

**“ONLY TWO!”****Pastor Mike Corwin**

**TEXT:** MATTHEW 22:34-40

**GOD’S WORD:** PSALM 90:1-6, 13-17

**I – RULES:**

In my last profession I had to know a lot of rules. When I started out I had to learn the rules and regulations of the department, otherwise known as the code of conduct. Then I had to learn the criminal rules of the state of Ohio, otherwise known as the Ohio revised code, as well as all the city ordinances. As I went up through the ranks I had to know more and more laws. I had to be familiar with all of the Ohio revised code, not just traffic and criminal statutes, but all of the other parts. Then on top of that there was the Ohio Administrative code. I couldn’t memorize all of the laws but there were shelves of books so I could look it up.

The laws of religion aren’t much different. If you look at our denomination you find that we have a book called The Book of Discipline. In that book are the statements of our faith belief, our social principles, and the rules and regulations the Methodist church is supposed to adhere to. Besides that book we have a “Book Of Resolutions” which contains all the resolutions that have been brought before the conference and passed with recommendations of how we are supposed to live and behave as Methodists.

In Jesus day they had what they called the Torah, which is a special name meaning The Law, plus some follow up directions. God called Moses up the mountain and gave him 10 Commandments the people were supposed to live by. These were the main ones. Others followed as God gave Moses more. You’ll find these in the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus for the most part. Then the Pharisees and others got involved. Besides the ten big ones the people ended up with 613 others telling them what they should do and what they shouldn’t do.

Just like the Ohio Revised Code is, how could people ever be expected to know and remember them all?

**II – TEXT:**

You’ll be happy to know that when it comes to our faith and the way we live, Jesus simplified it all for us. He reduced all the rules and regulations down to two. Here’s what Matthew recorded concerning it...

## Matthew 22:34-40

<sup>4</sup> But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. <sup>35</sup> One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup> The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

The sect of Jewish religious leaders, the Sadducees, had just finished trying to trap Jesus and get him to say something they could use against him. This sect didn't believe in the resurrection and asked him a question about marriage and death that spoke to this belief. Jesus being Jesus pointed out the error of their thinking and shut them up with his answer.

Well, that would never do, so the Pharisees, another ruling religious sect took their turn next. They turned to all the commandments and rules of Moses and one of their lawyers asked him out of all of them, which was the greatest commandment. Which was the most important?

Once again he didn't fall for their trickery and recited to them what was called “The Shema.” This was used daily by devote Jewish people and was realized as the number one way the people should live their lives. He was quoting Moses from Deuteronomy 6:5, To Love God with their entire being. Then he says there's a second one that's just important, to love your neighbor as yourself. This was a quote from Leviticus 19:18. Then in verse 40 he says these are the only two you have to worry about because the entire law and the words of all the prophets are all wrapped up in these two commandments. You don't have to memorize the big ten and the 613 that go along with it. Just know these 2 and everything else falls in to place.

These two commandments expose the very core of what it means to be and live as a person of faith. It's just as pertinent today as it was in the time of Jesus.

The great commandment is a positive restatement of the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment, that you shall have no other gods before Him. Love for God can't be halfhearted. It has to be a full devotion. God is first and nothing else ever takes his place or detracts from it. Nothing and none else can ever come between you and God or put him out of first place.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> one, to love others, is a result of the first. Love for God naturally leads to love for neighbor. Complete devotion to God must be expressed concretely in our relationships to others. The love of God should be the foundation stone of all human experience.

Jesus is taking the believer beyond a list of do's and don'ts in to a living relationship with God...who is at the heart of the law.

### III – LOVE GOD:

So, if that's what I'm supposed to do, if that's how I am supposed to live, how do I do it? How do I love God with my heart, soul, mind, and Mark adds strength? Let me give you just a few things to consider:

- **Read and study His Word.** Not just read to read, but study. Meditate and think about it. What does it mean to you? How should it alter your life? Read a passage of Scripture and ask yourself Where is God in these words, where am I in these words, how do the two come together.
- **Keep a journal of your answers to these questions.** Write down the insight you gain and how it's helped you understand God better.
- **Pray often.** Write your prayers in your journal and any answers you get to those prayers.
- Also remember what Psalmist tells us, to **be still and know that I am God.** If he's trying to answer your prayers and thoughts and you don't quit talking he can't get a word in edgewise.
- **Memorize his promises.** The Bible is full of them. Write them down too so you can go over and over them until you know them and live with the faith they give you.
- **Spend time with his people.** We need to fellowship with other believers who can help us sort it all out and hold us accountable to living this life.
- **Learn to trust in his will.** Seek to know which is his will and what is just life happening caused by someone else. Sometimes the two do intersect but if you're not seeking him out, seeking his will then you'll never know. Obey his will.
- **Trust that your life and his will comes out of his love.** Humans will, but God will never harm you.
- **Give God all the glory and praise him for your life.** Praise and thank him for all that he is and all that he does.
- **Put God's love in your life into practice in the life of others.** Interact and love others because God loves you.

### IV – LOVE OTHERS:

So how do we do this one? We know we are supposed to. We know that God wants us to and Jesus told us to. We know that we are not being a true follower if we're not. But it is hard sometimes. We get busy with our lives and our concerns and we lose sight of this one. If God sometimes doesn't get our priority how much less does our neighbor? And as I say neighbor, that includes everyone you come into contact with. So let me give you some things here to consider too:

- **See your neighbor.** This sounds kind of silly but think about it. You may occasionally catch a glimpse of them but do you truly see them? Do you really know what's going on behind the

outer shell, behind the color of their skin? Do you look past the obvious and look into their eyes, see their hearts, understand their circumstances. Can you see past bitterness or anger?

- **Live forgiveness.** If they have offended you do you offer it to them? If they have offended you do you seek it from them? Do you work at your relationship through the mess of life?
- **Pray for them.** Even if you don't know them or of anything they need, do you pray for their health and welfare?
- **Rejoice and mourn with them.** If they're happy, then be happy with them or for them. If they're sad or depressed walk along side of them and show them understanding and compassion. Let them cry on your shoulder.
- **Refuse to be judgmental.** No matter what you think of "those people" don't judge them. Stereotypes are not a valid tool for Christians. You must see everyone as a creation of the same God who loves you.
- **Share the Good News.** Use any opportunity you have to speak Christ into their lives and use his love to do it.

## V – HARD QUESTIONS:

Our society isn't exhibiting much love right now. We hear on the news about daily shootings. As close as Mansfield and Marion. There was one recently even here in Bucyrus. Columbus and Cleveland will be setting new records for homicide victims this year. It has become the norm to hate anyone who disagrees with you on any subject and to belittle them for not agreeing with you. We picket, we yell, we clash, we shoot at one another, we call each other vile names, we turn to violence. So much for loving God and loving one another.

People ask me what we can do to change it. The answer is simply show them the example. Live in such a way the love of God bursts from your heart, from your soul, and spills over onto others.

To do that you have to ask yourself the hard questions.

- How is my life out of line with keeping these two commandments from my Lord and Savior?
- What must I change to love God so that I can love others?

Once you have the answers to these questions you can start living the two commands Jesus gave you to live by. When you start living those two you will not only change your life but the lives of others as well.

I pray you'll love God, love yourself, and then love others.

AMEN