

Mark 12:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Analysis

Jesus adds the second commandment, quoting Leviticus 19:18, and declares it "like" (*homoia, ὁμοία*) the first—not equal in rank but similar in character and inseparably connected. Love for God necessarily produces love for others created in God's image (1 John 4:20-21). The command "love thy neighbour as thyself" (*agapēseis ton plēsion sou hōs seauton, ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν*) assumes legitimate self-love (proper self-care) and commands extending the same concern to others. "Neighbour" (*plēsion, πλησίον*) isn't limited to friends or fellow Israelites—Jesus expanded this definition in the Good Samaritan parable (Luke 10:29-37) to include anyone in need, even enemies. The phrase "There is none other commandment greater than these" declares that all biblical ethics derive from these two principles: love God supremely and love others sacrificially. Reformed theology emphasizes that genuine love is impossible apart from regeneration; believers increasingly love God and neighbor as the Spirit sanctifies them, though perfection awaits glorification.

Historical Context

By combining Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, Jesus provided a hermeneutical key for understanding Torah—all commandments flow from these two principles. Rabbinic tradition included similar summaries: Hillel said, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor; that is the whole Torah" (Shabbat 31a). But Jesus positively commanded active love, not merely avoiding harm. Paul later

wrote that love fulfills the Law (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14), echoing Jesus' teaching. The early church made love its distinguishing mark—"See how they love one another" pagan observers noted. Caring for widows, orphans, poor, sick, and persecuted became Christian community hallmarks (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35; James 1:27), demonstrating that love for God produces tangible love for others. This two-fold command became foundational to Christian ethics throughout church history.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. In what practical ways do you demonstrate love for your neighbor—not just those you like, but those in need, even those who oppose you?
2. How does understanding that love for God and love for neighbor are inseparable challenge any tendency to separate spirituality from practical care for others?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	δευτέρα	όμοία,	αὕτη	Ἀγαπήσεις	τὸν	πλησίον	σου
And	the second	is like		G846	Thou shalt love	G3588	neighbour
G2532	G1208	G3664		G25		G4139	G4675
ώς	σεαυτόν	μείζων	τούτων	ἄλλη	ἐντολὴ	οὐκ	ἔστιν
as	thyself	greater	than these	other	commandment	none	There is
G5613	G4572	G3187	G5130	G243	G1785	G3756	G2076

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 22:39 (Love): And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Luke 10:27 (Love): And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

Leviticus 19:18 (Love): Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

Matthew 7:12 (Word): Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

1 John 4:21 (Love): And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

Galatians 5:14 (Love): For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Leviticus 19:13 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.