



Series: Standalone Series
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Speaker: Allan Waruhiu
Text: Matthews 22:34-40
Title: Love God, Love People

INTRO

First, I would like to thank the Mercy Church leadership, staff and church family; it's been such a blessing for my family and me to serve here and take our next steps in following Jesus here at Mercy. From day one, even though church leadership knew we felt called to go back to Kenya, where I'm from, they none the less gave me a job, and in late 2020 when we brought the news to them that we felt a strong call to go to Kenya, we were met with encouragement and support. There is a strong sending culture here; indeed, when we say we send God's people to all people, we mean that!

This summer, my wife M'Lynn, our three kids, launch team members, and I are moving to Kenya to plant a church and set up a transition shelter for homeless women and children in the city of Nairobi. We loved Mercy so much that we've adopted the Name, God willing, the church's Name in Kenya shall be Mercy Nairobi and the shelter Mercy House. This theme of God's Mercy is all over scripture; the Lord, when He revealed himself to Moses in

Exodus 34, he said He is a merciful and gracious God who is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast Love. In Ephesians 2, Paul tells us God is rich in Mercy, and out of this wealth of Mercy, He has made us alive in Christ Jesus. Peter tells us that those in Christ are made a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people of God's own possession, not because of their works but because of God's Mercy.

Mercy Nairobi's vision will be the same as Mercy Church, the only difference being the city's name. We will seek to see a gospel awakening in Nairobi that will be carried to the ends of the earth. Our mission will be to make disciples for the glory of God and the good of all people. Most of us are familiar with what Jesus said to His disciples before he ascended to heaven, **19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."** This has been the global C - church's mission; for over two thousand years. Christians have moved from one place to another, driven by a passion for seeing God glorified and a compassion to see men and women come to salvation and be reconciled with God and each other by the power of the gospel.





When I think of the city of Nairobi and the kind of church that it needs, I am convinced that the city needs disciples that love God and love people because that's the only way you end up with a church that loves God and Loves people. This means I, my family, the launch team, future staff have to love God and Love people and not for our glory but purely for God's glory alone. This is both good for us and good for the community around us. And so, before I share with you the specifics of Mercy Nairobi and Mercy House, allow me to unpack from scripture, **The Kind of Church we perceive God leading us to Plant in Nairobi.** We will be in Matthew 22:34-40.

READ SCRIPTURE

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they came together. 35 And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test him: 36 "Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?" 37 He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind., 38 This is the greatest and most important command. 39 The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself., 40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."
- Matthew 22:34-40

CONTEXT

By the time we get to Matthew 22, The Pharisees had become tired of Jesus's miracles and fame. So, they came up with an elaborate plan to trap Jesus. They first asked him a question about taxes, to which Jesus replied with the famous "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" then the Sadducees asked about marriage in the resurrection. Here we learn from Jesus "in the resurrection we will neither marry nor be given in marriage," But they still have one more trick up their sleeves. One of the experts on the law- and by law, this refers to the Torah, the first 5 books of the Old Testament- asked Jesus what the greatest commandment is? What is the one thing that I need to do to be right with God? We sometimes ask questions like these: should we evangelize or focus on making disciples? Should I have a gospel conversation with my neighbors, or should I wait until they ask me why I go to church? Should I give money to the homeless or have a blessing package for them? (Any other?)

Look at how Jesus responds to this scribe,

EXPOSITION

37 He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind., 38 This is the greatest and most important command."



What Jesus does here is quote Deuteronomy 6:5. This is called the Shema. Faithful Jews would have recited the *Shema* daily¹ this scribe ought to have known this, he had spent his life studying, memorizing, and debating the law, and yet his heart was cold towards the one God had sent, this reminds me of Jesus's words to another group of Pharisees in John 8:42 "If God were your Father, you would love me, because I came from God." Notice instead of honoring Jesus for how he had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees gathered and plotted a way to trick Jesus with a hard question.

They were so focused on personal glory and not God's glory. Why do I say this? the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, but the Pharisees did? Jesus, when responding to the Sadducees, not only silenced them with the truth of the afterlife but also confirmed there is an afterlife. People will be resurrected. Instead of the Pharisees applauding Jesus for his fidelity to biblical truth, they became envious and malicious simply because they did not like Jesus.

But I do think it's wonderful that this question was asked because the answer gives us the basis, foundation, the starting point for everything we do, feel, or dream. Have

you ever walked out of your house with crisscrossed buttons on your shirt? Probably because you were not paying attention, you start with the wrong buttonhole, and it's guaranteed you will go out into the world looking not so good. But start with the right buttonhole, and you'll go out looking presentable, right – Well, on a grander scale, if we dream, feel or endeavor to make disciples not having first loved God, I'm afraid we will do ourselves and those disciples a disservice. And so, when I think of the Kind of Church, we perceive God leading us to Plant in Nairobi, I long for us to be so grabbed by who Jesus is, to love Him, and to know him because how dare we point people to love a Jesus we haven't first loved.

So how exactly do we love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind? The God of the universe who spoke things into existence, molded and crafted us – The one who says in Isaiah 44, **I am the first and I am the last. There is no God but me.⁷ Who, like me, can announce the future? ... Is there any God but me? There is no other Rock; I do not know any.** How do we love such a God? The truth is, we cannot love God in this way on our own. According to the bible ever since Adam and eve chose to love the deceiver, we became alienated from God and incapable

¹ Platt, D. (2013). [Exalting Jesus in Matthew](#) (D. L. Akin, D. Platt, & T. Merida, Eds.; Mt 22:15–40). Holman Reference.



of Loving God in this way. Our default setting before accepting salvation is to love the gifts over the gift giver. And after salvation it's a daily wrestling and refining to love God more than anything else. I will be the first to admit not every thought, desire, or ambition I have is always God-focused. Sometimes my self-centered will is leading the way. Let's make an observation here.

- **We Love God when we treasure, value, and enjoy Him more than anything else.**

The heart, soul, and mind are not to be understood as three different parts of our humanity to where we can choose to love God with our heart today, our soul tomorrow, and so on. To love God with our heart, soul, and mind means to love him with the entirety of ourselves. Loving God means every other treasure, desire, longing, accomplishment, when contrasted with the worthiness of God, loses its meaning. This is why Paul could look at everything he had before Christ and say he considers it rubbish because of the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus.

Some of you might find it hard to love God in this way because you have misunderstood who God is, or you do not know the affections of God towards you. I think of the many struggles in my home country, the pressure of a

shame and honor culture, the struggle to not mess up, the legalistic approach to the Christian faith where many are constantly working with the hope that the works will make God love them more or bless them more. Let's be honest. It's hard to love someone who you don't believe loves you back. If you see God as an unloving boss who demands your Love, I can see why it could be hard to love him with all of you- heart, soul, and mind.

Consider this with me, **God is your creator**; as we saw last week, he purposefully crafted and molded you to reflect His glory in all of the world. He knows your name, the number of hairs on your head. Consider this as well, **God is your redeemer**; the famous bible verse in all of the world says for God so loved the world that he gave... There it is. For God so loved you, he gave. And what did he give? he gave his only begotten Son so that if you believe in him, you will not perish but have eternal life.

It's easy for us to agree with that verse but not linger long enough to be grabbed in our hearts by the affections of our heavenly Father towards us in this act of giving his Son as a ransom for us. 2Cor5:21. **He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** Listen, God **loves you!!** (Psalm 8 **mindful** and **cares**) Nairobi needs a church that



proclaims the goodness of God and shows people how much God loves them.

Now Jesus doesn't stop at Love God, he goes on, look with me at verse 39, **39 The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.**

Again, Jesus quotes an Old Testament text; this time around, it's Leviticus. (Remember that bible book that you find hard to finish), Leviticus 19:18 reads, **Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.** Allow me to argue that this second commandment is the manifestation or visible fulfilling of the first commandment. What do I mean by this? Love for God is not fully visible to others apart from how we treat and love people. Consider 1 John 4:20 ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.² I love what Tony Evans says about this, **To love your neighbor is to make the decision to compassionately and righteously pursue his or her well-being³**

How would you have other people treat you? Jesus is telling you to treat people the same way. Do you want

people to appreciate you, encourage you, be there for you, give you the benefit of the doubt? Be gracious with you? If you were hungry, would you want others to feed you? If you didn't have something to wear, would you appreciate some clothes? If you were wrongly convicted, would you like people to advocate and fight for you? If you did not know Jesus and the good news of salvation (knowing what you know about the gospel today) wouldn't you long for someone to have a gospel conversation with you and intentionally disciple you?

I will contend that the most loving thing we can do in the world is to share the gospel with people far from God and intentionally and sacrificially Disciple them. This is the greatest good we can do in the world. And so, we proclaim, and we serve our neighbor because we love them as we love ourselves. And who is your neighbor? Anyone that God puts in front of you, regardless of class, ethnicity, or affiliation.

Kenya has more than 43 tribes that speak more than 43 different languages. We have 81 registered political parties. We have very diverse spiritual beliefs, not forgetting the social-economic divide, education divide, etc. All this diversity is significantly felt and seen in Nairobi

² [Christian Standard Bible](#) (1 Jn 4:20–21). (2020). Holman Bible Publishers.

³ Evans, T. (2019). [The Tony Evans Study Bible](#) (p. 1129). Holman Bible.



because it's the capital. And unfortunately, this diversity has led to many divisions in many churches in Nairobi; I'm convinced Nairobi needs disciples of Christ that are united behind the gospel and not divided along tribal lines. And I'm not talking about conformity; I'm talking about unity. Christians united behind what is in agreement with the gospel. Nairobi needs a church that Loves people regardless of class, ethnicity, or affiliation.

Now, as an outsider looking in, I've seen a few "tribes" in the American church. Y'all thought I won't talk about your "tribes," right. (Allow me for a minute to point a few tribes I've seen in the American church; not talking about Mercy – it's those other Christians)

The ethnic divide – I heard a preacher say Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America because dinner time is the most segregated time in America. Who is at our dinner table?

Political divide – I heard Christians tell other Christians they were not saved because they voted for so and so

Social/economic divide – poverty, injustice, - churches seem to pick sides not based on what the gospel says but based on tribal preference.

Theological divide- on one side, you have those who believe you should not in fact, we only know how to love because He first loved us the faith and on the other side,

question everything and doubt everything other than your doubts.

Paul in Galatians 3 says, ²⁷ For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. ²⁸ There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female, since you are all one in Christ Jesus. What Jesus is saying for the church in Nairobi and the church in Charlotte is, love your neighbor as you love yourself. Let's make an observation here.

- **We show Love for God by showing Love for Neighbor**

The point here is not to ask who is my neighbor? The point is to be the good neighbor to all the people God brings your way. Think with me for a minute; how did Jesus love you? He came to serve you and not to be served, he became the embodiment of God's Love to us, and since He has saved us and made us part of His body, now, we get to express God's Love for others through our service to them. One author says it this way "God wants people to taste and see, through our actions of love, that he is very good, and his kingdom is amazing, so that, after experiencing it, they will want to be with him forever in his kingdom." -Jeff Vanderstelt.



Loving our neighbor is not simply a religious performance. It's an opportunity to bring the rule and reign of our good God to the present brokenness of this world as we look forward to the eternal city that is coming. That's the kind of church Nairobi needs, a church that loves people and serves them.

Jesus ends his answer with this profound statement **40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.** if you take up all of the laws and take all the teachings of the prophets, they are fulfilled by loving God and loving neighbor. Paul in **Romans 13:8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.** Church, if we love God, we will delight to love him, and we will seek to do all manner of kindness to men for the glory of God.⁴

With that said, here is what the Lord has been reminding me in this season, if we try to fulfill the great commandment and the great commission by sheer force of will or self-determination, we will tire ourselves and labor in vain. The gospel frees us to depend on God. There is only one person in all of human history who has loved God with all of his heart, soul, and mind. There is

⁴ Clarke, A. (2014). *The Holy Bible with a Commentary and Critical Notes* (New Edition, Vol. 5, p. 216). Faithlife Corporation.

only one man who has loved his neighbor intentionally and sacrificially to the point of dying a horrible death on the cross on his neighbor's behalf. His name is Jesus.

So, if you desire to love God and love people, run daily to Jesus; depend daily on him. He promises that he gives those who accept salvation a new heart of flesh, a heart that is saved from the tyranny of sin and death, a heart that has the capacity to love God and Love, people. He makes all those who come to him new creations and gives them new affections, values, and priorities. I perceive that God wants us to be disciples and make disciples in Nairobi that seek Jesus before we do for Jesus, and that is the only way we will be a church that points to the surpassing worth of following Jesus!

Allow me to take the next few moments to share our vision for Mercy Nairobi and Mercy House Very briefly.

Why Nairobi?

- Nairobi is the capital of Kenya has a population of approx. 5 million
- It's the business and social hub for east and central Africa



- 60 percent of the people would claim to be Christian, but that could be further from the truth.
- Spiritual climate - prosperity gospel, Biblical illiteracy, and increasingly hostile attitude towards Christianity, especially those who have become disillusioned with churches that do not serve the community.

The Opportunity

Mercy Nairobi

- Plant a welcoming, growing, and going church that points to the surpassing worth of following Jesus.
- Church for the city – college students, families, public transport.
- Kenya borders three countries in the 1040 window; we have an opportunity to make disciples, mobilize, and send them out to Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia.

Mercy House

- BBC article documentary Mercy House - Serve homeless women and children.

- Provide shelter for women and children, job training and placement, and education for the kids. (There are many struggles in Kenya – but this one has grabbed our hearts- Learn to do what is good. Pursue justice. Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow’s cause.)
- And because prosperity gospel emphasizes the accumulation of wealth and spending on oneself, Mercy House will give us an opportunity to seek to counter that. An Apologetic for the gospel.

Action steps- We invite you to

1. Pray -
2. Give -as a member at Mercy, you are already invested through your giving to the mission of Mercy Church - send God's people to all people
3. Consider going to the nations - Taking the gospel to the ends of the earth is not for the professionals - if you have accepted salvation, you have the holy spirit, you can go make disciples anywhere in the world, starting right in your neighborhood.