

Would the church here at Blodgett be blessed by increased attendance, more Bible reading, better contribution, more prayers offered up on its behalf, etc. – of course it would. It would certainly be a blessing if more people here in this community were dedicated to serving the Lord. The focus of today’s lesson is to offer one “rock solid” way that will motivate people to do these things. This motivation is seen in the answer our Lord gave to question, “*Master, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?*”

Now when Jesus was asked this question, He didn’t say, “*Where did you ever get the idea that one commandment is more important than another?*” Instead, he actually identifies a commandment as being the number one commandment of all. In addition, he threw in the second greatest commandment as well. So we wonder why these two commandments are the greatest commandments of all. Let’s notice the text in Matt 22. In v34 the Pharisees were looking for a way to trap Jesus so they had a lawyer ask Jesus which was the greatest commandment? The Sadducees had failed, now the Pharisees would take their shot. There had been an ongoing debate over this exact matter. So they want Jesus to weigh in on this matter. Notice that Jesus does not give one of the Ten Commandments as the greatest as you might expect. Instead he quotes Deut 6:4 ff.

***Matthew 22:37-40*** *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* The common factor in both of these commandments is love. As we consider this point and the impact love will make, let’s begin with the second commandment and then backtrack back to the first one.

Turn it Romans 13:8. ***Romans 13:8-10*** *Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* Now five of the Ten Commandments are repeated with the conclusion to love your neighbor. ***(9) For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*** If I love my neighbor as myself, then I won’t commit adultery with his wife, I’ll

not steal from his workshop, I'll not lie about his character or covet what he has. V10 gives us the sum of the matter. ***(10) Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*** If you have a man that loves his neighbor, then you want have to worry about this man harming his neighbor.

Now the same principle is true with our relationship to God. What will make me want to obey the commandments of God? Well, the answer is love. ***If you love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15).*** Now this is a short but powerful verse. While in some aspects we may love God, we really don't love Him totally if we fail to do what He has asked us to do. Now the question is raised, why should I love God to this degree? What will make me love Him so much that I will embrace an active life; that I will want to study His word; that I will not forsake the assembling but rather be here at every service. Secondly, if I loved God that much, how would it be seen in my life and how would that affect the church here at Blodgett? If each of us loved God as Matt 22 suggest would it make a difference in our congregation?

Let's consider these two questions. We find the answer to the first question in 1 John 4. In v 8 we are informed that ***God is love.*** Then v 9 gives us reason for knowing that God is love. ***1 John 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*** God demonstrated his love for us by sending his ONLY BEGOTTEN SON into the world so that you and I might live. ***1 John 4:19 We love him, because he first loved us.*** When you consider what God allowed Jesus to do for us, there is not a reason you can have by comparison for not assembling together; for not praying; for not serving. As you picture Jesus being stretched out on the cross, what he asks of you and me is pretty trivial.

I want us to consider how Jesus shed his blood as you to ask yourself, "*Why should I love God with all my heart, soul and mind?*" In Luke 22 I see Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane in agony. ***Luke 22:44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*** Luke, the physician, is the only one to mention the bloody sweat. You've heard about this before about how under extreme stress how the human body blood

capillaries near the surface of the skin rupture and a person sweat glands mingle with that blood and he literally sweats drops of blood. This is called hematuria and its occurrences are very rare but there are other documented cases. But as I get older, the more I appreciate the bloody sweat. There has never been anyone under more stress than Jesus that night in the garden as he was in the wake of bearing the sins of mankind on his back. They hadn't driven a nail in Jesus yet or slapped him one time, but he was already feeling the effects of the cross by bleeding and crying out, "If it's possible let this cup pass from me." **Luke 22:42** *Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.* You see, we can read v42 in mechanical fashion or read it trying to feel the emotions of the words were spoken.

Now go with me to John 19. **John 19:1-3** *Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. (2) And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, (3) And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.* How can a person read these words without feeling a love for the Lord? If you were to be scourged, in some way your hands would be fasten to a solid object like a post so that you could not go anywhere. Then the person with the whip called a flagrum stepped forward to lacerate your back. This whip had sheep bone or stone or other metal objects attaché to the end so as to rip the flesh when it comes across the back with force. It will mutilate the muscle. It's been said of Jesus, "They beat our Lord until his skin is hanging in long ribbons of flesh and his shoulder blades looked whitecaps in a sea of blood, and with every blow his flesh quivers." Why should I love Him with all of my heart, soul, and mind and want to do what He has asked me to do?

John 19 then mentions a crown of thorns. These thorns were pressed down on Jesus brow and a purple robe placed on him as a means of mockery. Notice a couple of things that Matt 27 says about this. **Mat 27:29-31** *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: Oh king Jesus, here's your scepter and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! (30) And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.* Notice that they took this reed and began to hit him on the head. He

has the thorns on his head. What is going to happen if he is hit in the head? Those thorns are going to be driven even deeper into his brow. Since the head area bleeds more than any part of the body, Jesus head began to bleed profusely. I think Jesus was beaten beyond recognition. *Isa 52:14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:* “Visage was marred” means his view was disfigured. He had been beaten and slapped so much that he didn’t look like himself. Why should I love him?

V30 of Matthew says that they spit in his face and mocked him. The people reviled him but according to Peter. *1 Peter 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:* In fact, it was these people that Jesus cried out from the cross for their forgiveness. I am amazed at his forgiving nature after v29 of Matt speaks of them making fun of Jesus by bowing down to him and mocking him, *Hail, King of the Jews!* Does this make you mad? Does this touch some emotion within you? I hope so. I hope this bothers you enough that you will want to obey him and keep his commandments.

Then they made their way to the hill named Golgotha and there they nailed him to the cross. You know the story. In your mine you can picture them driving the nail through the flesh of his hand and into the wood, through the flesh of his feet and into the wood. The pain excruciating and he struggles to breath. While he is suspended on the cross, there is nothing to take away the pain and even the flies and birds could come and he could do nothing about it. If the blood and sweat dripped into the eyes and they begin to burn, there was nothing he could do about it. All this went on for some six hours.

Since he bore the sins of us, God could not be with him because God does not associate with sin. So Jesus in addition to all that had happen was forsaken even by His Father. So in Matt 27:46 he cries out, *My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* All you have to do is look into the mirror for the answer. I needed salvation and without the blood of Jesus Christ I could never have it (Eph 1:7). So in our mines eye we see him dying on the cross. Why should I love him?

Now for the application part. If I loved God that much, how will it change me? If I love God this much I won't ask how many times I have to come to services to please Him. The story is told of a couple several years ago that had a long distant relationship. They were engaged but 300 miles separated them. On week-ends he would drive those six hours one way just to spend time with her. Do you think he had to go to a love enrichment seminar to be motivated to go see her? No. Love for her was his motivation. No one had to knock on his door Sat. morning and tell him that he needed to get up and go see his fiancée. Now after sharing a good week-end together, do you think he said to her, *"It's been a real pleasure; but do I have to come see you again?"* Of course not, he wanted to come every opportunity that he could. So it is with the Lord. Because of genuine love, we should want to come together to be in His presence during worship.

*A preacher once told a story about several of his church friends that rented a gym in town and played basketball. He told how one night just two showed up, the preacher and one other. While they waited, the other fella was really getting quite perturbed. He said how inconsiderate the others were for not showing up and not even calling. He complained about how they made a commitment to be there and now they were not; and on and on like this he raged. The preacher thought to himself how this fella was carrying on yet he rarely attended worship services. Finally he asked the man why he was there. He said, "Because I love basketball."*

What's going to make me read this book more? ***1Tim 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.*** We have the commandment; but what will make me want to keep this commandment? What do you think that engaged couple just mentioned did with the letters that they wrote to each other during their time apart. Image I go over to his house and notice the letters from her laying in a stack on the table. I asked him about them and he said that they were letters from his fiancée. I comment that they appear not to have been open to which he says, *"Well, I just been so busy, I haven't had time to open and read them. But when things slows down a little bit, then I'm going to sit down and read them all."* We know better don't we. We know that he would open and read those letters as soon as he received them. He even kept them so that he could read them again later. Why, because he loved the writer. If I love

God with all my soul, heart, strength, then I will want to know about him and how he thinks and what he wants me to do. I will want to read his message to me. When we love the author, then God's word will be more and more captivated to us and it's going to compel us more.

There is the matter of prayer. The couple in love use to talk occasionally on the telephone. This was before cell phones and you had to pay to make a long distant call. Often he would make the call just to hear her voice because he loved the person on the other end of the line and wanted to talk to her. When I love God with all of my heart, soul and mind, it won't be any trouble for me to pray without ceasing. Prayer will become the most natural thing in the world. I want to show God that I love Him so I talk to Him through Christ often.

What about evangelism. How hard would it be for some of you to talk about your grandchildren; or maybe the sports team your kids/grandkids play on? We are so quick to talk about those things because we love those things. This makes me wonder why we are so seldom heard talking about Christ and His church. ***Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment.***

What will the love for God do to my giving? To love of God with all my heart, soul and mind will help me obey those passages that are so familiar to us about giving. With the right perspective of love, our giving will be generous and from the heart. . Of the church in Macedonia, Paul wrote, ***2 Cor. 8:3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;*** They gave of themselves and that's where it begins. Yielding ones will over to the will of the Lord. Show me the person that gives his will to the Lord and I'll show you a person that will be at all the services that he can, someone that want to read and study the Bible. I'll show you a person that will have an active prayer life; telling others about Christ and He will be a generous giver. It all starts with loving God.

Invitation