

Accepting Love

HVBC – 1/8/06

This past Wednesday night we took some time to talk about 2 passages of scripture. They are both quotes of Jesus and I believe that they are two of the most important verses in the Bible. I read one of the passages earlier. This one is known as the great commandment. The other also has its own title - the Great Commission.

I would like for these two passages, the great commandment & the great commission, to be our focal passages for 2006. I am going to begin the year having sermons that relate to these passages. Let's start off by giving an overview of these two texts and their context.

The **Great Commandment is found in Matthew 22:37-40**. The Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, had just asked Jesus a question about the resurrection. In answering their question, he showed some errors in their beliefs and understandings. The Pharisees, believed in the resurrection, so they wanted to follow up with a question of their own.

Matthew 22:37-40 *34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which commandment is the greatest?" 37 He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."*

The person referred to in this text as a lawyer, was probably a scribe, who copied the scripture and was an expert on the Mosaic Law. The Pharisees had found 613 laws – 365 prohibitions and 248 positive commands. They would also discuss the importance of the different laws. So it would be natural for a scribe to ask Jesus which one was the most important.

Jesus' answer was basically #1 – **Love God** and #2 is **Love others**. And he adds if you do those two you will do all the others. That was a bold statement. But as you think about it, it is so true. You can look at the 10 commandments. The first 4 relates to our relationship with God and the next 6 relates to our relationship with others.

So we can sum up the teachings of Jesus as Love God & Love others. Sometimes, however, we are not sure how to best love others. How can you demonstrate your love for God? How can you demonstrate your love for other people? What is the most loving thing that you can do for someone else? Well, I believe that this is the importance of the Great Commission. It tells us something to do.

The Great commandment is about relationship. The Great Commission is a task and a task that should be a part of loving God and loving others.

The **Great Commandment** is found at the end of **Matthew – 28:19-20**. It is after Jesus death and resurrection when he has assembled his disciples together. Here he tells them.

Matthew 28:19-20 *19 Go therefore (literally the Greek verb is “as you go) and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

A part of loving God and loving others is to make disciples. To make a disciple is more than making a convert. A convert believes in Jesus. A disciple is one that seeks to become like Jesus. All convert should become disciples.

These two teachings of Jesus strongly go together. Love God. Love others. Make disciples.

Rick Warren has stated, “**A great commitment to the great commandment and the great commission makes a great church.**” I believe that and I believe that Hope Valley is a really good church with the potential to become a great church. To do this we must make a great commitment to the great commandment and great commission. I would like to add to Rick’s statement – it not only makes a great church, it makes a great Christian. If one person makes that commitment and becomes a great Christian that energy can grow and spread.

I have shared all this to say that I want us as individuals and as a church to work on growing in loving God, loving others and making disciples. But before we do this, there is something else that we must do first and that is to Accept God’s love for us. Before we can adequately do the things that we are to do as Christians we are to realize God’s love and accept it.

God loves you. God knows everything about you, every sin, every thought, every action and God still loves you. Nothing can separate you from that love.

Romans 8:35-39 *35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.” 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Sometimes when my children talk to Anne’s mother, their grandmother, they say, “I love you.” To which she responds, “I love you more.” And they say, “No I love you more” and the cycle continues.

With God there is no debate, he loves you more than you love Him. God loves you more than you have the capacity to love. (think about that)

Often we feel unlovely. **When do you feel unlovely:**

- bad hair day. On a bad hair day, God still loves you. On a no hair day, God loves you.
- Seriously – **we may feel unlovely when we do something wrong or fail to do something that we know we should do.** We feel guilty and perhaps unlovely. God still loves you – immeasurably, no matter what you have done or haven't done. Our actions can hurt God, but they can't keep God from loving us.

There are also times that **we don't feel loved by God.** Some of those can relate to the times we feel unlovely, but there are other times that we may feel that God is not loving us adequately.

- when things are going bad in our life. We may question – **why are things so bad for me? Does God not love me?** Isaiah 40:27-31
- are other times it is when we look around and things are going well for others & we can question **if God loves me why is my life not more like theirs.**

Most of you have at least heard of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. This is a series of seven books that were written by C.S. Lewis. Book 2, "*The Lion the witch & the wardrobe*" was recently made into a movie by Disney. The books can be read on at least 2 levels. 1) Childhood books of imagination and 2) Books that illustrate what Christianity is all about.

In the 3rd book there is a wonderful dialogue that says a lot about how God works in our life. The book is entitled "*the horse & the boy.*" There is a boy who was raised in another land by someone that he thought was his father, but later discovers that this man had found him and only used him to work for him there was little love and he planned to sell him. The boy runs away with a talking horse. After many adventures he finds himself a lone and scarred when a large lion appears beside him. This lion is Aslan, who represents Jesus. The boy tells him how everything has gone so bad in his life and then Aslan begins to reinterpret events from his life. There were several events in which a terrifying lion had chased after him. Aslan tells him that there was only one lion, for it was him. He protected him when he was a baby. He comforted him in the form of a cat one night when he was all alone. He chased off other animals. He chased the boy to meet someone else for support and companionship and he chased both of them to meet someone that would care for them. When the lion chased both of them he actually reached his paw out and scratched the girl. The boy questioned why did you do this, to which Aslan explained, "I can only tell you your story." "I cannot tell you someone else's story:" Later Aslan encounters the girl and he tells her, her story. She ask about something that happened to another person & again he responds, "I can't tell you someone else's story."

It is a wonderful scene, for it is explaining how God is with us and caring for us in ways that we cannot imagine. It also shows that we are to seek to understand our story with God and not the story of others.

God loves you. God loves you when you feel unlovely and when you feel unloved. We may question further if God loves us why do bad things happen? This week someone ask me – why does God allow cancer? Why is there evil in the world?

I can't fully and adequately answer that question. I can tell you that much of the bad in the world comes from God giving us a free will and then people choosing bad decisions. For God to give us free will that took love . . . But there are still things that we can't understand. I have often shared there are times that we must question "why" and there are times that we may get mad at God, but we must work through it and in the end realize God loves us and God loves us more than we can comprehend. I also believe that when we hurt God hurts with us.

Then **there is the question is God is such a loving God, then why is there a Hell.** We all deserve Hell. None of us deserve to go to Heaven. That is because we have all sinned. Sin brings a separation between us and God. Hell is an eternal separation between us and God. It is a terrible eternity that we can't imagine.

Jesus paid the price for our sins, so that we don't have to go to Hell, but in order for us to have a relationship with God and so that we can go to Heaven.

John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life." God doesn't want us to go to hell. It is so important to God that he sent his only son and Jesus gave his life for you and for me so that we will not perish.

John 3:17 adds, "God sent not his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." God's goal is not condemnation and Hell, but love, a relationship and Heaven.

As I said, "God loves you more than you can imagine." The starting point in having a relationship with God and in really growing in that relationship is to realize God's love and to accept it. We may never comprehend the depth of that love, but the more we can comprehend, the more we will be changed by that love.

Through accepting God's love for us are we better able to love others. Let's look again to the text in **I John. 3:16, 4:16-19**

I John 3:16 – "We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another."

We know love through Jesus. Jesus teaches us what true love is all about. I have heard that there are at least three types of love. In church we generally hear about the three

greek words for love: agape, philos and eros, I want us to think of it a little different. I will love you if. . . I love you because of.. . I love you in spite of. . . God loves us in spite of.

Let's look on to 4:16-19 . . .

Conclusion

In future weeks we are going to be focusing on the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Love God. Love others. Make disciples. But before we can go there, we must first understand that God loves us. Jesus loved you enough to die for you. The Holy Spirit is available to live with in you and empower you. Have you accepted that love?

That begins by accepting Christ as your Savior.

But it also means to really accept that love. You are loved. You are loved by the creator of the world. You are loved more than you have the capacity to love. Accept that love and be changed forever.