

## Love God Through and Through Mark 12:28-34

Have you ever noticed how often we use the word "heart" in our culture?

- For example, a person without compassion is described as "heartless," and we urge them to "have a heart."
- The truly evil are "black-hearted" while godly saints have "hearts of gold."
- Courageous soldiers are "brave hearted."
- Jilted lovers are "brokenhearted."
- If we need to speak intimately with someone, we have a "heart-to-heart" talk.
- But when we lose our passion for life, when a deadness sets in which we cannot seem to shake, we confess, "My heart's just not in it."
- And our deepest hurts we call "heartaches."
- But when we love someone as deeply as we can - we're said to love "with all our heart."

In our verses today Jesus says that the greatest commandment in all Scripture is to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." - Mark 12:30 Let's explore the meaning of this greatest of commandments:

### 1. Love God with Passion – Love God with all your Heart.

We often speak of how much God loves us.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."  
But sometimes people fail to think in terms of how WE feel toward God.

We'll go to church, give our offerings, do all kinds of good works, say our prayers, but often - in our prayers – all we talk about are our needs and wants, or others needs.

Rarely do we take the time to tell God how much we love Him.

Rarely do we spend the time telling Him why we love Him.

We'll do our duty and presume God loves us, but for many believers, the idea of emotionally loving Him is somehow hard for them to wrap their minds around.

By contrast, Psalm 42:1 tells us, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God."

Psalm 84:2 declares "My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

Psalm 143:6 "I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land."

And Isaiah 26:9a "My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you..."

This is a love that is an all-consuming passion - a desire for God that goes so deep that it can cause us to cry out to Him.

But what if I don't have that kind of love for God?

What if I don't have this kind of passion – that love for God that comes from loving Him with all of my heart?

If I don't have it, how do I get it?

Well – in one of the Scriptures we just read – the writer is crying out to God because he seems to understand/remember what God has done for him in the past. Preceding Ps. 143:6 is.....

The psalmist saying =

"I REMEMBER the days of long ago;

I MEDITATE on all your works

and CONSIDER what your hands have done." Ps 143:5

This man spends time just thinking about what God has done throughout his life, and praising Him for His goodness. He is spending deliberate time thanking God for His mighty works that he's seen time and time again.

Philippians 4:6-7 says

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with THANKSGIVING, present your requests to God. And the

peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Give Thanks!

Remember what God has done for you in the past.

And when we do this, not only will anxiety melt away, but you'll experience a peace that passes all understanding. It almost defies explanation, but that's what we'll receive. But mainly it shows how much you love God.

Loving God with all of our hearts, is a love for God that is saturated with thanksgiving.

In the middle of President Lincoln's Presidency, an elderly lady made an appointment to see him. As she entered his office, he inquired, "How can I be of service to you, Madam?"

The lady answered, "Mr. President, I know you are a very busy man, and I have not come to ask you for anything. I simply came to bring you this box of cookies."

There was a long silence. Tears flowed from Lincoln's eyes as he began:

"Madam, I am greatly moved by what you have done. For since I have become President, people have come into this office one after another asking for favors and demanding things from me. You are the first person who has ever entered these premises asking no favor but bringing a gift. I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

In our prayers, we need to learn to deliberately set aside time to come into God's presence – not asking favors - but bringing the gift of grateful heart. That's what it means to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts.

2. Jesus also says that we need to Love God with Total Commitment or, to love the Lord our God with all of our SOUL.

This is the idea of total commitment.

When a person is in love with God with all of their heart and soul they become consumed with the idea of committing their time, talents & treasures to God.

David was a man after God's own heart and he reflected that in loving God with all of his soul. In 2 Samuel 24 we're told of an Israelite who offered to supply David with the wood and animals for a specific sacrifice. But David responded:  
"... I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing..." 2 Sa 24:24

David loved God so much that he was committed to giving something to God that actually cost him something.

Martin Luther once said  
"A religion that gives nothing,  
costs nothing,  
and suffers nothing,  
is worth nothing."

My dad had surgery last week to remove his gall bladder. One of the radiologists at the hospital there is a personal friend of his. He is in his late 60's. When asked about retirement he said: I just love coming to work. I love what I do. I love the people I work with. And when people want to criticize this hospital and this town I say, ..."wait a minute, this is my town, this is my hospital. I've devoted my life to this and you can't talk about it like that."

Loving God with all my soul is a love that leads me to give of myself because I love Him ... not because of duty or obligation. This kind of love is so overwhelming that I'm just so consumed with God. I can't help but dedicate everything I have to pleasing Him.

### 3. Jesus also says to love God with dedicated effort or love for God should be with all my STRENGTH

When I love with all of my heart (that's my emotions) that kind of love leads me to love God with all of my soul - to make an emotional commitment to please God.

AND if I love God with all of my heart... and all my soul... then I will be led to want to love Him with all of my Strength.

To love God with all my strength means that - whatever I do - I do it all for Jesus.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31 -

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Then in Colossians 3:17 he tells us that:

"...whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

This kind of love should affect how we worship Him on Sunday AND how we live for Him on Monday thru Saturday.

In Ephesians 6:5-6 "Slaves (or you could read "employees" here) obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart."

When you love the Lord your God with all of your strength, you do everything in life with an eye toward pleasing God. That is your driving passion whether anyone sees what you do or not. You do it totally for God. You do it for God as an employee, an employer, a husband/wife, a relative, a friend, or even stranger. It doesn't matter what your role in life... you should do all that you do for the glory of Christ. And that kind of love God is the type that requires ALL your strength.

The movie "Facing the Giants" filmed and produced by a Baptist Church in Albany, GA was made for under \$100,000 and grossed millions . Shortly after he and his wife decided to believe in Christ, the Coach in that movie found that he was in danger of being fired. In addition to this he also discovered that it was his fault that he and his wife couldn't have kids. He spent an entire night reading scripture and pleading with God. Later, when his wife came out to join him he asked her: "Will you still love God if He doesn't give us children?" What he was asking her was this: "Does our love for God override our present circumstances, and our personal agenda, and our felt needs. And she answered "yes".

That became a turning point in their lives. As the movie explained: this coach determined to love God with all of heart, soul, mind & strength. As a coach he decided to coach his team to play football to glorify God - to give Him the glory whether they won or lost. They praised God when they won, praised God when they lost. The coach put all of his strength into loving his God no matter what the outcome.

Ultimately, the football team won their championship... and the coach's wife gave birth to a child. But even if God had not been kind to them in this way, they still had determined they would dedicate themselves to loving God with all their strength.

Do you put all of your dedicated effort into loving God? No matter what you do in life, is it all for Him?

Now I've deliberately taken Jesus' comments out of order.

Jesus said: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).

I've told you about loving God with all of your heart/ all your soul/ all your strength - but I've left "loving God with all your mind" to the last.

#### 4. Love God willfully, with all your mind.

In the story told in Matthew, Luke & here in Mark, Jesus was approached by a teacher of the Law. According to Matthew, this young man had been spent time with the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and he had come up to Jesus with the express purpose of "testing" him.

These Pharisees and Sadducees couldn't stand Jesus. He threatened their power over the hearts and minds of the people. He resisted their legalistic ways. He claimed to be the Messiah. They wouldn't tolerate that so, eventually, they would later conspire to kill Him. But right now, they were content to try to expose Him as a fraud... And that is the focus of this young man's question: he wants to trip Jesus up.

"Teacher (he says) what's the greatest commandment in the Law?" Now, there were 613 laws in the Old Testament and experts in God's law would spend hours arguing over this very question. Jesus responds by taking 2 commands these experts would have regarded as somewhat obscure - they weren't even in the same book of the Law.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength" was from Deuteronomy 6:5

While "Love your neighbor as yourself" was from Leviticus 19:18

But Jesus explains that all the law and the prophets hung on these two commands.

Jesus' response is so obvious that you can almost see this young man who asked Him the question - standing there with his mouth open. He can't contain his admiration for something he'd never even thought about before.

"Well said" he exclaims "these are more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Then Jesus says something that really caught my attention:

"When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God...'" Mark 12:34

He was not far from the Kingdom? What did Jesus mean by that?

He meant that this young man had come to a decision.

Up to that point he was just engaged in legalistic argument. That's what he did for fun. That's what passed for worship in the circles he ran in. But up until this point in his life he hadn't understood the God of Love Jesus had just introduced him to.

Suddenly he began to see God as He really was.

This was a God who wasn't impressed with people who just wanted to know God's word, but rather a God who wanted His people to love Him passionately.

That was the choice this young man was now facing.

You see, when I love God with all of my mind that mean's I've made

a choice.

I've made a decision that it's God I want - more than anything else in this life.

In Deuteronomy 30:19-20 Moses said it this way "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life..."

### Conclusion:

Make a choice.

Decide who you're going to love.

Because on that single choice hangs your very eternity.

"Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded his empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for him." ~Napoleon Bonaparte

"The men who followed Him were unique in their generation. They turned the world upside down because their hearts had been turned right side up. The world has never been the same." -

Billy Graham

What will your response be to the love of God shown through Jesus? Will you love Him with your whole heart? Will you allow your heart to be turned right side up for Him? Choose today to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength!

Adapted from J.Strite with additions by D.Simpson