

For the next four weeks, we're going to continue to unpack this vision of what it means to orient the whole of our church and the whole of us individually around these two goals of apprenticeship to Jesus—being present with our rabbi, Jesus, and participating in the work of Jesus on the peninsula. If you didn't get the chance to listen to the message last week, I encourage you to go back and listen to that sermon. So much of what we're going to unpack in the next few weeks, and really the next few years, is right around the topic that we talked about last week. So if you didn't get the chance, go ahead and do that sometime this week.

I want to open with a question. What do you, at your core, want? I think this is one of the most incisive questions for an apprentice of Jesus to navigate. It's a question that Jesus was quite fond of. Throughout the gospels, he would use this question to encounter people.

In 1979, a Russian filmmaker, Andre Tarkovsky, made a film called *Stalker*. The title is a little more insidious than the film itself. But you journey with three primary characters. The Stalker, which is more akin to a guide, there's the writer, and the professor. The writer and professor are pursuing the Stalker because the Stalker functions as a guide that takes people into this mysterious area known as the Zone. Tarkovsky was not very creative with his titles.

The guide/stalker leads people into the Zone, but what they're really wanting is what is inside the Zone. In the Zone, there's this place called the Room. I told you he wasn't creative. There was this mythology that grew up around the Room, where those who entered it had their deepest innermost desire granted to them. All they had to do was step into the Room.

This journey is like a dystopian wasteland mixed with the philosophical bent of *The Matrix*. Tarkovsky's film is actually a brilliant and terrifying portrayal of humans. Because as they travel through their world into the Zone, it becomes this perilous journey towards the very core of their desire. And they risk their entire lives often to get to and arrive at the Room. As you watch this very slow-moving film, it draws you in, and you're seeing them drawn closer and closer to this question that I posed to you. What do you want?

They get right to the threshold of the Room, and the Stalker finally arrives and brings the writer and professor there. He turns and says, "Who wants to go first?" And what's interesting is the whole two and a half hours leading up to this point, you've watched them want and desire to get to this Room. And yet when they're on the very threshold of the Room, they get cold feet because they start to think, "What if I don't desire what I think I desire." Because the Room is oriented around not what you think you want, but what your core identity wants. Right on the threshold, they're debating back and forth, and they're talking about

what it would mean to step over that threshold. There's a concern of what if what the Room reveals is something different and a little more insidious than they actually think they desire. At one point, the writer says, "What comes true here is that which reflects your true nature. The most secret desire within you. It governs you, yet you are ignorant of it."

What do you want? Would you step into the Room? Would you cross that threshold? One of the things that I think is most challenging and why I think Jesus loved this question isn't because he is some genie that just wants to magically give you whatever you desire. Jesus wants to provoke something in us that says that we are more about what we desire than we are about what we think.

In the modern world, we've bought the myth that "I think therefore I am," which should sound familiar. That is Renee Descartes (1596) from the enlightenment, which has deeply shaped our world to where we think we are what we are in our heads. But what Augustine (AD 354), far earlier than Descartes, would tap into is the biblical narrative that believes you are not what you think you are. You are what you love. You are actually what you most desire.

I wouldn't want to start with the question, what do you think, if I wanted to get to know you. I wouldn't start with the question, what do you believe? I would get at this question, what do you want? Because what you want, that deep desire is the thing that animates your life. It's the thing that propels you. It's the core. It's your true nature.

As the Stalker on the threshold of the Room would say, "It governs you. It's your true self." But if we are what we love, what happens when we may not love what we think? That becomes problematic. I think this is why, in Proverbs 4:23, the wisdom literature would say, "*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*"

Right now, we have to do a little work on this idea of the heart because we conflate it with emotion, which is problematic. But for the biblical authors, the heart is more like your mind, your character, your inner self. It's the executive center of the person. The heart is where decisions are made, where life flows.

But for us in the modern world, we've conflated this idea that what we feel is what is actually in our heart. And when you conflate emotion with heart, that becomes problematic because you have less say over your emotions than you actually do over what you love and desire, which is the theme of this message.

You have a say over what you love. Love is less of a feeling, less of an accident, less of a coincidence; it's far more a choice. Love is where you set the direction of your affections, and a life that's organized around

that begins to take shape. And it then produces in you a love from which you live.

If you remember, last week, we talked about the fish swimming in the water, the most formative thing about the fish's life was the water, and yet they were unaware of it. The very things you do every single day are regular habits of rhythm and worship. Because again, we are loving, worshiping things at our core.

Your normal liturgies of waking up to your phone's alarm clock and the habits you have of scrolling Instagram or Twitter or watching this cable news network are your regular rhythms. All of these things are doing something to us and shaping our loves in a particular direction, but Proverbs would say, "*Guard your heart for, from it everything flows.*"

If we buy the myth that we are what we think, that radically shapes this idea of discipleship or apprenticeship to Jesus. Because if we are what we think, then discipleship and following Jesus is just about acquiring information. Well, here's the problem. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that I should, most nights, eat grilled chicken and salad, but the problem is I love tacos. I love pasta. I love cheesecake. You can know something, but have you ever felt that gap between what you know and what you do? I mean, all of us have. Where we know exactly what we should do or shouldn't do, and yet there's something in us that overcomes that knowledge, and it propels a different life.

Paul, in Romans 7:15a, stated, "*I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.*" He's saying there is this disconnect between what I think and what I do. If we are what we think, then discipleship is just acquiring knowledge, but Jesus comes along, and he doesn't say, "Here's a bunch of knowledge." He says, "Come follow me. Come take on a different rhythm, different habits, a different set of living, a different lifestyle, which will then shape your heart."

Because Jesus understood that we are not what we think we are. What we love and desire and the way desire and loves shape us is not just through knowledge. That has a role, and getting to that knowledge is important, but it's not most fundamentally what shapes our hearts. Guard your heart, for from it flows all of life.

Read what James K. Smith said in his great book, *You Are What You Love*,

**Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love. So discipleship is more a matter of hungering and thirsting than of knowing and believing. Jesus's command to follow him is a command to align our loves and longings with his—to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and crave a world where he is all in all—a vision encapsulated by the shorthand "the kingdom of God."**

Discipleship is more about hungering and thirsting than it is about knowing and believing. That is a different understanding of what it means to be human and how we go about following Jesus. It is more than just knowing because, again, we sense that gap between what

we know and what we think or what we do. Apprenticeship to Jesus is learning with and partnering with Jesus to cultivate and curate our hearts towards the things of God.

The main idea that I want to present to you is that you are what you love, but you may not love what you think you love.

**You are what you love, but you may not love what you think you love.**

See, this becomes a problem. This is Tarkovsky's moment. He says, "Would you step into the Room? Would you receive your innermost desire?" Because for all of us, you know the right answer is what I most desire is Jesus. You know that, but do you actually desire him? And when we then import the idea that we can't have any say over what we love, this becomes problematic.

Let's return to where I left off last week in Matthew 11 because Jesus is not leaving us an impossible task. In fact, he would say, to follow Jesus is actually the easy or light way. So, let's look more at that. Let's look at Matthew chapter 11:28-30.

**Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**

Now the word "learn" may seem to be that thinking piece again, but the word "learn" here in Greek is the same root word as the word "disciple." It's interactivity. It's to learn based on the experience of doing, walking, and interacting with your rabbi—Jesus. It's not just to acquire head knowledge; it's to root itself deep into your core, to take it into your heart, that executive center, the will, of which you make decisions. And Jesus says that when we follow him when he shapes our heart, that yolk, that set of teaching, is actually easy and light and leads towards rest.

Now, how can Jesus say that? When we hear teachings like, come follow me in this or that, we get burdened by them because what's happening is our heart's affection is not set in the same course of direction as Jesus. When your heart is set in the same affection, the same lane, it actually becomes easier. It's what Dallas Willard would call, *The Secret of the Easy Yolk*. He says, "If you want to follow Jesus and have it be easy and light and lead towards rest for your soul, you must be the person who desires and loves the very things that God desires and loves."

If your heart has been transformed in that direction, it becomes easier to follow Jesus than to live outside of that because it's the direction in which your heart is bent. It's the way in which your heart is aimed towards. And so it flows out of you. It may not always be the easiest possible thing, but it becomes easier than the opposite.

At some point, through the transformative work of the Holy Spirit, through us partnering with the Holy Spirit, opening up every dimension of our lives to the Holy Spirit, it actually becomes more natural for us to follow Jesus than it does to follow the ways of the world. If we want the life of Jesus, we have to take on the very lifestyle of Jesus. It comes

out from that in which Jesus is who he said he is. From that, we find ourselves in the way of Jesus, this alternative living that is very ordinary at times. It's how you operate in those liturgies I talked about. Those daily rhythms where your inner life becomes like the inner life of Christ. And then the life of Christ begins to fall out of you. That is the secret to the easy life. That's where you find it.

Well, if we're learning from Jesus, let's look at a particular passage here in Mark 12:28. It's important to recognize what Jesus is teaching. If we are following Jesus, if he is the one who's shaping the direction of our discipleship, then it becomes really important to know what it is that he is teaching. *"One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important?'"* (v. 28).

So we're entering into the middle of a scene where Jesus has been fielding questions from the experts of the law. Teachers or scribes of the law were something like the mix of a theologian and a lawyer. That's what the scribe would be. They were tasked with studying and memorizing the law from the Torah and then elaborating or contextualizing that into the community of faith. And they became experts in that.

Well, he comes, and he asks Jesus which was the most important commandment. This isn't the first time this question has been asked. This was a debate that had been raging around the first century of all the laws in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. What was the most important? If you know the Old Testament. You'll know that there were 613 laws. There were 248 that were positive commands, "Do this." And there were then 365 negative commandments, "don't do this." One for every day of the year. But then, outside of that 613, what developed around it was this oral tradition in which the scribes and the Pharisees would layer on more laws to help the people of God obey those laws. And so this oral tradition swelled up to over 1500 more laws on top of the 613. So what do you do when you have over 2000 laws? You begin to ask what's the most important one. You can't do them all.

So what is the most important? Rabbis would have a different take on what was the most important law. When we approach this text, and we see the scribe entering into this conversation with Jesus, what we realize is this is a long tradition and argument that's been going on. And Jesus has a brilliant take on what that might look like.

**"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." Mark 12:29**

Now Jesus is quoting from two different places, Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 6. This first commandment *"Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the LORD is one."* This is the foundation from which everything stands for the Israelites. This was what was called the great *Shema*. And in Hebrew, the word *Shema* means "hear." This is why, when Jesus said, "Hear O Israel," it developed this tradition in which they would pray this

multiple times, every single day, because, for the people of Israel, this was the foundation from which everything else was built.

And if you're thinking, well, that seems helpful for the people who have to say, so I do what he says. Well, I don't think that's much different than me saying I am God. I am the one who gets to decide. And therefore, in my life, I choose the laws I want to live by. It's really not a whole lot different. It's just who is at the center. Who is at the foundation?

The modern world would say, "Kevin, you are God," or whoever it is, "You can do whatever you like." For Israel, they said, "We have a different foundation. Hear O Israel. The Lord is God. The Lord is one. And so then out of that foundation flows what Jesus says in verse 30. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"* (v. 30).

Now I think when we read this, we often think of this text as a statement of emphasis that Jesus is just saying, "Love God with everything you got." This is true. It's not necessarily wrong, but I think it's far more than that. What Jesus is doing here is laying out a pathway to how you center the whole of your being on God.

See what happens is Jesus, in this place, is naming every dimension of what it is to be human. He is saying, love the Lord your God, with all your heart (the core), with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. And then your neighbor as yourself. These are the dimensions of what it means to be human. And he says the easy yolk, if you want to find rest for your soul, is to take every one of these dimensions and find a way to aim them towards the very things of God. This is what Dallas Willard would call "the path of indirection."

What Willard points out is if you want to love God with your heart, you cannot just decide one day to love God. You can't. You will all leave here, and by Wednesday, my guess is, you will have probably forgotten 90 percent of what I said. Hopefully, 10 percent hangs on, and hopefully, it's the people I quote, because they're smarter than me. But my guess is you'll forget most of it because we are not thinking things; we're loving things.

Jesus said that if you want to love God, you can't just think, "love God." You can't think, "I'm going to go out in the world this week. I'm going to love God with my mind." You can't directly impact your heart and your will. Your heart and your will are actually at the expense of all the other dimensions of your life that are giving shape to it. Instead of trying to just say love God more this week. What we have to do is indirectly affect the things we can control that will produce a life that loves God. It's the path of indirection. Let me give you an example because I know this is ethereal.

If you want to be a world-class musician, you don't just wake up and think; I'm going to be the best musician in the world ever. And then you're just there. A world-class musician comes out of a life organized around the vision of being a world-class musician. They would then organize the very dimensions of their life in such a way to where at some point over time, as they're transformed, the world-class musician would

come out of them naturally because their life has been orchestrated in a way that produces that.

And so when Jesus says to love the Lord your God, with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, he's actually laying out a pathway. Look at the ways in which your mind interacts daily and then take that and organize it in such a way where the results of that would be greater affection for God. Take your body that operates in regular rhythms and habits that creates a muscle memory or second nature, and it is natural. Like when Jesus says, bless those who curse you, he doesn't think you can just do it on the spot. He says, live in such a way by the power of the Holy Spirit that when that moment comes, when your enemy curses you, blessing comes out naturally. That's the easy way. Love takes practice; it takes training. It takes effort.

The beautiful thing is we are not left to our own devices, but rather the Holy Spirit is our helper, our advocate, the one who does the transformative work. When we look at this path of indirection when Jesus says, love the Lord your God with your heart, soul, mind, and strength and your neighbors as yourself, our role is to take those dimensions of our life and open them up to the work of the Holy Spirit. So that the Spirit continues to enter into our life deeper and deeper and then does that transformative work within us. We then take that easy yolk upon us.

[Look at this chart from Dallas Willard's](#) (click on the link), *Renovation of the Heart*, which is a brilliant book. This is Mark 12, this is it in a whole picture, this is every single one of us individually in this Room. It's each of those dimensions of the person that are represented here. See, at our core is our spirit, our heart, or our will. That's where decisions and our lives flow from. And then each of these different dimensions also constitutes who we are. Our mind, body, social environment, and that outer ring, the soul, that's the thing that encompasses all of who we are that makes us a unified person. The soul is every dimension of you. That's the totality of who you are.

If discipleship is about what we love. What our heart is. What the core of who we are is, in this modern world, our life is habituated in these different areas away from God. That's sin. It's disordered loves. And so our task then is to partner in this arrow on the left side of the chart that comes in, and it hits our spirit (heart/will). The arrow is the Word and Spirit of Christ entering into our lives.

If Christ is entering into our lives, but yet our mind is set against the things of God, it will be blocked before it can really begin the transformative work on our hearts or soul. But if you develop habits, rhythms, and practices in which you are constantly opening up your mind to the things of the Holy Spirit, well then, the Holy Spirit will flow through that freely.

Think of Paul. He said to take every thought captive because he understood the way the mind interacts with the Holy Spirit and the way the Holy Spirit enters our life. And so what if we could create habits and rhythms that look at each dimension of the person, which then, as we develop these things in partnership with the Holy Spirit, open our life up to the work of the Holy Spirit? Then God does that transformative

work, and over time that becomes the natural disposition of who we are.

I think when we take every thought captive, Paul's tapping into what we now know of as neuroscience that says our brain is wired in a particular way, and we can actually rewire it. We can create different mental maps infused and saturated with the Holy Spirit. So that when our enemy comes towards us, the Holy Spirit has wired us to where the natural disposition is towards love. And that is a lifetime of work that does not come easy.

This is how we change in any dimension of life. Do you want to be an athlete? It's going to come out of a life in which habits and rhythms are sustained there. Do you want to be a chef? You're going to need to understand a different type of life to become a chef. You want to take on the character of love and become like Christ. Well, of course, it will take us partnering with the Holy Spirit in that way. It's hard. It's difficult. But at the same time, Jesus says when you get there, it's the easy yolk, you'll find rest for your soul. Love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

In that same example of the world-class musician, let me map the teachings of Jesus onto this. If I take that innermost circle, if I want my spirit, or my heart or my will to be aimed towards the things of God, then I must initially respond and say yes to the work of the Holy Spirit.

I have to at least take that step and put my intention towards the love of God. Then out of that, my mind will begin to take on thoughts and feelings that slowly orient towards God. As I begin to move from a different type of love, a love of the world, greed, money, or power, whatever it is, and say, "Now my love is fixed here." I don't say, "I'm not going to love those things." Rather, instead of binging this show, I'm going to meditate on Scripture. That then shapes my mind in a different direction.

Then I look at my body and understand that my body interacts within the world in a particular way in which there's a muscle memory, a second nature to the way I live, where it's pointed in things against the way of God. But what if, through something like fasting, we could reshape the way our body operates in the world to where we naturally pull towards the things of God?

What if, in my social environment, I understand that I cannot love my enemy unless I live in context with them, but I also must live in a way in which the social environment around me helps and aids my own formation and opens me up to the Holy Spirit.

This is why you cannot follow Jesus on your own. You must be surrounded by community. You must do that because that's the habit from which you operate, and people can then speak into your life. You can learn how to love people that are different than you. All of those sorts of things shape who you are. I mean, Jesus lived in community. You must live in community. You must have that environment, and then out of that, your soul begins to take a different shape. It's aimed toward the things of God because, again, the Holy Spirit is doing this.

**We can't recalibrate the heart from the top down, [from the head down], through merely**

**informational measures. The orientation of the heart happens from the bottom up through the formation of our habits of desire. Learning to love [God] takes practice. James KA Smith, You Are What You Love**

Learning to love God takes practice. Now you will never earn the love of God. Let's be very clear on this, but it will take effort. You will not earn it, that is not possible, but effort is still going to be involved in orienting the whole view of who you are towards God. This is why we cannot do it alone. We need the work of the Holy Spirit.

One of the examples Mark Mitchell used to give all the time, which I love, is he would say it's something like a sailor on a boat. The role of the sailor on a boat is not to make the wind blow. You can't do that. But what the sailor on the boat does is set the sail. The sailor pulls up the anchor; they aim the ship. You do all the things to prepare for when that wind blows; then your life is organized in a way where it catches that, and the Holy Spirit takes off.

It's what Augustine would say thousands of years earlier that without God, you can't, but without you, God won't. We have a role in our formation. You have a role in shaping your loves and your desires. What do you want? What is your desire? And to answer that question, it actually takes an evaluation of what you do in your regular days, the very mundane habits that give shape to your life. You are the collection of a thousand different decisions throughout your day that constitutes a life. And what if those thousand decisions could be saturated with the work of the Holy Spirit so that it begins to reorient and recalibrate your heart towards God?

Let's read on for how the teacher of the law responded to Jesus. *"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him" (v. 32).* Notice that he begins with the foundation that it all begins with that reality of God. *"To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (v. 33).*

Think about it. This is a teacher of the law who says that all these burnt offerings, these sacrifices, these religious posturing, everything we could do is meaningless if we don't love God with every dimension of who we are. This teacher agrees that it is more important to love God with the whole of who you are and to love your neighbor as yourself. It's more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. *"When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions" (v. 34).* It's the mic drop moment.

So church, what do you want? What would you do at the threshold of that Room, where if you could step into it, the very core, the thing that

animates the whole of your life, would be given to you? Would you step in, or would you be nervous? I'd be nervous. I'd be very nervous because I recognize the way my heart has been calibrated and reshaped by a vision of the good life that's outside of the Kingdom of God. Every ad, show, and interaction in the world is constantly discipling us in a particular way. And I just wonder if we stepped in if we'd actually want what we got.

Jesus is saying, "Let me teach you a different way. Where with full confidence, you step into the Room." Just like the man wandering across the field and finding the treasure gives up everything because he found the Kingdom of God. He does whatever it takes. He takes that treasure because that's the good life. Jesus in John 10:10b, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

When that vision of the good life saturates and permeates everything we are. We will fully step right into the Room. Because we can say, "Jesus, that is what I want." But my guess is it's going to take a lifetime of learning from Jesus on how to have that be the center focus of your heart. You are what you love, but you may not love what you think you love.

I want to close with Psalm 37:4. There's this beautiful little verse. *"Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."* When we import a modern understanding of that verse, we think we have found the trick. I just delight in God, and I'll get everything I want. But what we miss is when you delight in the Lord, the desires of your heart are different. It isn't so much that God gives you what you want it's he gives you new wants.

When you delight in the Lord, when you organize your life in such a way where Jesus and the Kingdom of God is the center point of all you are, and the Holy Spirit permeates you and saturates you and begins to do the work for us, ask whatever you wish and it'll be given to you. Because all of a sudden, you'll realize your wants are different.

It's not about getting rich. That's a different kingdom. It's not about acquiring all power. That's certainly a different kingdom. It's not about having all pleasure and everything you could desire. No, that's a different kingdom. What I've learned from Scripture and what I've learned from those wiser than me is that all of those leave you weary and burdened. They don't actually satisfy.

*Take delight in the Lord and he'll give you the very desires of your heart.*

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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