming year that we will rightly divide your word. We will see in the light shed by the Holy Spirit exactly how we can best present ourselves as living sacrifices and be transformed by the renewing of our minds to understand and implement your good and acceptable and perfect will.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. The portion we left off with last time in Matthew chapter 22 was the close of the resurrection question where the Sadducee's mistake was not knowing the scriptures or the power of God.

I was reviewing and looking at a translation this past week that I think really sums up the clinching nature of the answer that Jesus gave when he said concerning the resurrection of the dead in chapter 22 verse 31, have you not read what was spoken to you by God? The Old Testament scriptures are the word of God. It's amazing that anyone would question that, but as you know from our studies in recent weeks, there are those who are not just questioning but setting aside Old Testament scripture in the interest of a

new persuasion and ostensibly they're focusing on the Lord Jesus as the guide, as the example, as the new and living way. That's great.

Listen to what Jesus says. Old Testament scripture is God talking. That's what Jesus says.

That's good enough for me. Do you not hear what God spoke to you saying? I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of dead men, but the God of living men.

This is a very legitimate and I think helpful translation. I think sometimes I know in the past when I was taught concerning this answer that Jesus gave that he was stressing the present tense of the verb. I am the God rather than I was the God, but really the emphasis here in the structure, at least in how this comes across in Greek is God is not the God of dead men.

He is the God of living men and it is a double-edged sword because not only does it emphasize that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their dead bodies are going to be resurrected. Jesus doesn't say don't you know Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are floating around in Abraham's, I'm not sure how Abraham could be in his own bosom, but they're in paradise, they're disembodied souls somewhere and they're not dead, they're alive. That would miss the point in answering this question.

This is talking about resurrection of the body, so talking about the location or status of souls wouldn't pertain. In fact, it would actually miss the point and be an ineffective answer if he said, well, but their souls, because their question was in the resurrection you've got living people moving around and there's seven men and a woman, what's their relationship? This is about resurrection. God is not the God of dead men.

God is the God of living men. God's people who have lived are going to live again because he is eternally their God. The only way God can be the God of the living for those who have died is for him to bring them back.

That's the thrust of the argument. It's a powerful argument. God isn't content to let his people die and stay dead.

If God is our God, he is the God of living men. And even if we die, remember John chapter 11, Jesus talking to the Lazarus sisters, the one who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And the one who lives and believes in me will never die.

And there's a very similar principle at work here, a very similar doctrinal truth that undergirds this answer. It's a beautiful answer. God is not the God of dead men.

He's the God of living men. And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at his teaching. Then we picked up in verse 34, when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

And so they see this as an opportunity to advance their politics, their religious standing. Since Jesus has silenced the Sadducees, somewhat embarrassed them, they see an advantage. Let's move into this vacuum.

The multitudes are paying attention. We can gain an advantage here. If it's army, Navy, this is our year to win.

So the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees. They gathered together, one of them a lawyer, inquired, testing him and saying, teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? I learned something new this past week as I was reviewing this. And this is where it's fun to go in and read Edersheim or others who have studied the first century milieu in which Jesus lived and taught.

And something I did not know, there was a scale of understanding amongst the Pharisees who were very dedicated to the law on what commandments were more important and what commandments were less important. We tend to say that various scriptures are of different weights. I think I will go to a promise of God that says, they who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength.

They will mount up with wings as eagles. They will run and not be weary. They will walk and not faint.

There's something I can memorize, put on a magnet, stick it on the fridge. When I get to the genealogies and I'm reading this guy begat that guy and he begat another and this guy had these sons and this is where they dwelt and so on, maybe not so helpful, not something I'm going to necessarily put on a magnet unless I've studied it enough to appreciate it. So we do this.

We find some portions of scripture more immediately helpful, pertinent, applicable, motivating, encouraging such. Well, they did this with the law of Moses with regard to its commands and in deciding which commands had greater weight and which commands had lesser weight. Remember, these are not judges now.

These are Pharisees. These are the scholars. Scribes were generally Pharisees because they all had a strong interest in the text.

They measured the force of a command or its importance or its value by the penalty for not keeping it. So most important commands, thou shalt not murder. He who sheds man's blood by man shall his blood be shed.

This goes all the way back to the days of Noah in Genesis 9. So they were interested in the portions of the law that were most important because they had the most severe penalties for failure. The Sadducees disregarded a lot of the law because they were the liberals of their day and they had thrown out an awful lot of the scripture in favor of their viewpoint, which was quite free. They didn't take the commands literally at all.

Therefore, they didn't believe in resurrection and they didn't believe in angels or spirits because they took the Old Testament scriptures in a largely metaphorical or figurative way. So you can see here the dynamic. The Sadducees have suffered a setback at Jesus hands in their view, and they want to press this point.

And so they're going to recruit Jesus to give them another step on the Sadducees and talk about how important some of the commands are and that he'll follow their view that, well, thou shalt not murder. That's a big one. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain or whatever, because the first commandment with promise, honor your father and mother so that your days will be long in the land.

If you don't honor your parents, your life will be shortened and so on. So this is what they're expecting. And they also think that they can argue with him.

If he picks any given command, they can say, well, but doesn't this one have a greater penalty? Isn't this penalty more severe in the long term or in the short term? Or it wasn't this a stoning offense? Wasn't this a negative promise from God? Look at the blessings and curses on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, and they could wear him down with details. And Jesus bypasses all of that because he doesn't look at the specific commands that are implementations of God's policy and expressions of faith, obedience, and love for God to the summary command. So when he says immediately without any condemnation, without, you know, he started his previous answers with some condemnation.

You are mistaken. You are in error. Earlier in verse 18, why do you test me, you hypocrites? Show me a coin.

But there is no upbraiding. There is no rebuke or no criticism at the beginning of this one. He dives straight to the point.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Much attention has been focused on this, and rightly so. Jesus says, by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another. So love your neighbor as yourself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. The law can be entirely fulfilled if you are expressing love for God and love for your neighbor. You are going to, under that principle, be following these rituals, these observances, these symbolic features such as tassels and colors and disposition of various parts of the sacrifice, times of assembly, times of not working.

All of these observances should be done out of a love for God and recognition that even

if I don't understand why he is saying don't shave the corners of your beard or other minutiae of the law, he has expressed his will in this regard. I love him, so I'm going to do it. Not necessarily because I understand all of its outworkings and implications.

I may not be aware of the shadow of the future or the Christology that is involved. I just know that God has asked me to do it, so I'm going to do it. Love means we don't always have to understand the motivation behind the request.

Would you just do this because I'm asking you to, because this is my guidance for you. You are my people, you are a symbol to the nations, you are a light to the Gentiles, and this is the way I want you to be distinct, separate, unique amongst the nations. Whether it seems to make sense or not, God has clearly asked or required us to do these things because I love him, because I respect him.

I'm going to endeavor to do it. I don't have to understand why everything doesn't have to be explained to me before I agree. Love.

And it's very interesting, as you may know, I have a great set of books that I refer to from time to time which are called Parallels. I've got the New Gospel Parallels, I've got Pauline Parallels, and they very helpfully put scriptures, especially in the Synoptic Gospels, they'll put Matthew, Mark, and Luke side by side. If there's something in John that compares, if there's something in the Epistles or elsewhere, there is kind of a scheme of arrangement on the page so that you can see what might not occur as a direct cross-reference but is helpful.

And especially in the Synoptics, it's great because you've instantly got these columns. I don't know if you can see this, but I've got here, there's Matthew, Mark, Luke, and then on the other side, there's a fresh page with Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And then there are other parallels down below so that you can quickly see this.

And our section here is very instructive when you look at the trifold witness because we've seen Matthew, and since I'm in the Matthew section of this book, all of this is in boldface. For the Mark and Luke sections, they only bold what is exactly the same in Matthew. So when our Matthew says in verse 35, one of them, a lawyer asked him a question, when you go to the Mark parallel, this is Mark 12, 28, and one of is in bold because Matthew said one of, but then the rest of it is not.

So one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, which commandment is the first of all? And so which commandment is the first, that's in boldface because that's the same thing you find in Matthew. It's really wonderful. I love just wandering around in this and reading.

Jesus answered, and notice there is a more fulsome record of what Jesus said on this occasion in Mark. Jesus answered, this is Mark 12, 29, to the question, which

commandment is first of all? Jesus answered, the first is here, O Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. It's interesting in Matthew, because Jesus said in Matthew, the three parts of the reply are his quotation from Deuteronomy 6, 5 is love the Lord, your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

Notice that in Matthew verse 37 there in our chapter with your mind, the Hebrew and the Septuagint, it's heart, soul, and might, M-I-G-H-T. Jesus changes it to mind, mind, nous in Greek. So in Mark, Mark includes everything that's in Deuteronomy and Jesus addition.

So you have four elements, your heart, your soul, your mind, and with your strength, but if you look at the beautiful sort of Psalm-like substitution, David would do this with parallelism in the Psalms and other Psalm writers, where in a parallel set of lines, one thing is synonymous with another. And when Jesus says mind in the place of might, he tells us that the strength here is not physical strength, it's mental strength, it's thinking strength. We are to be thoughtful as we love God.

The Hebrew conception of the human put together, the invisible parts of us were the heart, which is sort of the overall invisible portion in which resides the nephesh, the soul or the life, life and soul were interchangeable and synonymous. And this was the seat of emotions and thinking and the mind. But the heart is sort of the outward container in which you have your life, your soul, and your thoughts, your motivations, thoughts and intents of the heart, if you will.

And so all of that could be referred to as your heart. This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They don't live their lives in the light of God's word or his presence or their covenant.

They're not motivated. They don't think about him. They don't speak of him.

They don't do their daily actions. Everything that's in the heart, their heart is far from me. So it's kind of helpful to see that expressed in this Deuteronomy 6, 5 quotation, you should love the Lord with all of your heart, specifically with your soul and with your strength.

And Jesus says that strength is your thinking, whether it's your emotions, your gut, your in the Greek, it's sploek now, which is as hard to spell as it is to say, but Mark includes them both. The second is you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these in the mark account.

No other commandment greater than these. And Mark records the answer that was given by the scribe. The scribe said to him, you are right, teacher.

You have truly said that he is one and there is no other, but he talking about God,

because in Mark, Jesus quotes, the first part of that Deuteronomy passage here, Israel, the Lord, our God is one. You are right. Teacher.

You have truly said that he is one and there is no other, but he, and to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. This scribe, here's Jesus answer. And he is one of the few in this group that, that learns from it and appreciates it.

And he says, you know, we've been going at this all wrong. We were trying to gauge what was a great commandment by how important did God seem to make it by the penalty for failure or by how many times it's repeated or how prominent it is on the tablets of the law or in, in various listings in the, in the Pentateuch, how often it might've been quoted later on in the prophets, but we've been going at this all wrong. And he says, you're right.

And you can see this individual's heart awakening to the truth in Jesus reply. And it's a reminder that even in the last days, even when he has come to his own and his own received him, not even when he is two days away from the cross, because this is Tuesday of passion week that he's talking, you have to admire Jesus focus on his mission, his objectivity with regard to the truth of God's word. He's he knows day after tomorrow, I am going to be lifted up to bear the sins of the world.

I am going to die day after tomorrow, but his love for God's word and his complete facility in understanding it, bringing it instantly to bear. He started out this way in the wilderness with Satan and he's concluding his life this way. He is soaked in the word of God.

Man does not live by bread alone. Man does not live. Jesus is about to die.

But whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's Paul says, and the Lord himself exemplified this and he's steeped in God's word. He's thinking about it. He has an instant ready answer to this.

What they thought was kind of a complicated question. They had a, I believe there's a list of some 236 separate commands that they had compiled. Some of that's done by Gematria where they swap in words and make another command out of one that's already there, but well over 200 separate commands, which is, which is great.

Which ones are great in that list? Which ones ought to be at the top of the list? Jesus slices right through all of that. He says, the Lord, our God is one, love him heart, soul, mind, which is your strength. And this scribe says, you're right, teacher, you have truly said he's one and there is none other but he and to love him with all the heart, the understanding, the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all

whole burnt offerings and sacrifices in these last days.

Here's a Pharisee who turns, who responds because Jesus was faithful. He didn't get distracted. He didn't get subjective.

He didn't spend two days in prayer, asking his father about whether the cup could pass from him. He knows his mission. He knows his Bible and he knows the opportunity here.

And when this scribe answers and agrees with him and comprehends his answer, Jesus says, Jesus saw, this is Mark 1234. When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, you are not far from the kingdom of God. You're getting there.

You're starting to see. After that, no one dared to ask him any question. In Luke, Jesus answers the question with a question.

And this is another part of the conversation that Luke preserves because he talked with different eyewitnesses on this occasion and he preserved something that neither Matthew nor Mark included. So in Luke 10, 25 and following, behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test saying, teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, now this is a parallel and I should have paid attention. This is in italics because this is not a gospel parallel in the sense that it's the same occasion, but it's a similar conversation.

So this lawyer stood up to put him to the test. Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, what is written in the law? How do you read it? And the same idea is present here. What does the scripture say? How do you understand your Bible? So the lawyer answers, love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus said to him, you have answered right. Do this and you will live. But he desiring to justify himself says, who is my neighbor? And this sparks the parable of the good Samaritan.

But it's so interesting that there are three different accounts of Jesus emphasizing love for God and love for neighbor. As I have pointed out in the current progressive Christianity surge, if you will, it's the re-emergence of liberalism under a new label. There is a wonderful emphasis on the second commandment that Jesus cites, love one another, love your neighbor.

It's called enemy love. It's a hyphenated term. We should practice enemy love, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you.

And that's great if it is a part of a larger picture. What often gets left out in this emphasis on, we need to stop hating on each other, stop bickering, stop using the word of God to justify a lot of heinous self-interested things. Yes, by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you love one another.

But on these three occasions from Jesus' lips, what comes first? What has to precede the second commandment? You have to love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind. Strength in mind, hand in hand. This is strength of purpose.

This is proper values, proper goals, proper priorities. The ability to discern the better things, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we will know the will of God. All of that has to precede and provide a context for loving one another.

And we have to be discerning because at the same time that God so loved the world, we have a command that says, love not the world or the things that are in the world. Discrimination and discernment are required. And we're going to see that in the upcoming section, the very next dialogue where Jesus asks his own question is very straightforward after this introduction.

It becomes clear because of these preceding conversations. And it's important for us to understand. Do we just take any opportunity to sell our goods and give them to the poor? If all Christians did that, we would all be the poor and there wouldn't be anybody left to sell their goods and give them to us.

It requires discernment. It's not a command for all times and all occasions, or we would just have to dismiss right now and start putting all of our stuff on Craigslist and collect the proceeds, find somebody poor, hand it to them. Now we are the poor.

Discernment is required. You can't just yank something out of context and say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, because that's what Jesus did. Jesus never started a war.

Jesus never persecuted a person that had physical relationship issues in terms of adultery or fornication or any of the other heinous perversions, because Jesus didn't do it. We won't do it either. And we shouldn't do it.

And if we do it, we're somehow wrong. Enemy love is the principle. Love your enemies, love everyone.

Love should be the dominant theme. Whatever the question, the answer is love. Well, Jesus is going to ask a question coming up and it's different.

And the answer comes from a great source, an undeniable source, a source that they acknowledge and that they cannot deny. And it's another one of those beautiful distillations of truth that not only answer Jesus' opponents and his critics and those who wanted to put him to death, but it provides us with tremendous applicational truth. This is something we can use.

This is something we can think about and live by, and it balances us. Love for God is

balanced by love for one another. You can't be so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good.

If you say, well, I'm just going to go off and contemplate God because I love him so much, you're failing the second command. You cannot, by the same token, so emphasize the second of these great commands, love one another and miss coming to know God and loving all of him, all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our strength, all of our mind dedicated to God as he has revealed himself in scripture, not a God of the imagination, not a God of the emotion, not a selectively pictured God, a partially revealed God, God in his fullness. And it takes time.

It takes reflection. It takes the witness and ministry of God's Holy Spirit. And it is an endless journey.

We will be doing this for all eternity, coming to know our infinitely great, infinitely wise, infinitely holy, infinitely just, infinitely loving Heavenly Father better and better throughout the ages to come. We're starting that experience and that journey, if you will, now. People have a lot of things to say about, you know, the journey.

Well, there's only one that's worth making and that is traveling the narrow road through the straight gate. Jesus is the way he is the truth and he is the life. And we come to the father through him.

So that's where we're headed. That's a review of our last few weeks before our Christmas specials intervened. And we're going to pick up now in Matthew chapter 22, this closing section, verses 41 through 46.

While the Pharisees are still gathered together, Jesus has a question for them. And it's a great question on many levels. We'll see it after the break.