

## With All Your Heart

Jeremiah 17:7-10; Matthew 22:36-40

Sunday, October 25, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

### Introduction

I remember listening to the story of a professor who led a student short term missions trip to a hostile country. He and his group had a wealthy benefactor who promised them all the financial support that they would need, only to abandon them once they arrived in the country. They managed to finish their goals and make it back to the United States, but it was a very difficult and nerve-wracking experience. They were not sure they wouldn't be stranded thousands of miles from home until the last day when they boarded a plane to return. The professor was livid with the unfaithful benefactor and he was mad at God as well. At one point during the trip home he prayed, and during the prayer told the Lord that he would never treat his son the way God had treated him. The professor concluded the story by saying that he felt, or somehow experienced a response from the Holy Spirit. He said that God told him, "finally would be speaking to me the way a son would speak to his father." There is something to being honest with the Lord in prayer that, I believe, is part of loving God with all your heart. Let's take a look at that phrase.

### Set the stage

Jesus is having his final debate with the religious leaders of the day when one of them asked Jesus a classic question. He asked, "what is the great commandment in the Law?" Rabbis and scholars found this to be a popular question to try to find that one verse of verses that served as the sum total of the entire Old Testament. One answer was Habakkuk 2:4b, "But the just shall live by his faith," but Jesus chooses two separate verses. One is Deuteronomy 6:5, part of a passage so famous that it has its own name, the "Shema" and was recited by the people twice a day. The other was Leviticus 19:18, part of which tells us to "love our neighbor as ourselves". The context of the two is interesting, in that the "Shema" tells people to love God by teaching Scripture to children and Leviticus tells us to love one another by being honest when we disagree or have a complaint. For today, let's just look at the phrase to "love the Lord with all your heart."

### Love the Lord with all your heart

not precise categories

When Matthew recorded the words of Jesus, he wrote, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." It's not quite the same. I think the point is that "heart", "mind", "soul" and "strength" are not precise categories but rather listed for emphasis. We are to love the Lord our God with everything we have.

know well enough to teach

If we look at the context of the passage in Deuteronomy, we find that one way to love the Lord God with all our heart is to know the Word of God well enough to teach it effectively to children. It is said that if you want to learn something well, commit to teaching it to others. That will force you to learn your subject well. But I'd like to consider another application of loving the Lord with all our heart.

The main point for today is that He knows what is in us anyway

I'll give you a couple of examples: Luke 9:47 says "And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him..." Knowing that they were arguing over who was greatest, He challenged them to be child-like in their faith. The point is that He knew their hearts. Even more telling is the words of the prophet Jeremiah (17:9)

**Jeremiah 17:9-10 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

<sup>10</sup> I, the LORD, search the heart, *I* test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

This verse runs counter to the notion that we must be true to ourselves and "be who we are" and follow our heart, because our heart can deceive us. We don't know the true state of our hearts, but the Lord does. Nothing is hidden from Him.

Application: be completely honest with the Lord

And this leads us to our application: be willing to be brutally honest with the Lord in prayer, and as much as you can, be honest with each other. The Holy Spirit already knows everything that is in us, so there is no sense in not being honest in prayer. Perhaps that is one way of loving the Lord with our whole hearts, that we be honest with the Lord in prayer. We're not always happy, life is not always easy and being a Christian can be very challenging. A loving child can be real with his parents, we can be real with the Father.

Conclusion

Jesus said that one of the two verses that encapsulate the whole of Scripture is to "love the Lord with all your heart." Considering what is sometimes in our hearts, one application of loving the Lord is not prayers of flowering language but honesty in prayer. God already knows what is in our hearts, and He told that upset, frustrated professor that He valued his honesty. That is part of loving the Lord with all our hearts.

