



2019 March Sermon Series: The Main Thing

Message #1 – The Main Thing... Loving Well

Getting the Nod

Open with the Video: **Radio Priorities**

Illustration of the Jar and the Rocks: By now almost all of you remember the story of the professor who used a jar to make a profound point. He started filling the jar with larger rocks until the rocks were at the mouth of the jar. He asked his student, “Is the jar full?” Their answer was “Yes”. Then he proceeded to add smaller pebbles to the jar. “Is it full now?” he asked. “Yes” was their reply. He then added sand to the jar. He repeated his question and they answered with the same “Yes”. At last he pulls out a jug of water and adds it to the ingredients. “Is it full now?” Of course, their answer remained the same. **Here’s the professor’s profound point:** What is the lesson to be learned from this illustration? With intrigued eyes they sat thinking. The professor then laid out the profound point... **“With all these ingredients to work with... Make sure you put the big rocks in first. Start with making the main thing the main thing.**

What are the big rocks in your life? Family? Marriage? Work? Professional status? Friends? Hobbies? Retirement? Money? Possessions and Toys? Faith?

The Big Rocks are just examples of what PRIORITIES are in our lives. Priorities create questions like...

- Who matters most in my life?
- What am I supposed to be doing with my life?
- What are the most important roles that I play?
- Who should get most of my time in my life?
- How do I find balance with all these radios playing?
- Which rock supersedes all the other rocks?
- What is the MAIN THING in my life?

Transitional Statement: I submit to you that there is one rock... one radio... one MAIN THING... one question that brings clarity and focus... **“What does God want me to do?”** Or another way to put it, **“What is God’s Will for my life?”**

Connecting Us

If you’re a disciple of Jesus Christ, this is the #1 question to answer all the other questions.

And I confess, so many us who have chosen to follow Jesus consider it a mystery to know God’s Will for their lives. But I believe that we can know God’s will for our lives because I do not believe God has a plan for us... **but hides that plan in the bushes of our life or has it locked in a closet someplace** to somehow become the focus of some **divine scavenger hunt.**

But I believe that God has a plan and will for your life and all you have to do is be in the right place to receive it!

You can know God's Will for your life... and it starts with the essentials first...

Illustration on Guitar Lessons: Back in college I tried guitar lessons. My dream was to take the skills that I already had... which was best described as five chords and a flurry of strumming. I only lasted two weeks because the instructor told me there were certain foundational skills that had to be mastered before I could move on to performance levels. But he didn't realize that I had dreams of audiences waiting and worship to be leading! I grew impatient... and I chose to remain a five-chord playing hack that never realized the level of commitment it took to become the best for God.

Finding God's will is hardly ever like receiving a postcard in the mail with God's signature on it and with an invitation to your spiritual graduation. It takes more than that realize God's perfect plan and will for your life. **And over the next few weeks I am going to address what are the MAIN THINGS:**

- **Living an empowered life with the gift of the Holy Spirit**
- **Becoming a citizen of the Kingdom of God as a DISCIPLE.**
- **Shining the LIGHT of JESUS in a dark, sinful world.**
- **And today we start with...**

Transitional Statement: If finding God's will in your life is **THE MAIN THING...** then the first step to getting there is **learning how to love well!!!** Pull out your Bibles, digital devices, or photographic memory and go to Mark 12. We will begin reading at verse 28...

God's Take

NLT | Mk 12:28-31 One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, **"Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"** 29 Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. 30 And **you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.**' 31 The second is equally important: **'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** **No other commandment is greater than these."**

Background:

- Jesus and His 12 have arrived in Jerusalem by palms and the triumphal donkey ride.
- He has been teaching the 12 important lessons with a withered fig tree; tossing the money changers out of the temple; forgiveness gauged by our forgiveness.
- Jesus was creating some serious noise in the city. So, the battle was on with the religious leaders. It started with questioning His authority to do the things He was doing and by Whom He was empowered to do them. Jesus then told a parable about corrupt vinedressers taking care of the master's vineyard... of course the lead role in the parable were the religious leaders.
- Then they tried to trap Jesus with the whole tax paid to Caesar thing. And the Sadducees tried to confuse Him with a resurrection question about which brother would be married to the same wife of them all.
- After all these cheap shots at Jesus... finally a scribe asked the real question of the day, "Which is the first and greatest commandment of all? And Jesus' answer to that question is the text that we just read.

- This scribe came to Jesus with a question which a matter of debate as often found in the Rabbinic schools. In Judaism there was a kind of double tendency. There was the tendency to expand the law limitlessly into hundreds and thousands of rules and regulations. But there was also the tendency to try to gather up the law into one sentence, one general statement for all to turn to.
- We find several attempts at that general principle in Psalm 15; Isa. 33; Micah 6:8; Hab. 2:4.
- What most people don't know is that this response of Jesus was to combine two separate commands into one... and to open up the love to more than Jews... but also to Gentiles. **No Rabbi had ever done that before!! Jesus was saying with clarity... the only way to prove your love for God is by showing love to others. All others. This specific Scribe then did the unthinkable... he jumped out of his theological ship and agreed with Jesus.** He told the scribe that he wasn't far from getting it.
- **The BIG ROCK... the bottom line of Jesus' Main Thing is this: Learn to simply to LOVE WELL. LOVE GOD WELL... and LOVE OTHERS WELL!!**

Look at what some people have said about love:

- **Love is a Banana Peel.** I look at you and wham, I'm head over heels. I guess that love is a banana peel. I feel so bad and yet I'm feeling so well. I slipped, I stumbled, I fell. (Song by Elvis Presley)
- **Love is an Open Door.** I've never met someone- Who thinks so much like me! Our mental synchronization can have but one explanation... You and I Were Just Meant to be! (That was in the Disney Movie "Frozen")
- **Love is A Bull.** Happiness is the china shop; love is the bull. (H.L. Mencken, A Little Book in C Major, 1916)
- **Love is an Ocean.** Love is an ocean of emotion surrounded by expensive commotion. (Sir Thomas Robert Dewar)

Look at How God's Love is Described for Us: (From Don Carson's book "The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God")

1. He loves His Son and His Son loves Him.

- NLT | Jn 5:20 **For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished.**
- God is a relational God... even with His Trinity. Eugene Petersen describes the Trinity as Three Persons in "THE DIVINE DANCE". Love for each other. Divine respect and Joy. Three persons... ONE HEART.

2. He loves the obedient and the disobedient.

- NLT | Mt 5:44 **But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! 45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.**
- God loves everyone. Everyone is a candidate for mercy and grace. Everyone has potential. Everyone is a target for His resurrection power. We can't be bad enough to be rejected!!! WE can't run far enough to escape His loving intentions.

3. His love is a an inviting, a seeking, and a saving love.

- The Message | Jn 3:16 “This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life.
- He is pursuing us... with a plan that was formed before creation and confirmed on a cross. And that plan is to rescue us from ourselves; from a very real adversary; from hell.

4. God chooses to love the selected and the seeker.

- NLT | Dt 10:15 Yet the LORD chose your ancestors as the objects of his love. And he chose you, their descendants, above all other nations, as is evident today.
- God chose a nation to be His people to bless and parent them. He selected Israel... and yet we need not worry that birthright is not on our side... He never turns away someone seeking Him!!!

5. God dispenses faithful love.

- NLT | Jn 15:10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love.
- And His love is seen in the lives of those who remain faithful... obedience is how Jesus loved His Father... and how we now love Jesus.

Here’s what I’m trying to say: God’s love is a captivating and motivating transformer in the lives that get it! **If God’s love no longer captivates us... we are then fruitless and impotent followers!!!** But if we are still captivated by the love of the One who created and runs the universe with an awesome hand... God can and will use us!!! And if we are captive by His love... we WILL LOVE HIM IN RETURN!!!

We are called to love our God:

1. **Passionately with our personality.** Loving with the heart is not our emotions or feelings. It is loving God to the point that when others think of us... they cannot subtract God from who we are.
2. **Surrendered with our soul.** This is loving God through surrendering our core values. This is loving God to become holy. To become someone that isn’t a product of the world... but of Heaven.
3. **Showing interest in His instruction.** Loving with your mind is meditating on pleasing God and knowing His rescuing, delivering, rebuking, and transforming Word. To know what to become!
4. **Completely with all our capacity.** The usage of the Greek word *holos* and *meizone* (which are the translated words for “All” and “Greater”) gives us the visual of a container that is full and what is contained is the strongest elements above all!!!

Transitional Statement: But loving God is only half of the equation...

Our Response

NLT | Ga 5:14 For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Video Clip: Unlovable

Transitional Statement: Let me close with this...

Drawing the Net

Illustration of a Flight Student: Imagine that you are a flight instructor and someone who wants to learn to fly airplanes. You take him and give him six months of full time theoretical training. **We teach him everything there is to know about flying.** We teach him the **lift equation.** We teach him what happens when one does certain things with the **controls.** We teach him all about **flight planning.** **Then we give him a written test and he gets 100%. He has passed, so we give the keys to a plane and tell him to go and fly the plane by himself.** What do you think will happen? I'm pretty sure there will be a hole in the end of the runway. **What went wrong? Our student knew all about the theory of flight but had never put it into practice.** You see, knowledge must be accompanied by practice.

Get this... if we are to make the main thing the main thing... we have to LOVE WELL. Loving God completely... and loving others intentionally.

My Challenge Today:

- **Is your love for God alive? ... if not, ask for forgiveness and date Him again.**
- **Can you remember the last time you showed love to a neighbor? If not, ask for a fresh vision of the lost and offer your friendship.**
- **Are you being intentional to become a true disciple? If not, stop playing church and start applying church to your life!!!**