

The Greatest Command

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Date: 30 March 2025

Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[0:00] We're going to begin our worship by singing to God's praise in Psalm 100, the first version of the psalm, the Scottish Psalter, page 362, the Tunis Duke Street.

Psalm 100, the first version, all people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice and say with mirth, his praise forth tell, come ye before a man rejoice, we'll stand to sing to God's praise.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice, him said with mirth, his praise forth tell. come ye before them and reioice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed, where thy daily feet did us make.

We are his hope, he doth the seed, and for his sheep he doth us take.

[1 : 34] Oh, enter then his gates with peace, approach with joy his courts unjewel.

Praise God and bless this name always. Please, if you pray, if you pray, if you pray, if you
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O times firm he stood and shall proclaim to his endew.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we come thankful for this day, a day that you have given to us, a day set aside for the great joy and privilege and delight of coming to worship you.

We thank you for these words that we have sung together, that we are joining in with a multitude of people who sing praise to you this day, who come to worship you, to hear your word, your very voice speaking to us, for you are one who, your word is living and active, as it says, and we thank you that there is such power in your word to help us in all our daily needs and to remind us that you are God and there is no other.

And help us today that we would come to love the Lord with all our heart and to love our neighbour as ourselves. As we think of who you are, Lord, your greatness, how great you are as creator of heaven and earth, and yet you're the one who draws near to us, the one who shepherds us.

[3 : 54] And we thank you too, Lord, that you give us people in our lives, you give us people around us, friends and families and neighbours and colleagues and even the strangers around us, Lord.

We thank you for the world in which we live in, for the billions of people that there are in it, and everyone is known to you. And we pray, Lord, that you would give all people of this world a sense of wonder of who you are, but also a sense of love towards you.

But I ask, well, Lord, that we would see a people loving their neighbours as themselves, that we would think of places where there are such difficulties and conflicts and wars and so many terrible things happening.

We pray, Lord, for your gospel, the good news of God to help in every situation. So here is today, Lord, look down upon us. We thank you for our young people. We thank you for a time of holiday for the schools, and we pray that teachers and pupils and all the staff would be refreshed and encouraged in this time.

May you bless and watch over all who come and go over these weeks. May you remember us in the church here as well as the holiday tweenies goes on and the creche goes on, Lord. We thank you for all who help in these things and for all who attend and even today that your spirit will be upon us to bless us.

[5 : 16] Watch over us then, we pray, and continue with us. It's all we ask. We ask for the forgiveness of our sin. In Jesus' name, Amen. It's good to see the young ones out today.

I know it's a time of holiday and I hope you all enjoy a good holiday, a break from school. Some of you will be staying at home over the holiday time. Some will be going away. But I think of holiday time as a time just to take our eyes off the busyness of what's happening around us every day, whether it's school work.

You maybe want to put that away for a while. But then you think to yourself, well, what am I going to do? What am I going to focus on? It's not just going to be sleep and eat, I hope.

I hope there's going to be more than that. I'm sure some of you will be helping just now with lambing time. Some of you will be just maybe out and about doing different things. And whether it's at home or whether you're away, keep your eyes out for just different things you might see that you haven't seen before.

And with that in mind, I think of just recently I was in Edinburgh. Hands up if you've ever been to Edinburgh. Anybody ever been to Edinburgh? Yeah, there's a few hands going up all right.

[6 : 25] Who's been on the Royal Mile? Anybody been on the Royal Mile? Do you know where that is? It's near the castle, Edinburgh Castle. The Royal Mile goes up towards it. It's that road. Well, I was at the free church offices, which are just beside the Royal Mile.

And we had meetings there. And that's where I used to go to college when I was training to be a minister as well. And every day, I would be walking up and down the Royal Mile. Not the whole mile, but just a part of it to get to the college.

And so when I was down just now, just recently, I was thinking about the number of times I'd walked up and down. And the many things I hadn't even noticed before. And a place I didn't often pass when I was down in college, but I passed this week, was a place called John Knox's House.

Now, anybody heard of John Knox? He was a very famous Scottish minister a very long time ago in the 1500s. And he was used by God very powerfully in Scotland for the church in Scotland.

And there was this house, it's called John Knox's House. And I thought, wow, that's interesting. It looks a very old building. And it is a very old building. Apparently, it was built in about 1470.

[7 : 37] So that's more than 500 years ago. He didn't always stay in it. There was somebody else in it before him. And what was amazing was on the outside of the walls, there was letters in gold.

And I stopped and I started to think, I hadn't noticed that before. What does it say? Well, what it said was to love God above all and love your neighbour as yourself.

And I thought, wow, that's amazing. Love God as yourself and love your neighbour, love God and love your neighbour as yourself. There's a verse from the Bible in gold on the side of this house.

And it had been there since it was built. Now, in Edinburgh many years ago, there was a fire that destroyed many of the buildings around the Royal Mile. But this one stood.

This one didn't get burnt down. It stood even in the midst of fire. And there's God's word still speaking to us. And the Royal Mile is called such because at the bottom of the Royal Mile is a palace, Holyrood Palace.

[8 : 48] And then on the top of the hill is Edinburgh Castle. And between that, the distance is a mile. And it's called a Royal Mile because the royalty would go from the palace to the castle and back and forth.

And I was thinking, well, imagine how many of these royals and how many of the servants and how many of the people saw this verse? Love God above all else and your neighbour as yourself.

A great reminder to all of us of what's important in life. And this is the text we're going to be looking at today in our service. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself.

It doesn't matter if you're royalty, it doesn't matter if you're a servant, it doesn't matter who you are, this is a great command to us all today. So keep your eyes peeled as to what you might see.

Many buildings, many old places, they very often have Bible verses in there somewhere. And this one spoke to me that week just saying, love God above all else and love your neighbour as yourself.

[9 : 53] So may we be able to do that. Well, we're going to say the Lord's Prayer together now. Let's say the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen. We'll again sing to God's praise.

Now we're going to sing in Psalm 92, again in the Scottish Psalter version. Psalm 92, page 352 of the psalm books. We're going to sing from verse 1 down to verse 6.

The tune is Paisley. Psalm 92 at verse 1. To render thanks unto the Lord it is a comely thing unto thy name O thou most high due praise allowed to sing.

[11 : 00] We'll sing from verse 1 to 6. To God's praise we stand to sing. Amen. To render thanks unto the Lord To desert the living And to thy name, O the Lord, To face the life to sing Thy loving kindness to show forth When shines the morning light And to declare thy faithfulness With pleasure every night

On a tempting instrument Upon the solitary And on the harvest All ensign And gifts with melody For thy Lord, my mighty words Has made my heart my cloud And I will triumph in the words Which by thy hands were made How great Lord, thy words teach God

Of high and deep it is And if thy thy name And if thy thy name Orthrophot We can turn together to read God's words in the Gospel of Mark, in chapter 12.

We're going to take up our reading at verse 28, reading down to verse 40. Mark, chapter 12, at verse 28.

In this passage we read there's a question that one of the scribes comes to Jesus with.

[14 : 09] And what has been happening up to this point is that there have been a number of people coming with questions to Jesus, trying to catch him out. You see at the end of chapter 11 at verse 27 there, the authority of Jesus was challenged.

They tried to catch him out on his authority. And then in verse 13 of chapter 12, they've got a question about paying taxes to Caesar. So they're trying to catch him out politically.

And then in verse 18, they ask about the resurrection. They're trying to catch him out on a theological point. So they're trying to catch Jesus out in all these different questions that they have.

But then there's a sense of change as you come into verse 28 with this question that's asked of Jesus. And this is where we're going to focus our attention today.

So at verse 28 we read, And 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 most important of all?

[15 : 19] Jesus answered, The most important is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

The second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. And the scribes said to him, You are right, teacher.

You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. 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.

And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.

[16 : 35] David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son? And the great throng heard him gladly. And in his teaching, he said, Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like greetings in the marketplaces, and have the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.

They will receive the greater condemnation. And so on. And may God add his blessing to that reading from his word. Well, let's again engage in prayer.

We'll bow our heads in a word of prayer. Our gracious God, we do thank you for your word. We thank you for the wonder of how you continue to speak to us as a people, that you show grace towards us as undeserving sinners.

And yet, Lord, you still desire that mercy upon us, that we would come and know you and love you with all our heart. And we pray today, Lord, that you would bless your word, that you would bless it not just in our hearing here, or to those who listen in online at home, or who at some point come to hear this service.

We pray, Lord, that your word will be blessed to all ends of the earth. For we know that you have your people to all ends. You have your people near and far.

[18 : 07] That you are one who is building his church. And we thank you, Lord, that your kingdom comes with power. And even in the words that we've read, we're reminded of that kingdom and of how this scribe who came to Jesus with a question was told, you are not far from the kingdom of God.

And it can often be a case where we feel close to your kingdom. But sometimes it's so near and yet so far. And we pray today, Lord, that for those who hear your voice and feel that there is still that little distance to be overcome, that you would help, Lord, that by your spirit, you would apply your words to each one of us to remind us of your kingdom and the way to your kingdom.

That is to see that you have first loved us and given yourself for us. And that we would then come to love you with all our hearts. So bless us, Lord, around your word today.

And remember us as a people. Remember us here and remember your people throughout all ends of the earth. So we thank you, Lord, for the power of prayer.

We thank you for the many prayers that will be offered up to you today. Not just here, but through all your people in so many different languages and so many different places and so many different circumstances.

[19 : 32] We thank you that prayer is made to you. And we pray, Lord, that as the hearer of prayer, that you would answer and answer according to your will. And we pray, Lord, today just to see your kingdom come in power, to know that power of Christ in our midst, to know the power of the resurrection, to know the power of your word and your spirit working.

And we pray, Lord, that indeed there would be much blessing and rejoicing to all ends of the earth today. May there be rejoicing in one sinner who repents and one who comes to know you and to love you.

And we thank you, Lord, for all the kingdom work that you are doing. We thank you, Lord, for the way that you remind us that you are building your church. We think even of the Gambia partnership.

Thankful for the very generous collection that was made and for the blessing that that is. It's not just to those who work with the Gambia partnership, but especially to those who receive the Bibles, whether they're written Bibles or audio Bibles.

We thank you, Lord, for the great ways that your word goes out there. We pray that it would be blessed. We thank you for all belonging to our congregation here. And indeed, throughout our island, many people have visited there and seen the work going on and been involved in it.

[20 : 56] And we pray, Lord, that you will bless each one and encourage them in their hearts and help us to have that prayerful awareness of your people there. We thank too of Myanmar and Thailand at this time with the devastating earthquakes there.

Having recently heard of the work of the gospel in Myanmar and thankful for your people there, we pray for all people there just now in the midst of the devastation that has been brought.

The loss of life and those still missing. And we just pray, Lord, for your blessing over them, your help towards them. There and in Thailand as well, Lord, we just pray for even good to come out of even these circumstances that people would recognize their need of you and recognize that you alone are God who is able to help.

We think too of the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and the Ukraine and the devastation that that brings. And we just pray, Lord, for peace. We pray, Lord, to see your power at work in these places.

We pray to see that, Lord, throughout our lands, to give wisdom and help to those who rule over us, to give blessing to people throughout our nations, Lord, to see their great need of Jesus, a Savior who has come into this world.

[22 : 22] I mean, as we think of Easter time and the way the gospel is heard in different places and in different ways, we thank you that there is still that heritage in our land that we are a Christian nation.

And though we may have drifted very far from it, we thank you for the Christian influences around us, even the testimony of your word and of your grace down through the years.

We pray, Lord, that in these days you will have mercy upon us and turn us again towards you. Continue to bless us as we worship you this day, Lord, look after us and all our loved ones as we commit each other into your hands.

Remember those who are away at this time and those who will be coming and going over these weeks of holiday, Lord. Keep people safe and travel and watch over each one. Remember our community, so, Lord, we do pray for your help towards us as a people in all our different needs, those who are unwell, those who are anxious and afraid of the future and what changes might come into our lives.

We think of those who are maybe awaiting test results or anxious about ill health, Lord. We pray for help towards them. And especially at this time, Lord, as we have seen so many deaths in our communities in this past week and even in this day and in the days ahead when there are so many funerals to take place, Lord, we do remember all who mourn and grieve at this time, asking for your comfort and your blessing over each one.

[23 : 51] Especially remember our undertakers at this time and what has been a particularly busy period, Lord. We pray for them, each one, that you will bless them in their hearts and in their souls.

In the midst of seeing so much grief and sorrow, Lord, we pray that you would minister to their hearts and into their lives. We pray that for all who feel that voice of grief at this time, Lord, that you will be near to all such and just pray your blessing over them.

Hear our prayers, Lord. Continue with us in this day and throughout it, Lord, may we be able to lift our eyes to Jesus and look on him, the one who came to die for our sins, but the one who is risen, who is ascended, who is at the right hand of God our Father.

And we pray in his name all of these things with the forgiveness of our sins. In his precious name, Amen. We're going to sing to God's praise again before we turn back to look at this passage.

We're singing in Psalm 43 in the Sing Psalms. Psalm 43, we'll sing the whole of this psalm together. Page 54 of the psalm books, the tune is Finart.

[25 : 07] Come, vindicate me, O my God, against this nation. Plead my cause. Deliver me from wicked foes and hypocrites who break your laws.

And then at verse 3, it says, send your light forth and your truth. Let them direct me in your grace and bring me to your holy hill and to your sacred dwelling place.

We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise and we stand to sing. Amen. Come, vindicate me, O my God, against this nation.

Plead my cause. Deliver me from wicked foes and hypocrites who break your laws.

You are my stronghold and my God. Why then have you rejected me?

[26 : 21] Why must I go about and leave down to the by the enemy?

O Savior, I've forth found your truth. Let them direct me and bring me to your holy hill into your sacred dwelling place.

then to God's altar I will go to God my joy and my delight and I will place you with the hand
O God you are O God you are my Lord O my Why are you I will cast to my soul Why are
you so disturbed in me Trust God for I will listen yet my Savior and my

God is He Amen We can turn back to our reading in Mark chapter 12 and look at verse 28 in this section.

Where one of the scribes came and had heard him disputing with one another and seeing that he answered them well asked him, which commandment is the most important of all?

[28 : 40] That's the question that we see here. And then we see Jesus answering the question. The most important is, Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.

And the second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. What's the best bit of advice you've ever been given?

It might be something that's just stuck with you all your days since you heard it being given to you. Not the kind of advice that says, Why are you doing it like that? You should do it like this.

It's that kind of annoying bit of advice we can often get frustrated with, but a bit of advice that's been given to you and you've thought, I need to listen to that.

But did you listen? Are you still listening to it? It might have been a bit of advice about planning for the future, maybe financially planning your future.

[29 : 43] It might have been about what job to take or not to take as you were considering that. Maybe it's advice you're sort of hearing just now. If you're younger and you're thinking, What am I to do going forward?

Am I going to go to university or college? Am I going to go to work? What should I do? And there's all kinds of advice being offered to you. In the midst of all this advice that's coming your way, the trouble is what to listen to.

And do we listen to it? Somebody once put it like this, The trouble with good advice is that it usually interferes with your plans.

That's often the sense that we get good advice often interferes with your plans. And when you think of the gospel and what Jesus says to us in the gospel, it isn't just advice.

It's not just a bit of advice in the midst of what other people are offering to us. Here is an option for us to listen to. It's not advice. Yes, it's commands.

[30 : 48] And because it's commands, we have to ask ourselves, Are we listening to it? And as Jesus was speaking to the scribes and the Pharisees, as we're reading here, they were hearing what he was saying, and it was almost like they were taking it as advice.

Here is an option for you. But what Jesus was saying, it's not advice, it's commands. And are you listening to these commands?

And as we think of this setting of this passage before us, it's in the midst of Jesus' final week before the crucifixion. And if you like, tensions are running high.

There are those who have seen and heard what Jesus was doing. They've marveled at him, and many have come to follow him. But there are those also who have seen him as more of a threat, someone that needs to be dealt with, someone that needs to be got rid of.

And so there's this tension that's mounting. And ultimately, this tension is going to come to the point where Jesus is put onto the cross, where he's crucified. But before you come to that point, you see that they're trying to catch him out.

[32 : 03] They're determined to get something that they can hold against him. And that's what I was pointing out before we read, as you see at the end of chapter 11 and into chapter 12, they're trying to catch him out on all these different things.

Whether it's his authority or political ways, paying taxes to Caesar, who are we to pay? Or the resurrection and questions of theology.

They're trying to catch him out. Trying to catch him so that they can put down on him. But Jesus, as he answers all of these challenges, he comes to say that you do not know the Scriptures.

You do not understand what the Word of God is saying. If you did, you wouldn't be asking these questions in this way. But then you come into verse 28.

And there's this encounter of Jesus here, and one of the scribes who comes up to him. And they've heard this debate that's going on.

[33 : 12] And you sense there's just something different here. There's something more to this encounter than just trying to trick Jesus or catch him out.

The question that we have here is more looking from the heart. Not to catch him out, but almost coming pleading with a help me understand kind of attitude.

We're hearing what you're saying. And maybe it isn't just advice that we can choose whether we follow or not. Instead, is it a command that we are to obey?

That's what's at the heart of this question. And it's an encounter with Jesus, with Jesus meeting this man. And he's got this question, this burning question in his heart.

He wants to understand. So how do you come to the Word of God today? How do you come here today? Or how do you come as you tune in online to come and hear the Word of God?

[34 : 17] How are you approaching Jesus? Is it to come and find fault with him? To find something wrong with him? To find a reason to turn away from him?

Or are you coming with that heart, seeking to understand? With that longing to come and see for yourself, Jesus, help me. Help me to understand what this means for my life.

Well, Jesus, in the midst of this question that he's asked, gives a wonderful answer that goes right to the heart.

It goes right to the heart of what it means to be saved. It goes right to the heart of what it means to worship. And so what Jesus says to this man and those who are hearing, in his hearing there as well, it is so much to say to us today.

Even just thinking of the context of Jesus here, on his way to Jerusalem, on his way to the cross, to be crucified, knowing what's ahead of him.

[35 : 26] How we often see he has that heart for the people, that longing, that they would come to understand all that he has come to do. How he has come to show them such a great love, and that they are to show him that love in return.

And we want to see three things from this passage together this morning. And the first thing we're going to look at is the question that's asked. And then secondly, we're going to look at the question answered.

And then the third thing is we're going to think of the question applied. So the first thing we want to look at is the question that's asked. And where does this question come from?

Where does this question come from? Which commandment is the most important of all is the question. Where does it come from? Well, the first thing we notice about the question asked is the one who asks the question.

One of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another and seeing that he answered them well, asked him. So who is it that's asking this question?

[36 : 43] It's one of the scribes, one of the teachers of the law. He was one of those who would have been the group who were opposed to Jesus and his teaching. They were looking and seeing him almost as a threat to their authority, to their position.

They were the ones who had the law. They were the ones who told the people what they should do and not do. And so Jesus is a threat to them. And yet with him, with this scribe, there seems to be something different.

He came up and heard them disputing with one another and seeing that he answered them well. What Jesus was saying, it stood out to him.

It made an impact on him. It started to open his mind to something that he was hearing, something different and a different way for him to see things, seeing that he answered them well.

And that's what being in the presence of Jesus can do to you. It can do to us all as we come into the presence of Jesus. We come to hear the word of God speaking to us.

[37 : 58] It reminds us of all that God has done well. All that God has done for us. What he heard from Jesus impacted upon him.

And to this day, that is what it does to people as well. No matter how opposed people might be at first, the word of God is powerful to speak. And we always need to have that in the back of our minds.

Whatever we're doing for the Lord, whatever we're sharing the word of God, the word of God is powerful to speak. We think even of that encouragement with the Gambia partnership and the Bibles going out there, audio Bibles, written Bibles.

That word is powerful to speak. A minister recently was sharing about a home Bible study group that we're meeting through his church.

Different parts of a city they were meeting. And in one group, a woman had come in who was an atheist. She didn't believe in God at all.

[39 : 05] And yet someone had spoken to her and told her about this group that was meeting and invited her along. Probably maybe wondering, I wonder, will she come? After all, she's an atheist.

What interest would she have in the things of God? And yet she did. She came along to this group. Came along one week and listened. And then she was back the next time as well.

She began to enjoy hearing about the word of God, hearing about Jesus, and beginning to question atheism. Is there a God?

Could this God be real? Is this word speaking to me in a more powerful, in a more meaningful way? And that's the power that God's word has.

That's what we see with this scribe who came to ask this question. He came having seen something in Jesus, how he answered well in all the disputes that they had been having.

[40 : 05] And so the second thing we see about this man, the question being asked, is that what he heard was good. And you see that in how he sees Jesus and he answered them well.

It wasn't just a clever answer that Jesus was given. It means more than that. But he answered them well. There was something more powerful about what Jesus was saying compared to anything else that he was hearing.

This word was full. What Jesus was saying had no comeback. We see that and how in all these different ways he'd been asking questions.

You see at the end of this section in verse 34, it says, after that no one dared to ask him any more questions. What Jesus was saying was complete.

It was good. It was full. There was no way of coming back against it. And that's what we can take for ourselves as well of the word of God.

[41 : 15] It gives answers to us that are complete and full. Even the most searching questions that we might have. You have to give the word of God a chance.

So many people just dismiss God's word. They don't want to hear. They think they know the answers. But if you're truly wondering, what does the word of God say?

Well, give it a chance. Have you given the word of God a chance to speak into your heart, into your situation? Or have you just pushed it away thinking you know the answer already?

You think to yourself, what questions do I have that the Bible can answer? Well, come and see the wonderful range of answers that the Bible gives to us about life, about death, about eternity, about all the big issues in life.

We find the word of God speaks into every one of them. It speaks truth. It speaks well. It speaks good. It speaks in a way that we have no way of coming back against it.

[42 : 24] You almost might come to the point where you dare ask no more questions if you're against it because you're afraid the answers might be given to you. If you could ask one thing of the Lord, what would it be?

What question would you want to come and ask the Lord? Well, come with it. Give the word of God a chance to answer those questions. That's what this scribe does.

He has this question that he wants to ask. And the third thing we see about the question being asked, it's a personal question. It's something that's very much weighing heavy upon him.

Probably a question he's maybe been mulling over in his own mind long before he's heard Jesus talking at this point. Wondering, is this really the way we should be living?

You see, the question is so personal. Which commandment is the most important of all? Why is he asking that? Why is he asking about which commandment is the most important of all?

[43 : 30] Well, because as a scribe he was so used to having hundreds of laws, hundreds of commandments that he taught the people that this is how you are to live.

There was more than 600 laws or commands that the people had to live by. And there was always discussion, always debate going on about which were the most important.

Some were of a positive nature, some of a negative nature. And then they were divided into groups of the heavy and the light commands. And so they were weighing down, there was a heavy burden on the people.

They couldn't agree amongst themselves which were the most important ones. And so that's what's behind this question. Which is the most, which commandment is the most important of all?

Of all the hundreds of commands that we have, which is the most important of all? Which one can we focus on? They loved to debate.

[44 : 38] debate. They loved to discuss all these different commands but so often they were just weighing heavy. And that's often the case with ourselves as well.

The questions we have are ones we might love to debate back and forth and discuss in different ways but we have to come to the point and ask ourselves but which is the most important question?

What's the most important thing that we have to focus on? What am I to do? That's what's behind the question that's asked.

Which is the most important commandment? Well we see the answer then is given. It's the second thing we see the question answered in verse 29.

Jesus answered the most important is hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind with all your strength.

[45 : 41] And the second is this you shall love your neighbour as yourself. As well as a good question there is a great answer.

There is a wonderful answer given and as is often the case with Jesus he doesn't bring them something new something that they might find hard to understand. Instead he reiterates what's at the heart of the gospel.

What's at the heart of what they already know from the Old Testament. And what he does here is bring them right back to the very teachings that they have themselves.

In that version 29 where it says hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one. That's a prayer that the Jews had from the Old Testament days.

Still have to this day. It's called the Shema. And it's a declaration they make every day morning and evening. Those words hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one.

[46 : 41] It's a declaration there is only one God. And it goes right back to Deuteronomy chapter 6 hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your strength. these commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your heart.

So he takes them right back to the scriptures of the Old Testament and there it is this prayer that they already knew. Hear O Israel the Lord your God the Lord is one.

You see in the midst of asking all our questions in life what do I need to do? Where do I need to go? How can I find this hope this salvation that Jesus offers?

It's in his truth. It's in his word. It is here before us. And what Jesus does is he sums up for them here this command.

[47 : 43] He says basically come back to this because this is the heart of our relationship with God. It's not about the weighing down of law. It's not about the weighing down of trying to keep the hundreds of laws that are before you in order to be right with God.

That's not what it's about. It's not about sacrifices. It's not about rewards. It's not about any of these things. It's about love the Lord your God with all your heart.

And love your neighbor as yourself. love. You wonder what impact this had on not just on the scribe but on those around.

The same impact as the word of God so often does. Some would listen and some would put it away. But what Jesus is saying to him here is love is at the heart of it.

Love here as you see in English the word love is just one word. But when you look at it in the text itself in the original language it's agape love that we have here which is a love associated with God himself.

[48 : 58] And this is a love that he has shown to us that is behind it all because we can only love when we see he first loved us. And so he's telling us that this love is a costly love.

Just as his love has been a sacrifice that was made. So our love is to have that sacrifice as well. The advice the commands that interfere with our plans that is the ones that we are to listen to.

And because they disrupt our plans or interfere our plans it means there are things we have to leave behind. Attitudes we have to change. Things we have to put away and listen instead to the word of God.

So you have this love that he speaks of here and he says there is no other command greater than these love the Lord your God with all your heart love your neighbor as yourself.

God So as you hear this question it would ask of them it asks of us do I love the Lord with all my heart do I love my neighbor as myself Jesus is here stripping away every layer as he is getting to their heart stripping away all the laws that they have tried to keep all the things that they have tried to do themselves and he is getting to the core he is getting to the center of it all and saying do you love the Lord do you think your heart is right today with God or have the years sort of put layers on top of your heart where you think but I'm a good person I'm doing well!

[50 : 49] things are going! well the Lord kind of just strips all these layers back think of it in this way you've got a wooden bench in the garden it's been there maybe 20 years and every year you've painted it with a gloss paint and just each year put a new coat on top and you think to yourself this bench is fine this bench is good it's lasted for years but you're getting to the stage now you're thinking well it's so many coats of paint now I better strip it right back to the wood and just start with a fresh coat again but to your horror when you strip back all the layers of paint you find the wood underneath is starting to rot all that's been holding it together has been the paint all these layers of paint they've hidden what's at the core of it and so you need to take action well in many ways that's what the word of God does with our hearts as well you think I've been going to church

I've been saying my prayer I've been reading God's word all these layers are building up in your heart and you think everything's fine but behind all that when you strip back is the core and the core is the heart with all your soul with all your mind with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself as all the strips are taken away it asks do we do we love the Lord in that way because that's what is key here the question answered takes away from all the burdens of the law that they were under and just shows them the wonder of the grace of God that is love to us that demands that we love him with all our heart well the final thing we see here is the question applied

Jesus says there is no other commandment greater than these and then verse 32 it says the scribe said to him you are right teacher you have truly said that he is one and there is no other besides him and to love him with all the heart with all the understanding with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices you see here the man is hearing this and he's beginning to recognize he says you're right this moment of dawning you're right the word of God is right you have truly said he says there you have said well you have given almost the word is beautiful you've given such a beautiful answer that is one

God and to love him perfectly and to love others perfectly is more important than all the laws we've been under this man had come to understand truth the truth of God's word the truth of who God is did he believe well Jesus says to him here you are not far from the kingdom of God Jesus is seeing in that there's something working here but it says you are not far from the kingdom of God he's saying you are close but you're not quite there is that you today where the Lord is speaking to you in this way he's saying you're not far from the kingdom of God what's missing maybe you think there's nothing really missing maybe you think

I'm a good person I'm beginning to see that this is truth but Jesus says here there's something still missing with this man you're not far from the kingdom of God it's a reminder to us that it's possible to be a good person to have a good religious upbringing and still be lost it's possible to know the truth and still be lost it's possible to hear the gospel preached all your life and still be lost somebody else it's possible to be within an inch of heaven and still go to hell close is not enough not far from the kingdom of God is not enough is this advice that we choose or not well Jesus has reminded him this is a command you're not far from the kingdom of

[56 : 13] God but he's saying now almost go and do these things go and live in this way love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind and with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself and they you will fulfill the commands of God believe in him what's the best advice the scribe was given well surely it was this command to do these things and what's the best advice for you today it's to see this is not just advice this is a command do this and live that's what the word of God says do this and live believe in him this scribe had to deal with this question here and then and today you have to deal with this question too do you love the

Lord your God with all your heart do you love your neighbor as yourself because it's dangerous to delay and put this away Jesus came to deal with sin that's what we come to see as you look at the gospel and all these commands that he is giving it was leading up to the cross and giving his life for his people that they might live so we need to listen the question is will you will you listen to this command today love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself let us hear the word of God and do let us pray our father in heaven we do thank you for the commands that your word gives to us and the things that we so often struggle with ourselves we know

Lord the frailties of our hearts and the more you reveal them to us Lord the more we see that there is nothing good in us but we thank you Lord for your grace that is able to save and the way that you are able to take our hearts and transform them from the hard hearts that we so often see to the hearts that burn within us with a love for you and so we pray!

we'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 52 to sing Psalm's version Psalm 52 page 69 of the psalm books going to sing verses 8 and 9 and the tune his brother James is heir Psalm 52 at verse 8 but I am like an olive plant in God's house growing free I trust in God's unfailing love to all eternity we'll sing these two verses to God's praise but I am like an olive plant in God's growing free I trust in God's unfailing love to all eternity

I trust in God's unfailing love to all eternity I'll praise you ever for your deeds my hope is in your name and in the presence of your saints I will extol your faith and in the presence of your saints I will extol your faith after the benediction I'll go to the main door we'll close the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forever more

[61 : 13] Amen voy! voy voy voy voy voy voy voy! voy voy! voy voy voy! Thank you.