

JESUS EXPLAINS THE WHOLE BIBLE  
Matthew 22:34-46; Trinity 18; October 2-3, 2021

The text for today's sermon is the whole Bible. The Bible has 66 books in total, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. A typical Bible in English has more than 1,200 pages. How can a single sermon cover such a large and broad subject as all of God's Word, the whole Bible? It would seem an impossible task. Clearly, such a sermon could only touch on major points without going into much detail. But to be faithful to God's Word it would also have to be very specific and go beyond vague generalities.

In the week leading up to Jesus' death and resurrection, He spent a lot of time in the temple courts teaching the people God's Word. Jesus also got questions from His religious adversaries, the Pharisees and Sadducees, in attempts to trap Him in His words and test His understanding of God's Word. Today's Gospel from Matthew 22 relates the final question that anyone dared ask Jesus then. **"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And 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. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."**

By **"all the Law and the prophets"** Jesus meant all the books of what we call the Old Testament, Genesis through Malachi. The "Law" is an unfortunate translation of the Hebrew *Torah*, a word meaning "instruction," designating the five books of the Bible by Moses including everything God did to create and save His people. The "Prophets" includes everything else in the Old Testament, the books of the prophets as well as all the historic and poetic books. Jesus said that these commands of God summarized the whole Bible of His day.

**"Which is the great commandment in the Law?"** Jesus answered, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."** The great commandment summarizes who the only true God is, the Lord, and what it means to have faith in that God.

The second commandment from God describes how our love and faith in God is expressed toward our neighbors. **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** These two commandments are often used to summarize the two sections of the Ten Commandments, the first three about our love for God and the last seven about our love for our neighbor. Jesus says that the whole Bible of His day, what we call the Old Testament today, hang on these two. **“On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”**

Based on how Jesus answered, we might led to think that the whole Bible is basically a bunch of rules handed down by God, but we would be misunderstanding what Jesus said. The Lord our God we are commanded to love is the One God who saved His people and set them free from slavery. The command to love the only true God comes out of His love for us. God does not want us going after other gods, who are always false, because they can only lead us into sin and death. God’s desire for us to love Him only is to keep us from returning to the slavery to sin from which He has set us free.

From the first temptation of Adam and Eve by the devil in Garden to turn against this God all the way through unbelievers today, the problem is always the same. Sinners reject the Lord God for something or someone else, and for false reasons. The true God who is rejected is not who people think He is. This becomes obvious when people say things like, “Why would I want to be a Christian? It means following a bunch of rules that take away my freedom.”

People who think that faith in God is primarily about following rules believe in a different and false god. Ever since Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in an effort to free themselves of God’s laws, people have believed the lie that faith in God limits our lives and the only way to truly enjoy life is to take charge and make ourselves into our own gods. Take a good look at our world; how well that has worked out?!

The “first and great commandment” directs us to the true God and Lord who has loved us from the very beginning. Behind this commandment is the God who gives us every reason to love Him with all our heart, soul, and mind.

Our love for God then leads us to love our neighbor, the second commandment. It basically tells us that our love for our neighbor is a reflection of God's love for us. How does God love us? He puts us first even though he doesn't need to. God wants our love, but doesn't need our love. It is our neighbor who needs our love, just like we need God's love for us. God's second commandment to "love our neighbor" is Him saying to His people that He loves our neighbor through us. In the same way that God loves us by putting us and our needs first, we love our neighbor by putting his or her needs before ours. When God commands us to love our neighbor, it is not so He can get what He wants from us, but so our neighbor gets what he or she needs from God through us. \*(LWML Sunday, 1 Pt. 4:8, "Keep loving...")

After Jesus summarized the whole Old Testament by answering the question about the great commandment, He asked His own question, which connects the Old Testament to the New Testament, the books starting with the Gospel of Matthew through the Book of Revelation. **Jesus asked them a question, saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, in the Spirit, calls Him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies under Your feet'? If then David calls Him Lord, how is He his Son?"** Jesus is quoting Psalm 110:1, a Psalm of David.

I have to be honest. Every time I read this verse I have to stop and figure out who each of the "Lords" refer to as well as the possessive pronouns "my" and "your." David the psalmist is speaking, but who is he talking about? Before I try to unravel this convoluted verse, I'll give you the answer, which is straightforward. The answer is Jesus. Who is the Son of David? Jesus is the Son of David. And Jesus is the Son of God, the Lord. Understanding what the whole Bible is saying depends on knowing who Jesus is.

One of the reasons why Psalm 110:1 can be difficult to understand is that both the Greek translation of the original Hebrew in Matthew's Gospel as well as our English translation of it use the same word "Lord" for two different words in the Hebrew. Being able to know this is one reason why our church encourages pastors to learn biblical languages. Let's unravel this key verse.

**The Lord said to my Lord.** The first “Lord” David refers to is the LORD of the Old Testament who reveals His personal name to His people, a name that they can call upon. Sometimes this name is pronounced in Hebrew as “Yahweh”, or as “Jehovah.” When God’s name Yahweh is translated as LORD in our English Bibles, it is typically printed in all capital letters. Maybe you noticed this in our Old Testament Reading for today from Deuteronomy ten. This LORD is the LORD of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment: **You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.** David begins: **“The LORD said.”**

So who is David referring to secondly as his, **“my Lord”**? This “Lord” in Hebrew is not Yahweh, but, “Adonai,” a more general word for master or ruler. This “master/ruler” also happens to be David’s eternal Son, the King who would rule on David’s throne forever, the promised Messiah, the Christ. Jesus’ question focuses on this point: **“What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”** Jesus got the correct answer from them: **“The Son of David,”** who is the Christ. The tricky part is Jesus’ follow-up question, **“If then David calls Him Lord/Master, how is He his [David’s] Son?”**

Jesus, the Son of David through the Virgin Mary, is also the Son of God the LORD, Yahweh, One with the Father and Holy Spirit in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. If you find this verse confusing, you are not the only one! But even though this is complicated, it is really quite simple and straightforward. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of David and God’s Son. You know who Jesus is and what He has done for you. If you know Jesus, you understand what the whole Bible is all about.

Jesus explains that the whole Bible is about Him. If you reject Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of David and God’s Son, you have no saving faith, which was the issue Jesus was dealing with that day shortly before His death and resurrection. Matthew notes that their lack of faith in Jesus kept them from answering: **And no one was able to answer [Jesus] a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask Him any more questions.** St. Paul reminds us, **“No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit”** (1 Cor. 12:3). David had the Holy Spirit and called Jesus his Lord. We have the same Holy Spirit and confess Jesus as our Lord. So we by faith in Jesus **“love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind... And we love our neighbor as ourselves.”** Amen.