

Loving God Series Part 1 - Loving God with all Your Heart!

Mark 12:28-31

Intro: Well it is baseball season again – smell of fresh cut grass – oiled leather – Hot dogs – peanuts popcorn

A) Sound of 90+ mph fastballs hitting the catcher's mitt.

B) The **Crack of the bat – pounding a ball** – or the umpire yelling Strike three you are out

C) For the Baseball purist Spring is an exciting time of the year.

Most of you know I grew up playing baseball – loved every minute of it.

A) When I wasn't playing baseball – I loved doing things that involved baseball –

B) Watching a game on TV / collecting Baseball cards

1) And when I went to Church – Sunday School – I loved the times when we would play Bible Baseball

C) What is that? Well – You divide the class into two teams – everyone gets an at bat.

1) Simple question – Single / harder equals a double / even harder a triple – super hard – Home run

D) **You miss a question – and it was an out!**

1) Sort of a poor man's version of Bible trivia – but it was fun. Good way to learn to!

Well here in Mark 12 you could say that Jesus has been engaged in a game of Bible baseball.

A) The Pharisees and Sadducees are on one team – and Jesus is on the other.

B) Jesus is at bat and they have been firing the questions at him {desperately wanting him to strike out

“Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?”

“A woman is married seven times, who will be her husband in heaven?”

“How can David's son also be His Lord?”

Indeed, these were tricky questions.

C) Understand, this is more than a game to these Jewish leaders...

1) They hope Jesus slips up... gives a wrong answer.

D) They want to discredit Him, and brand Him as a false teacher.

1) They want an excuse to demand His execution.

E) That's what makes the outcome so hilarious.

The Pharisees and Sadducees try their best to strike Jesus out. Instead He hits homer after homer.

A) He goes 4 for 4. And in the end, it's the Jews who sulk away embarrassed and discredited.

And that's when these religious leaders discovered that playing Bible Baseball with the author of the Bible is a losing proposition.

A) Now it would be nice to look at all nine innings but we are going to look at just one at bat – V.28

Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"

B) Remember there were 613 Jewish laws, and 10 glorious commandments.

1) This scribe is thinking that Jesus might just make a wrong choice...

2) Jesus' answer hits at the very basis of our relationship with God. The main thing God expects from us!

Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

"And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

C) It has been called the first commandment –

1) Matthew's gospel refers to it as the **First and greatest of the commandments**

The first and greatest commandment is to love God!

A) So much is promised to those who love God...

1 Corinthians 2:9 tells us, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

B) God has incredible treasure – amazing truths – on reserve for folks who love Him.

Romans 8:28 promises, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

C) God promises to take bad stuff and work it for good. **What an incredible promise!**

1) But it's not for anyone - there's a condition... it applies only to people who love God.

Well in His answer Jesus tells not only reveals that the greatest commandment is that we love God

A) But He also tells us **HOW we are to love God – **4 ways – All of our heart / Soul / Mind / Strength.****

B)–About a year ago I was looking for some sermons on these verses

1) The greatest commandment – Love God – I didn't find any.

C) Great CHS – never / Morgan –Prince... Nope

1) Lloyd Jones – nope – Wesley - None –

2) Contrast 1000's on the 2nd – Love one another

Something wrong with that picture – Needs to start with Loving God – Loving him in these 4 ways

A) Our love for others is going to be the outflow of how we are loving God!

B) So over the next 3-4 weeks {Easter} we are going to look at this commandment –

C) What does it mean to love God with all of your **heart -/ Soul / Mind / Strength?**

1) Start with the heart

Understand, when Jesus uses the term *heart*, He's not talking about the muscle inside your chest cavity... the old blood-pumper... your ticker...

A) The word heart is a biblical idiom for the *seat of the desires*.

B) It's the core of your decision-making process.

1) The heart is the command center of our life.

C) If your life was a ship, your heart would be the bridge.

1) If your life was a **NASA rocket**, your heart would be mission control.

D) If your life was an airplane, your heart would be the tower or cockpit.

E) Our heart is the part of us that charts our course, and sets direction.

Let me ask, what are the things in your life you do with all your heart?

A) Obviously, we're not talking about filing expense reports...

or sitting down with the checkbook and paying your bills...

or washing dishes... or doing homework...

B) Not talking about taking out the trash...

1) that's stuff we do, but I doubt if any of you do it with all our heart.

C) *If you take out the trash with all your heart you're a little weird...*

Hey, what are the things you do enthusiastically... with heart?

A) I'll give you a few examples of stuff you do with all your heart...

B) Your **favorite football team** is on the goal line with 10 seconds left in the game, trying to score the winning TD.

1) At that moment you're cheering with all your heart.

C) I have seen petite little ladies – big football fans – screaming at the TV -

D) You walk into your boss' office to make a case for a pay raise. This is no time for a half-hearted effort.

1) You're going to present your case with all your heart.

You've fallen in love. You want to marry this young lady.

A) You've spent your life-savings on the ring in your pocket, and now you're mustering the courage to pop the question.

B) And when find the right moment, and look her in the eyes, and finally purpose, "*Will you marry me?*" – You're going to do it with *all your heart!*

C) I think we all know there's a difference between just doing something and then doing it with heart... and the difference in a single word is... *desire!*

D) Others might call it **PASSION!**

When I think of Desire / heart / Passion – There is one guy who comes to my mind – Rocky

A) *The Southpaw from South Philly... the Italian Stallion... Rocky Balboa...*

B) The thing about Rocky is whenever Rocky boxed in a big fight – whether it was against Apollo Creed, or Clubber Lang, or Ivan Drago, Tommy Morrison –

C) **Rocky was always the underdog.**

1) The experts wrote him off as too slow, or too dumb, or too inexperienced.

D) But Rocky had the one indispensable... Rocky always prevailed because he had heart.

Whether it was practicing on frozen sides of beef in Rocky I

A) Or in the Siberian wilderness. He's working out, and chopping wood, and climbing mountains – and getting ready to duke it out with the evil Russian bully.
R IV

B) **He's fueling and intensifying his desire.**

1) He trained and went into all those matches with an intense desire to do His best – come out on top

C) And that is how God wants us to love Him!

1) Like Rocky threw everything in to his training

D) We would throw everything into Knowing God and living for God

E) To **love God with my heart** is to make Him the direction of my life –

1) It is to want to be a part of what God is doing, and to want God to be a part of what I'm doing.

Remember what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:6 Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."

A) And understand the words Jesus uses here are strong words.

B) In the original language the word “**hunger**” means “*to hunger to the point of starvation*”. The word “*thirst*” means “*to thirst to the point of dehydration*”.

C) Most of us have never truly been hungry or thirsty

1) Oh, we missed a meal, and our stomach starts to growl - and we say we're famished.

D) Or we come in from mowing the lawn on a hot day - and talk about how desperately we're craving some cold water...

E) But there are actually people in the world who haven't had a meal for weeks –

1) Who really will die for lack of water?

Imagine your desire for food, after not having anything to eat for two weeks

A) Or your desire for water, if you've been 48 hours with nothing to drink.

B) Now we're no longer talking mere *desire*, we're talking *exasperation and desperation*.

1) Yet, that's the kind of desire Jesus wants us to have for Him.

C) Here's what happens when you love God with your heart.

1) You forget about being cool – you stop worrying about your image –

D) What other people might think about you – or if you'll get laughed at... **you act like a hungry person.**

Hey, what if you were really hungry to the point of Starvation and thirsty, to the point of dehydration

A) If I sat a Big Mac and a Coca-Cola on the edge of the stage... What do you think you would do?

B) I can tell you this: you wouldn't worry about what someone else might think –

1) You wouldn't care about acting hip – you'd rush the stage to eat.

C) Jesus the **Bread of life** is available to us today – **Chance to receive Him!**

1) And if you really Love Jesus with all your heart you will want what He has for you –

2) You will do whatever it takes to know Him

Confession: There was a time in my life – when I loved Jesus with my words (I said all the right things)

A) And I loved Jesus with my behavior – (I wasn't a wild child – I did all the right things- good & moral)

B) But I didn't love Jesus with all of my heart – I wasn't **Passionately seeking Him**

C) Perhaps that's how you might sum up your relationship with Jesus...

1) I'm not doing a lot of wrong stuff, but I'm certainly not Passionately pursuing

Have you noticed that people who are really in love do stuff – often crazy stuff - to inflame that love, and enhance their relationship?

A) Talk for hours on the phone – Drive a significant distance just to Drop off flowers

B) Their love provokes them toward that object of their love!

C) When you love someone you desire to please them and to Show your love to them

1) To love God with all your **heart is to DESIRE** ways to express that love to Him and for Him

Cc) It is having a heart that says – God I am desperate for you.

1) Jacob wrestled with God – Not letting you go until you bless me {Like **Rocky he refused to Quit!**}

D) God touched his hip – Changed his name – Jacob heel catcher Supplanter – Conniver to Israel

1) Man governed by God

E) See if you love Jesus with all of your heart you won't **let anything get in your way**

1) And you will do whatever it takes to know Him

One pt of that story is God wants to be wanted!

A) When you or I grab hold of God, He doesn't shake us off – He picks us up, and He blesses our lives.

B) Psalm 119:2 tells us, “Blessed (or happy) are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart!”

C) God wants us to love Him with all our heart.

Here's the irony, I believe that every human is born with a desire for God, even though they may not realize yet its God they desire!

A) There is a God-shaped void – an emptiness - in the soul of every man and woman that only God can fill!

Augustine testified of this universal hunger when he prayed, “God, You have formed us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You.”

B) Maybe you have a restless heart this morning – because you are looking to be satisfied apart from God

C) **Have you ever seen a baby when it's time to eat?**

1) A baby starts rooting for its bottle... but if the bottle isn't available the baby will grab anything he can get its hands on, and stick it in his mouth –

D) A ball, a spoon, a bowl, a toy, a set of car keys.

The hungry baby will suck for a few seconds –

1) Then when it dawns on him that what he's picked up doesn't satisfy - he'll spit it out.

And adults are no different!

A) We all get spiritually hungry, and we start rooting – we'll take anything we can get their hands on, stick it in our mouth, and start sucking.

B) And as soon as it dawns on us it doesn't really satisfy – it doesn't meet our deepest needs – we'll spit it out, and move on to the next disappointment.

C) And the problem today is no different than 2500 years ago in Jeremiah's day.

1) The prophet rebuked the people for looking to broken cisterns which held no water.

D) Understand a cistern was a water reservoir carved out of the rock that captured the run-off from the spring rains.

1) But a broken cistern was an empty cistern. If there was a crack in the rock the water would seep out.

And here's Jeremiah's point,

A) if you're depending on human relationships, or worldly pleasures, or earthly pursuits for your happiness

- You're drinking from a broken cistern. It's incapable of providing your need. In the end it won't satisfy.

B) Always remember, "A spiritual thirst can't be satisfied by a physical pleasure."

1) In contrast though, the psalmist says of God, "all my springs are in You."

C) God is our sole source of deep-down satisfaction.

1) Hey, the only table where you can find true fulfillment - and real, lasting joy - is at the Lord's table!

D) Don't you think it's time you stopped dining everywhere else?

Let me close with the story of a mom & her little boy.

A) Each night at bedtime they would describe their love for each other.

Mom might say, "I wouldn't trade you for all the boys in the world." Her son would try to top her, "I wouldn't trade you for 40 motorcycles." *In his mind 40 motorcycles is a big deal.*

Or "I wouldn't trade you for a swimming pool, even if it were filled with money."

B) But there was one exchange between mom and son that the mother said she would never forget.

1) It made her think. After a rough week – one filled with hurt and disappointment – the boy said, "Mom, I love you with all the pieces of my heart."

C) Guys, sometimes our heart gets broken. It gets ripped apart and torn to pieces.

1) But God wants us to take all those pieces and with them desire to love Him more.

D) You can't present to God a perfect life.

E) Perhaps, you can't serve Him with supreme talent.

1) Maybe, you can't afford to give Him large sums of money.

F) But you can stoke the fires of your heart, and desire God above anything else.

1) You can be deliberate and determined with your love for God.

You can hunger and thirst for God alone... *Hey, with all our heart... let's love God.*