

“Authorized by Jesus: to live love”

Scripture: Matthew 22:23-36

Graphic: all access pass, restricted area

Key Verses: 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.'

Theme: Through Jesus, we are given a full access pass to the kingdom of God. With that, comes great responsibility...to love, to give, to live, to bear fruit, to come, and to go! To love God is to love your neighbor, living God's love in their life. We love God by obeying Him, and love others by caring and witnessing to them.

1) Introduction

- a) Turn with me to Matthew 22, verse 23...
- b) Before we get to the main part of our text today, I wanted us to just hear this additional story that took place with a different group of religious leaders than the Pharisees.
- c) Now, we've been hearing about how the Pharisees, the religious leaders of Jesus' day, were trying to trap him so they could get rid of him, right? It didn't work, did it?
- d) But the Pharisees weren't the ONLY group of religious leaders in the Temple...another group was called the Sadducees.
- e) And we're like, "Why are there two groups of religious leaders?" Inquiring minds want to know. Well, similar to today, we have different groups operating in the church, some might call them denominations, some might call them factions...but they exist primarily because they don't agree on some things.
- f) The Sadducees and the Pharisees didn't agree on things like the existence of angels and spirits, and resurrection from the dead. The Pharisees believed that those things existed and the Sadducees did not. Which makes this story great...let's look at verse 23...
- g) READ MATTHEW 22:23-33
- h) These Sadducees, WHO DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, were trying to trap Jesus into talking about the DETAILS of something in which they didn't believe.
- i) But Jesus, right (?), turns the tables AGAIN! (turn to your neighbor and say, *Jesus did it again*)...
- j) The Sadducees were like, "In the resurrection (snicker, snicker) whose wife will she be?"
- k) And Jesus said, "You're wrong!" Actually, he said, "The question you're asking is the WRONG QUESTION!" It doesn't matter! You don't know – here's the great part, right? Jesus is talking to the RELIGIOUS LEADERS...wealthy men who have STUDIED the Torah – "You don't know the scriptures OR the power of God"

- l) “In the resurrection, people are like angels...angels aren’t married (except the one who married ME, of course)...but your missing the point.”
- m) The point is: There WILL BE a resurrection...and those who put their faith in God, WILL BE IN IT!
- n) And then Jesus rattles off this list of guys who the Sadducees would think were the bomb! Abraham...Isaac...Jacob!
- o) “Isn’t God the God of THOSE guys?,” Jesus was saying? Sure!
- p) God is the God of the LIVING and not the dead...and so, if that’s true, then THOSE guys must be in line to be ALIVE in the resurrection, just like each one of us! God is the God of the living...
- q) Today, we’re finishing up this series of messages on the authority that Jesus gives to DO certain things in response to our faith in his salvation power...in our hope of the resurrection when He returns...
- r) That through HIM we are given full access to the kingdom of God.
- s) Yet, clearly, when we have full access to the Kingdom of God, it isn’t simply to enjoy the party in the future eternity in the resurrection...there’s work to be done...God is the God of the living!
- t) Access to the kingdom of God gives us a calling to the WORK of the kingdom NOW.
- u) And in the rest of the text for today, we are given CLEAR instructions about what we are to DO as authorized agents of Jesus Christ in this world, today.
- v) Are you ready and alive? Let’s pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 34-35

- i) See the Pharisees saw that the Sadducees got taken to the same woodshed that Jesus had taken them now, like, three other times.
- ii) And just like the bully on the school playground who sees another bully taking on his territory, the Pharisees were re-motivated to try to trap Jesus.
- iii) ...and we just shake our heads...again...
- iv) But this time, they sent the expert of the experts...this will REALLY get him.
- v) Verse 36...

b) Read verses 36

- i) Quick background here...the Pharisees believed that every single law of the 600+ laws was of EQUAL importance. It didn’t matter whether the law had to do with worship, sacrifices, daily living, repentance, whatever...they were all EQUAL.

- ii) And so, knowing that, does this question make any sense?
- iii) Verse 37...

c) **Read verses 37-40**

- i) There is an important confessional statement in the Jewish tradition based on Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and it's called the Shema.
- ii) It goes like this: Shema, Yisrael, Adonai, Elohenu, Adonai, echad.
- iii) Which means, "Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is One."
- iv) That is the foundational confession of the fact that God is the ONE true God.
- v) And right after that in Deuteronomy 6:5, we read these words, that may be familiar to you, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might"
- vi) Where have we heard THAT before, right? Jesus is plucking the greatest commandment from the greatest confession in the Jewish faith, of which these Pharisees were supposed to be the greatest champions, but who were the greatest failures, and telling them that THIS was the greatest still!
- vii) And one just like it, "...to love your neighbor as you love yourself..." which Jesus quoted from Leviticus 19:18. Which says, "you shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, **but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.**"
- viii) And on THESE two commandments, hang all the law and prophets.
- ix) Everything that God had ever said to his people. Everything that has ever been spoken by the mouths of the prophets regarding how God's people are supposed to respond to God...every word of instruction in the Bible can ultimately be boiled down to loving God and loving other people.
- x) And I challenge you to find something that does not fit that paradigm...something that God has commanded us to DO that, ultimately, does not fall into loving God and loving our neighbors.
- xi) But how do we love God and how to we love our neighbors?
- xii) Is loving God about feeling "in love" with God the same way we might feel "in love" with our high school sweetheart?
- xiii) If that's the case, then in those times when you feel distant from God because you FEEL like God's abandoned you, or that you don't have a friend in the world who will listen to your pain...do you still love God? Does God still love you?
- xiv) Loving God can't possibly be dependent on what I feel about God.
- xv) Loving God can't possibly be the same as my affections for those people around me.

- xvi) Simply offering our best to God is not sufficient to fulfill the heart of God's commandments. What I can offer is so inconsistent and misguided, sometimes.
- xvii) Loving God is not about affection FOR Him, but about obedience TO HIM. The affection is a product of our obedience to Him.
- xviii) And if that's the case, and Jesus told us to love our neighbors, then that's what we should do...
- xix) And when Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven AND on earth has been given to me. GO THEREFORE and MAKE DISCIPLES of ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to OBEY everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." If we believe that Jesus said that, then that's what we should do...
- xx) To love God IS to love our neighbors by sharing this AWE – (what's the word?) AWESOME news about a loving God. To love our neighbors is to obey what God has asked and that shows our love for Him...to live love for God and others...
- xxi) Let's finish strong, shall we...look at verse 41...

d) Read verse 41-46

- i) The Jews were waiting for the Messiah to come. They were waiting for someone from the line of King David to come and save Israel.
- ii) Jesus was trying to get them to understand that HE INDEED was the Messiah.
- iii) This final exchange, with Jesus, now, asking the questions, pointed them to the fact that the Christ (in the Greek) would come, from David's line, but would not be less than David (David's son), but would be greater than David, Lord and Master...
- iv) And they couldn't answer the question! They were finally silenced.
- v) How could the baby that Mary delivered, as the song goes, soon deliver us?
- vi) It's kind of ironic that the Pharisees were silenced by Jesus in this final debate. In a few days from this incident, the very next time Matthew records that Jesus speaks to the Pharisees, Jesus is standing in the court of the temple, silent...as they accuse him falsely of pretending to be God. And they arrest him and they throw him in jail...and then they murder him on the cross...
- vii) In all these encounters with the Pharisees – everything the religious leaders could throw at Him, Jesus has shown us that he is the victor. In the cross and tomb, and in all the challenges that he faced, Jesus showed that he is the victor.

3) Applications

- a) He has shown us, again, that He is worthy to be called the Christ...the Messiah...the Chosen One of God...

- b) Jesus has shown us in these verses that the way of the Kingdom of God is clearly at odds with the way of the world.
- c) Our worship, which sings “Jesus, Name above all names, wonderful savior, glorious Lord, Emmanuel, God is with us, precious redeemer, living word,” is in a theological debate with our culture. A culture that celebrates wealth, self, and stealth. A culture that wants to mind its own business while telling the world their opinion about a God they don’t know.
- d) And I can tell you it’s not just adults that are debating this in the break room and on cable news. Our youth are fighting this battle for obedience to God on Facebook and at their lockers. I’ve seen it...
- e) Thank God for Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...
- f) Jesus has handed to you, through his death and resurrection, an All Access Pass to understand and live out the purposes and will of God: to be in relationship with Him who created us.
- g) The pass we are given is for the hard road to take.
- h) The motivation to love God through being obedient to Him and loving the people around you is the road that is challenging. But because of Jesus, Lord, it is the road we are called to take, without excuses.
- i) It calls us way out of our comfort zone...
- j) Jesus leads us to places we never thought we would be, doing things we never thought we would do, with people we never thought we would meet. Maybe in your...maybe halfway around the world in a country that needs Jesus as much as anywhere...
- k) Grab that pass that was given to you when you came in. (make sure everyone has one)
- l) That pass in your hand is some silly little piece of paper and plastic that Kathy and Stacy and I created this week.
- m) It’s not a magic talisman that will instantly turn you into an evangelist or preacher.
- n) And I wanted this pass to be useful to you as you pray about the people in your life that have so far rejected the grace that God offers them through Jesus.
- o) And on the back of that pass, you’ll read that, “The bearer this pass has been authorized by Jesus to share your faith in Him with the world”
- p) And because I wanted this to not just be a trinket to simply throw away, I included a graphic that can help us explain to our neighbors the salvation message of Jesus.
- q) And this is most effective when used one-on-one with someone who has a relationship with you...and who the Holy Spirit has opened to hearing what you have to say.
- r) Maybe it’s a friend at the breakfast table at the Rowdy Rooster. Maybe it’s a co-worker who is looking for answers to questions about faith and life. Maybe it’s a son or daughter that wants direction. Or a parent who sees something in you that they don’t understand.

- s) I pray that it will remind you, every time you look at it, that Jesus has done the groundwork so you can share your faith in Him. We, as His followers, authorized by Him, have the task of living the love of God.
- t) It's the hardest thing that Jesus calls us to do and the only thing he calls us to do.

4) Conclusion

- a) So that's it...five weeks of watching Jesus fight with the Pharisees, Herodians, and the Sadducees.
- b) Five weeks of hearing that because of the sacrifice that Jesus made and the place he now has at the right hand of God, we – the people called Christians – have been authorized to come to the feast, to go out to the fields, to bear fruit for the Kingdom, to give as God's leads us, to live, and to love.
- c) Have confidence that your life with Christ IN it is being used by God for the work of the kingdom.
- d) God is powerful and true. You have been given full access to that power as you respond by loving God and loving your neighbor.
- e) Go out from here with the same command that the disciples went out from Jerusalem – share the Good News about Jesus Christ with the world.
- f) Let this (pass) be a reminder every day that you have been authorized to do it in Jesus' name...
- g) Let's pray...