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Sermon Notes

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## **The Second Greatest Commandment**

**Matthew 22:34-40**

Sometimes the simplest acts of kindness and generosity can be an oasis of love in this cold, loveless desert of a world inhabited by 6 billion sinful descendents of Adam

In this case this morning, I remember such an oasis I had while watching the movie “Driving Miss Daisy” ... in which Morgan Freeman plays an African-American man hired to drive around an elderly white woman; the movie depicts their relationship first as employer/employee then ultimately as friends

The final scene of the movie is the one I have in mind: she is elderly and suffering a measure of dementia; he goes to visit her in the nursing home on Thanksgiving and feeds her a piece of pie. As he does so it is clear that he is enjoying the pie just as much as she is... savoring each mouthful as though it were in his own mouth. It is the love of friends, the love that two humans should have for each other...your blessing is my blessing, your happiness is my happiness, your enjoyment of each bite of pie is mine

It is the lack of this love between human beings that has led to all the murders and wars and crimes and abuse that has ever happened in this world

And it is at least in part to establish a world in which a multitude greater than anyone could count from every tribe and language and people and nation will live in perfect unity and love with one another that Jesus died on the cross

He came to put to death all hostility between humanity and to create ONE NEW MAN OUT OF THE TWO THUS MAKING PEACE

In short, Christ died to fulfill the Second Great Commandment—**LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF** and to enable us at last to fulfill it ourselves

Context:

The final week of Jesus’ life

Strife with enemies who are seeking to kill Him

One trap after another: first the Pharisees and Herodians with the question on taxation... a question designed to get Him killed

Then the Sadducees with their ridiculous question about the resurrection

Then this expert in the Law probing Him with this question:

***Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"<sup>37</sup>  
Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'<sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment.<sup>39</sup>  
And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'<sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."***

For the last two weeks, we have worked on the first and greatest commandment

But we cannot ever separate the first commandment from the second

The first commandment is vertical and MUST take priority over our love for each other, because God must always come first

But we cannot love God and hate our neighbors; so the second commandment is like it and must also be obeyed

## I. A Dark History

### A. When the Vertical Goes, the Horizontal Goes with It

1. The Vertical: a right love relationship with God, the Creator
2. The First and Greatest Commandment

***Matthew 22:37-38 "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'<sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment.***

3. When we are loving God properly, we will love our neighbor properly too
4. But if our relationship with God is broken, it is no wonder that horizontal relationships with others will be broken too

### B. Adam and Eve: Marriage Damaged

***Genesis 3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.***

When God confronted Adam about his sin, he sought to blame his wife and also God:

***Genesis 3:12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me-- she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."***

A broken relationship with God inevitable results in broken marriages...

Adam and Eve covering themselves and blaming each other for sin was just the beginning of marital difficulties... all manner of problems would follow this destructive start: conflicts, arguments, dissensions, jealousy, adultery, divorce, and even murder would sully marriage in the generations to come

C. Cain and Abel: Brotherly Love Damaged

D. Lamech: Sin Escalates

E. Noah's Era: All Evil All the Time

F. Jacob and Esau: Brotherly Love Damaged, Part 2

G. Jacob and Laban: Employment Relationships Damaged

H. Joseph and the Patriarchs: Brotherly Love Damaged, Part 3

I. Joseph and Potiphar's Wife: Employment Relationship Damaged, Part 2

## II. The Two Commandments Intertwined

A. True Love for Neighbor Depends on First Loving God

1. You cannot truly love your neighbor without loving God more
2. Loving your neighbor more than you love God is IDOLATRY
3. Thus husbands and wives should NOT love each other more than they love God
4. Parents should NOT love their children more than they love God
5. Truly, a healthy love for neighbor must be a SUBSET of loving God...  
whenever we truly love our neighbor, we are loving God in the very act

B. HOWEVER... True Love for God ALWAYS Results in Love for Neighbor

***1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.***

## III. Humanity Judged Based on these Two Laws

***"All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."***

A. Judgment Day is Coming

B. The Standard of Judgment is the Law of God

1. The Law of Moses... the Ten Commandments
2. The “Two Tables of the Law”... the Vertical: Relationship with God; the Horizontal: Relationship with Other Human Beings

a. The first four commandments—vertical:

- i) No other gods before me
- ii) No idols
- iii) Do not take the name of the Lord in vain
- iv) Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy

Summed up: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all you mind.”**

b. The Second Table of the Law

- i) Honor your father and mother
- ii) You shall not murder
- iii) You shall not commit adultery
- iv) You shall not steal
- v) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
- vi) You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor

Summed up” **“Love your neighbor as yourself”**

C. God Really Intends that the Human Race Obey

1. These are not idle words... they are our LIFE, says the Lord
2. God will hold the entire human race accountable to these two commandments

D. By this Law We Are Condemned

***Romans 3:10-20 "There is no one righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. " <sup>13</sup> "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." <sup>14</sup> "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." <sup>15</sup> "Their feet are swift to shed blood; <sup>16</sup> ruin and misery mark their ways, <sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they do not know." <sup>18</sup> "There is no fear of God before their***

eyes." <sup>19</sup> ¶ *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.* <sup>20</sup> *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.*

1. No one loves God
2. No one loves our neighbor as we love ourselves
3. These two great commandments are not a “how to” manual on personal salvation... they are the death knell of any hopes we had of going to heaven apart from a Savior

#### IV. Law and Gospel: Christ Fulfills the Law

##### A. Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

***Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.***

##### B. Christ Perfectly Loved God

##### C. Christ Perfectly Loved His Neighbors

##### D. This is the Only Hope

***Romans 3:21-24 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.*** <sup>22</sup> ***This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,*** <sup>23</sup> ***for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*** <sup>24</sup> ***and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.***

##### E. Having Been Justified We Are Called to Law Obedience

***Romans 8:4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.***

In other words, we are SAVED TO OBEY THE LAW... these two great commandments

#### V. What Is Love for Neighbor?

##### A. Definition

Love is cheerful sacrifice for the benefit of another person and for the glory of God

1. Love is an AFFECTION... a heart movement toward a person... it must come “from the heart”... this is included in the word “cheerful”

2. Love is SACRIFICE... a willingness to give something valuable... time, energy, money, yourself—your attention, your gifts, your personality... without sacrifice, there is no love; the more sacrifice there is, the greater the love

***John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.***

3. Love results in BENEFICIAL ACTION... some action in the world, something is done to help the person

B. Love is a Feeling... and not LESS THAN a Feeling

1. Common expressions of love FILL the world

- a. “O I love this song! It’s my favorite!!” says a teenaged girl when a certain song comes on the radio, and she turns it up
- b. “I love this time of year” says a woman in the spring, when the warm breezes blow and the flowers are beginning to bloom, when the birds return from their migration, and the days grow longer and brighter
- c. “I just love the mountains, and all the spectacular scenery” says the hiker to his partner as they stand and look out over a scenic overlook
- d. “Daddy loves you SO MUCH!!” says the father after returning home from a week-long business trip and picks up his four-year-old daughter who is running toward him with open arms
- e. “I LOVE chocolate!” says the wife who opens up the surprise package from her husband and finds it to be her favorite kind of chocolate sampler box
- f. “I LOVE March Madness” says the basketball fan as he settles in to watch his favorite team play an opening round game in the NCAA tournament

2. How are all these “loves” related? There is a common theme uniting the movements of the heart toward

- a. A song on the radio
- b. A season of the year
- c. Mountain scenery
- d. A four-year old daughter
- e. Chocolate
- f. College basketball

3. Jonathan Edwards: "Treatise on Religious Affections"

- a. God has endowed each soul with the ability to assess everything in the universe AND to be attracted or repulsed from that thing
- b. The attraction of the heart we call LOVE
- c. The repulsion of the heart we call HATRED
- d. The essence of true religion, according to Edwards is the affection of the heart
- e. This is PRIMARILY expressed toward God
- f. However, it also moves toward neighbor

4. 1 Corinthians 13 makes it plain that actions without heart is not truly loving

***1 Corinthians 13:3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.***

- 5. John Piper, *Desiring God* makes it plain that "disinterested benevolence" is not truly loving
  - a. We must DELIGHT to do others good, or it isn't love
  - b. We should ENJOY blessing others... it should bring us a positive PLEASURE or it isn't love

***2 Corinthians 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.***

- c. A "cheerful" giver... the giving has brought the man three pleasures
  - i) The pleasure of doing good to someone else, alleviating their suffering
  - ii) The pleasure of obeying God and glorifying Him, thus strengthening the relationship with God
  - iii) The pleasure of future reward in heaven, stored up by faith in the Son of God
- d. Genuine love is a FEELING that fills the heart... an internal motivator, an internal ATTRACTION TOWARD the person... "I WANT to bless you, it is my PLEASURE to help you, to bring you joy, to ease your pain and suffering"
- e. Without that feeling, it isn't love... it is acting... it is hypocrisy

Jonathan Edwards: "In some sense the most benevolent, generous person in the world seeks his own happiness in doing good to others, because he places his happiness in their good. His mind is so enlarged as to take them, as it were, into himself. Thus when they are happy, he feels it; he partakes with them, and is happy in their happiness. This is so far from being inconsistent with the freeness of beneficence that, on the contrary, free benevolence and kindness consist in it."

### C. Love Results in Sacrificial Action to BENEFIT someone

1. James makes it plain that true love MUST ACT to meet the need

***James 2:15-17 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.***

2. Therefore, action without feeling is not love
3. Neither is feeling without action love
4. The two MUST work together
5. There must be a cheerful action for the benefit of another person

### D. Jesus' Example... Jesus displayed this MOVEMENT of the heart again and again in his ministry

- i) The widow of Nain, burying her only son

***Luke 7:13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."***

- ii) The leper

***Mark 1:40-42 And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." <sup>41</sup> Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." <sup>42</sup> And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.***

- iii) Martha and Mary

***John 11:33-35 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. <sup>34</sup> And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.***

- b. Jesus readily MOVED inwardly to love us

***<sup>KJV</sup> Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities***

## E. Love Results in Sacrifice

1. As we said in the first and greatest commandment, love ALWAYS results in sacrifice
2. Love is cheerful sacrifice for the benefit of another
3. If we are to obey this commandment, we will have to part with some of this world's goods—some money or possessions; and what is more, we will have to sacrifice some of our time to do it;
4. One of the biggest challenges in living a life of love is GIVING UP YOUR OWN AGENDA for the day; how many times have you seen a motorist broken down by the side of the road or an elderly person with some need, or a poor person begging for money... and have shrunk back from helping because of how TIME CONSUMING it is to love your neighbor...
5. It is so astonishing to me how INTERRUPTIBLE Jesus was

***Matthew 8:5-7*** *When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. <sup>6</sup> "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him."*

***Mark 5:22-24*** *Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet <sup>23</sup> and pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." <sup>24</sup> ¶ So Jesus went with him.*

***Matthew 20:30-34*** *Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" <sup>31</sup> The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" <sup>32</sup> Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. <sup>33</sup> "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight." <sup>34</sup> Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him*

## VI. Two Great Clarifying Texts: 1 Corinthians 13, Luke 10

- A. What Kind of Heart Attitude is Truly Loving? 1 Corinthians 13
- B. What Kind of Sacrificial Actions are Truly Loving? Luke 10 (The Parable of the Good Samaritan)
- C. Love from the HEART: The HEART STATE of 1 Corinthians 13

***1 Corinthians 13:4-6*** *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it*

***keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.***

By giving a list of negatives, Paul trains us that love cannot exist with certain dispositions of character; just as certain chemical spread over your garden will kill every plant in the garden, so these character traits KILL a love relationship

#### a. Love is PATIENT

Long-suffering

A loving neighbor cannot be impatient with his neighbor; this impatience can be seen in common daily life scenarios: in conversation, waiting for the person to finish his story so you can tell your own; in the checkout line at the supermarket, waiting for your neighbor to scan her groceries through so you can do your own

Or it can go to larger things: being impatient with a fellow church member to grow or make changes in his/her Christian life... impatiently wondering why the brother or sister isn't growing more rapidly or why he/she doesn't see things the way you do

#### b. Love is KIND

There is a mildness in the heart toward the person; a melting; a motion of gentleness, and a desire to BLESS

Our nation is more and more characterized by unkindness; unkindness is more than just an absence of kindness; it requires energy to cut someone down with a clever remark, or to show someone up at a meeting, or to grab a parking spot right out from under someone who is lining it up; unkindness is an energetic disposition to hurt someone else in a minor way for one's own entertainment or pleasure

#### c. Love does not ENVY

A loving neighbor must forgo all envy; he must weed it out of his heart; this is hard to do, since so much of the drive of capitalism and the competitive marketplace springs from ENVY:

***Ecclesiastes 4:4 And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.***

A loving person delights in good things belonging to his neighbor; he is happy when his neighbor excels, delighted in his neighbor's blessings

#### d. Love does not BOAST

Boastfulness cannot coexist with love for neighbor; boasting is self-exaltation, usually directly at someone else's expense; it frequently involves either directly or indirectly a put down of the neighbor; "I am the greatest!" said Muhammad Ali... thus he is greater than all

the other boxers that have ever lived; true love for neighbor must turn away forever from boasting; AS WELL AS ITS ROOT...

#### e. Love is not PROUD

Pride is the root sin, causing all others to flow from it; the primary cause of lack of love for neighbor is an overweening love of self; we are PROUD and therefore cannot stand to see any blessing flow to our neighbor

#### f. Love is not RUDE

Again, our culture has become increasingly RUDE... ill-mannered;

One journalist's take on Rudeness in America:

The other day, I went into a juice place, ordered a smoothie and watched the girl behind the counter fill it to overflowing, cram the top on and slide it across the counter at me with such vehemence I wondered if she was in training for some Olympic shuffleboard event. Luckily, my reflexes are quick and I caught it. But then came the challenge of inserting the straw, which of course resulted in the top coming off and the smoothie squishing out all over the counter. She did nothing to assist me as I went through the futile motions of trying to mop up the mess with the tiny squares of napkin they provide. Finally I asked her for another top.

"You mean a lid? You want a lid?" she snarled, before shoving one across the counter.

Increasing rudeness on the roads: you put your directional on, trying to change lanes so you can make a right hand turn off the road; cars actually SPEED UP to prevent you from going over!!

it is rude to interrupt someone; it is rude to cut in front of someone in line; it is rude to receive blessings from someone and fail to express appropriate gratitude; it is rude to behave poorly at the dinner table; it is rude to argue in public; it is rude to talk loudly on a cell phone in public, forgetting the people around you; rudeness used to be trained out of children by something called MANNERS; nowadays, this is not a guaranteed part of child rearing

"PRECIOUSNESS OF OTHERS" is a precept of love; rudeness violates this constantly

#### g. Love is not Selfish

Selfishness and love are polar opposites; so a selfish spirit is not a loving spirit; selfish people pursue their own agenda, feed their own stomachs, press their own passions, seek their own benefits to the exclusion of concern for any other person on the earth

#### h. Love is not easily angered

A loving spirit CANNOT COEXIST with an angry spirit; flaming into anger at the drop of a hat; arguing, irritability, fault-finding, annoyance, an abundance of “pet peeves”

#### i. Love keeps no record of wrongs

Loving hearts are forgiving hearts; a vindictive spirit that cherishes wrongs done by keeping an accurate record of those wrongs is UNLOVING; all of us have that tendency, but it is the opposite of love; along with this is a desire for vengeance

#### j. Love does not DELIGHT IN EVIL

SHADENFREUDE... delight in someone’s demise; celebrating other people’s misfortune or sin

Our culture is rife with this, as I’ve mentioned in past sermons: You Tube videos entitled “The World’s Worst Drivers” elicit prideful laughs all over the country as none of us is able to empathize with someone who just can’t seem to park at WalMart

Even worse is delighting in people’s sins that bring them down—whether a Rick Pitino or a Tiger Woods

#### k. Love REJOICES IN THE TRUTH

Here is the HEART STATE of delight!!!

Here is where CHEERFUL sacrifice comes in

Here is where the two greatest commandments meet... JESUS is the truth... I want my neighbor to know Jesus... God’s word is TRUTH... I want my neighbor to have God’s word

I DELIGHT IN YOUR BLESSING

I DELIGHT IN YOUR Happiness!!

I DELIGHT IN YOUR Health... your success... your joy... your fruitfulness...

I want only the best things for you

Love is therefore a HEART STATE of affection for another person

Next week, we’ll look at the parable of the Good Samaritan to see love in ACTION... love must not remain merely a heart state, but the body will MOVE to bring about benefits for the other

Assess your heart:

Husbands... is your heart still melted toward your wife? Does it still yearn to please her, to make her happy, to bring about blessing for her?

Wives... do you still melt in your heart toward your husband? Is the fire of affection still burning brightly within you, or has unforgiven sin put it out?

Parents... do your hearts go out to your children... do you

Church members... for one another

Neighbors... for one another

For the lost...

How is your heart???

2. Anyone who would seek to love his neighbor MUST weed these evil character traits out of his heart and lifestyle... love does NOT show them
3. Therefore, love weeds out all such sinful actions as well:

***Romans 13:9-10 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.***

- a. Obviously it is impossible for someone to love his neighbor and to commit adultery... he has hated his own wife, his neighbor, his neighbor's wife, their children, etc. on and one
- b. Obviously it is impossible to love your neighbor and MURDER him; and since Jesus linked anger with murder, so it is impossible to call an ANGRY MAN a loving man
- c. So also love rules out stealing from your neighbor; a loving person respects his neighbor's property and actually returns lost possessions, even making an effort to be sure his straying cow is safely returned to him

***Deuteronomy 22:1-4 If you see your brother's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to him. <sup>2</sup> If the brother does not live near you or if you do not know who he is, take it home with you and keep it until he comes looking for it. Then give it back to him. <sup>3</sup> Do the same if you find your brother's donkey or his cloak or anything he loses. Do not ignore it. <sup>4</sup> If you see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help him get it to its feet.***

- d. so according to Romans 13, love does no harm to a neighbor... anything HARMFUL is filtered out by the command "love your neighbor as yourself"

## VII. How Christians Ought to Love their Neighbor

### A. The Pattern: "As Themselves"

#### ***"Love your neighbor as yourself"***

1. A command to love yourself??
  - a. Some follow this approach: "You can't love anyone else until you love yourself..."

- b. So, first, love yourself, and then you will be fit and ready to love your neighbor as yourself
- 2. However, I think the Scriptures indicate we already love ourselves in the way this command wants us to do for our neighbors
- 3. Key verse: Ephesians 5

***Ephesians 5:28-29 husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it***

Every act of kindness and care you show to your own body—physical grooming, feeding, drinking, sleeping, scratching an itch, getting an extra blanket because you’re cold—all of this is evidence that you do love yourselves

- 4. How do we love ourselves?
  - a. Consistently thinking of our preferences, our goals, our pleasures, our desires, our aspirations
  - b. Consistently meeting our own physical needs: food, warmth, relief of pain, sleep, drink, etc.
- 5. This then is how we should love our neighbors... seeing their needs as if they were our own

***Philippians 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.***

The non-Christian is fanatical about looking after his own interests... the Christian adds the interests of others

***Philippians 2:21 everyone looks out for his own interests***

“Looking Out for Number One”

This Darwinian, survival of the fittest, dog-eat-dog, selfishness is at the root of what makes life here on earth so wretched and sin-cursed

- 6. So, a loving Christian learns to see other’s needs as if they were his
  - a. He looks at urban poverty and says “What would it be like if I lived there? What would I need?” He is thinking like Christ... stepping out of his own comfort and self-satisfaction to take on the misery of others
  - b. A Christian looks at the lostness of co-workers and takes on their spiritual emptiness as his own problem

c. He looks at total strangers in public places in terms of “What needs do you have that I can meet? Can I hold the door for you? Can I let you go first in the checkout line? Can I give you the last empty seat on the airplane and wait for the next flight? Can I stop in the rain and help you change your flat tire?”

d. He is loving his neighbor as himself

B. The Measure: “As I Have Loved You”

1. Christ gave us a “New Command”... despite the fact that “Love your neighbor as yourself” is found in the Old Testament

***Leviticus 19:18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.***

2. But yet Christ later will say that He is giving us a new commandment

***John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.***

3. John picks up on this:

***1 John 2:7-8 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. <sup>8</sup> Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you***

How is this a new commandment? Jesus Christ’s example is the most perfect fulfillment of this commandment in history... therefore, Christ adding the words “As I have loved you” is what’s new... a whole new MEASURE of love for our neighbors

***John 15:12-13 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.***

Jesus’ willingness to go to the cross for our sins, to suffer under the wrath of God will forever stand as the measure of Christian love for others

***1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.***

C. The Primary Recipients: Brothers in Christ

1. Our greatest responsibility is to love other Christians

2. In this way we are directly loving Christ

3. Thus does 1 John focus on “brothers”

Thirteen times in 1 John, the apostle commands us to love our brothers

It is clear that he is referring to other believers in Christ:

***1 John 5:1-2 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. <sup>2</sup> This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.***

Our top priority in fulfilling the second great command is to love other Christians and care for their needs

4. Paul makes this priority clear in Galatians:

***Galatians 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.***

D. The Secondary Recipients: Anyone As We Have Opportunity

1. Who is “my neighbor”?

2. Christ answered that question, as well as the other question, “How then shall I love my neighbor?”

***Luke 10:25-37 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup> "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" <sup>27</sup> He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" <sup>28</sup> "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." <sup>29</sup> ¶ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup> In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' <sup>36</sup> "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" <sup>37</sup> The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."***

Who is my neighbor? Any human being who crosses your path...

How should I love my neighbor? Doing whatever is needed to care for him and bless him

#### E. Loving Neighbors Physically

1. Basic necessities: food, clothing, shelter, heat for the winter, medical treatment as needed

***1 John 3:17-18 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? <sup>18</sup> Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.***

***James 2:15-17 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. <sup>16</sup> If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? <sup>17</sup> In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.***

2. It goes beyond this, in the “Sheep and the Goats” account:

***Matthew 25:35-36 I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'***

3. See opportunities and seize them
4. Make certain that you are looking for ways to bless

#### F. Loving Neighbors Spiritually

1. Missionaries who sacrifice their own comforts and ease to go overseas and share the gospel are fulfilling the Second Great Commandment
2. They are sacrificing to meet spiritual needs
3. So it is with any efforts we make in evangelism: any outreach we do, urban ministry, short term mission trip to Haiti, health fair, personal evangelism in the workplace, etc. All of these are fulfillments of the Second Great Commandment
4. So also the counseling ministry... seeking to administer the word of God to alleviate suffering in marriages or personal struggles with sin
5. In all these ways, God is calling on us to obey this commandment

***LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF***