

Why do we need commandments?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 March 2024

Preacher: Rev Gordon Kennedy

[0 : 00] I know there are lots of us here today who can drive. I wonder when was the last time any of those drivers looked at the highway code?

! The morning of our test perhaps. I wonder how many of us drivers would actually have a current copy of the highway code in our homes.

Or ever have thought that it might have changed since we passed our test. We use things like the highway code when we're learning. We learn things and we use guidebooks, perhaps even rule books to help us learn something.

[8 : 48] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. Tell me, how do you do this?

Or you do that? Or you do the next thing? The phrase is saying, everything that makes you, you. Every single part of you and your humanity, you are to use to love God.

Not only will loving God take your whole person, it will take the whole of your existence. All of your life. For all of eternity. To do this.

This is not mastermind. You know that first round in mastermind. What's your specialist subject?

Our specialist subject this week is Scotland's wins of Grand Slams at rugby. Right?

That only happened three times. 1925, 1984 and 1990. I was there for all the home games at two of them. And if any of you think it was 1925, I'm going to be miffed. Only three. It is possible to study those three tournaments.

[10 : 30] To learn what colour of shirts all the teams wore. To learn who played in all the games and when the substitutes happened and who scored when and who did this and what the referee was.

And you can learn everything about three tournaments and your specialist subject and go on mastermind. But loving God isn't like that. It's not finite and limited. It is infinite and unending. You just can't get to the end of it and say, I've done it. There is always something more that we can do to express our love for God with the whole of our being.

And this is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. To love God unendingly, overwhelmingly. And if that's not enough, you shall love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Tell me, how do you do this? More importantly, tell me, how will you ever complete this? When will you get to the end of loving your neighbour?

[11 : 43] Jesus told another lawyer a parable to demonstrate that your neighbour is anyone who needs your help. Anyone who needs you to care for them.

You are to love them. In this context, we define love as seeking the best good of the other. Anyone who needs your help.

Anyone who needs your care. Whoever they are. Wherever they are. Whenever they are. You are to love them. It's not wrong to love yourself.

We are all very good at that. We need trained actually to love others. Because we are so good at loving ourselves. We instinctively grab what we can and keep it all to ourselves like good pirates.

But with the same energy and passion as we love ourselves. We are to love anyone who needs our help. Everyone who needs our care.

[12 : 49] Your neighbour is not limited to your family. To those people you like who live next door to you. To those people who are like you.

It is not limited to those people who can return the favour and do something good for you. Your neighbour is only limited by their need.

Anyone who needs you. Anyone who lacks is your neighbour.

And you are to love them. What the Lord Jesus has done is taken this diminishing question. What is the minimum? How small can we make the requirements?

And he has turned it upside down. And said okay I will give you just two. But see once you think about them. They are not really very minimum. There is no minimum which you can do in your life to satisfy the laws just demands.

[13:56] There is no minimum you can fulfil that will make you right with God. What God requires of the disciples of Jesus is everything. The whole of your being.

Given to love him and to love your neighbour. And this is never ending. So then.

Why do we need commandment? You might think it is a foolish question. Either. We don't want them.

We want to live without them. We want to do being a disciple of Jesus without worrying about rules. But else you think it is so obvious. We need a whole lot of rules.

So that we can satisfy God by obeying our rules. None of those are good answers. Why do we need commandments?

[14:54] The commandments tell us what God requires of us. If Jesus had not spoken these two commandments in this way. We would not know.

That we are to love God and to love our neighbour. The evidence of all human history demonstrates. That instinctively we will not love God.

And we will not love our neighbour. Only under the influence of the gospel. Do we properly love God.

And properly love our neighbours. We need this commandment. To teach us to love one another. And to love God. God's commandments point us out from our selfishness.

Into a shared life with God. And with others. The commandments teach us our limits.

[15:51] Because we can't do them. We cannot do them. Not the labours of my hands.

Can fulfil thy laws demands. We sang it just a moment ago. Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling.

This is what the commandments teach us. We cannot ever. By our obedience. Fulfil the terms of the commandments.

There will always be a part of our life. Which we hold back from loving God. There will always be another person in need. For us to care for.

And love. And I have nothing in my hand. To hold out to my God. That should deserve from him. Salvation. The commandments teach me.

[16:49] And you. That we only ever come to God. Naked. And helpless. In my failure. The commandment does lead me to the cross.

I cannot love God as I should. I cannot love God as I should. But Christ my substitute has. I cannot love my neighbour as I should.

But condemned in my place. And hanging on the cross. Christ does love my neighbour. Apart from the commandments. We would only have small thoughts of the cross.

Christ alone on his cross. Has finished every law. Completed every commandment. Done everything. To fulfil the requirements of the law.

And make us right with God. We cannot have too big a thought of the cross. We need to come more often to the cross. And see Jesus there.

[17:50] And ponder what he has done for us. The commandments show us what the life of a disciple of Jesus is to be.

We do not come to Jesus and kneel at the cross for a moment on Good Friday. And then rise and carry on until the next Good Friday. As though it didn't make any difference to anything in our lives.

The cross of Jesus must radically change us. Transform us into people who aim for these two commandments. Even if we know we can't do them.

That's what we're aiming for. And we're not going to change the target. We're going to keep on depending upon Jesus. And aiming for the love of God.

And the love of our neighbour. We will give our life to love our God. We will give our lives to love our neighbour. Up and out. God and others.

[18:52] This is what the commandments teach us. Love to God and love to all people. This is your life and mine. In this we are informed and directed.

