

Scripture: Mark 12:28-34.

Topic & Proposition: To be a Christian - like people.

Text: Mark 12:31 -- "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

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Dates and Places used:

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Although I forget where I read it, an interesting article on human personality commented at length on the fact that if we took the second great commandment of Jesus seriously the outcome would be anything but desirable. The first and greatest commandment given by Jesus is to love God, and the second is to love your neighbor as yourself. The writer of the study I vaguely remember says that if we loved others as we love ourselves we would injure or kill them.

It is true that we ~~xxxxxx~~ often are harder on ourselves than anyone else is. In every one of us there is some guilt complex which makes him punish himself, as it were. In each there seems to be a bit of the extreme of this attitude, so that probably every one toys at some time in life with the idea of suicide. In many of us there is a driving ambition which makes us push ourselves over health and safety limits much more severely than we would someone else.

On the opposite side of the picture there is, of course, the instinct of self-preservation in each of us too, which causes one to get necessary things for himself no matter what the effect on others. There is in many a great degree of selfishness which causes them to get all they can, no matter what the cost or suffering to others. This is probably the thing Jesus was thinking of when he said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," to blunt the selfishly acquisitively instincts and actions by extending their effort to the benefit of others too.

Certainly we know that the pattern of Jesus' own life and the substance of his teaching emphasized loving and serving others. He once taught "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his neighbor." He did just that himself, giving his life upon the cross for you and me.

Mark 12:28-34

If, then, to the a christian is to follow in

the footsteps of Jesus, within the framework and patterns of our age, it surely must be clear that to be a Christian means to love people, people generally, persons specifically. To word our them of today a bit more like our own daily speech, to be a christian is to like people.

All around you can find evidence of people who like other people.

In a halway in our church is a water fountain low enough for children to use comfortably. On the wall near the fountain is a small bronze plaque which says simply, "In memory of Jack Jones, who loved children." I didn't know Jack Jones, and I'm not sure I know his family, but I know that such an epitaph points to a person of Christlike spirit.

In the Old Testament book of Proverbs it is written, "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." A person who is your real friend will stick with you regardless of what may come. A story that points this out tells of a time when a shadow said to a body, "Who is a friend like me? I follow you wherever you go. In sunlight or in moonlight I never forsake you."

"True," answered the body, "you go with me in sunlight and in moonlight. But where are you when neither sun nor moon shines upon me?" (Macartney's Illustrations, p.133).

Test your friendships. What is the attitude of your friend toward that which you, as a christian, hold sacred -- honor, purity, the Bible, the home, the church and Christ? In an old writing, Faust, the beautiful and chaste Margaret confessed that when Faust was present she was unable to pray. What is the influence of an evening with your friend? (Macartney's Illustrations, p. 136.). The christian is one who influences his friends, by the very quality of his own life and person, to higher and purer living.

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An unknown poet has written a tribute to a friend which any Christian can have said about him if he likes people and is attempting to practice the attitudes of Christ:

"There's a comforting thought at the close of the day,
When I'm weary and lonely and sad,
That sort of grips hold of my crusty old heart
And bids it be merry and glad.
It gets in my soul and it drives out the blues,
And finally thrills through and through.
It is just a sweet memory that chants the refrain
"I'm glad I touch shoulders with you!"

Did you know you were brave, did you know you were strong?
Did you know there was one leaning hard?
Did you know that I waited and listened and prayed,
And was cheered by your simplest word?
Did you know that I longed for that smile on your face,
For the sound of your voice ringing true?
Did you know I grew stronger and better because I had merely touched shoulders with you?

I am glad that I live, that I battle and strive
For the place that I know I must fill;
I am thankful for sorrows; I'll meet with a grin

What fortune may send, good or ill.
I may not have wealth, I may not be great,
But I know I shall always be true,
For I have in my life that courage you gave
When once I rubbed shoulders with you.

(Masterpieces of Religious Verse, # 1259).

Remember, Jesus commanded as second only to loving God the attitude of living your neighbor.

We can accurately say that this means, To be a christian - like people.

