

April 4

Scriptures: Read Mark 12

Key Verse: "...Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength..." (Mark 12:30)

Overview

I think we need to establish something right off the top—it's possible to love someone you don't like. Why? Because love is an act of the will, whereas "like" is the product of the emotions. To like someone means to feel good about him, to love someone means to seek his highest good. And you can seek the highest good of the most dislikeable person on earth, if you choose to.

In this chapter, Jesus responds to one of the teachers of the law who, impressed with Jesus' debating skills, asks Him which commandment is of most importance. Rather than quoting one of the ten commandments, Jesus refers to Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. The greatest commandment, He says, is to love God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength. And, in this context, one should love one's neighbors and one's self the same way.

So what do "heart, souls, mind, and strength" refer to? "Heart" obviously refers to the emotions. "Strength" refers to the will. And, "souls and mind", interestingly, are summed up by the scribe in verse 33 (NIV) as "understanding" or intelligence. To summarize, Jesus says we're to love God with all our emotion, intelligence, and will—our feeling, thinking, and doing.

Try to think of your love for God graphically, in terms of three concentric circles (like an archery target). On the outside, the largest and most visible circle is how you feel about God. A little closer to center is your thinking about Him, and the bull's-eye is what you're doing about that feeling and thinking. Indeed, the core of your love for God is your action. In Jesus' terms, love for God isn't something you say or sing, it's something you do.

Prayer

O Lord, our God, give me grace to truly love You in deed and not in word only. For this purpose I give You my emotions, my intelligence, and my will.