

ANALYSIS OF THE NON-PLACE OF SELF-LOVE IN CHRISTIANITY

Jesus when he was asked by a Jewish scholar, a scribe, what the greatest commandment of morality was replied as follows.

“The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31, King James Bible).

Jesus quoted what he called the first command, from the Jewish Law, which he said was the word of God. And in the Law (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) the commandment is treated as the only one that ultimately matters. It is the one that we are told to obsess with. The demand to love ones neighbour is not exalted to that level in the Law. So Jesus agrees with the law but why does he say that love of neighbour is important too? He is indicating that the command to love God alone contains the other commandments the greatest of which is to love neighbour. Loving neighbour is really about loving God only. In other words, love your neighbour not for themselves but because God says so. The notion that the two commandments say exactly the same thing is nonsense. Loving Tony is not the same as loving Amy - so loving God is not the same as loving your neighbour.

To love God totally is the most important commandment. Therefore to break it is the greatest sin.

Jesus commanded you to love your neighbour as yourself.

Love your neighbour as yourself does not say you are to value yourself and your needs as much as the needs of others. People argue that Jesus assumes we love ourselves and asks us to love others equally to ourselves. As Jesus was speaking in the context of the loving of God alone being what matters, he is telling us he does not approve of our self-love even if it is natural.

Many do not like the suggestion that they are to love God alone for they want to love themselves. Sadly for them as we now know, Jesus did not command self-love. Telling us to look after our neighbour as yourself only means he sees you do look after yourself or you would not be alive but does not indicate any approval. What gets the approval is looking after your neighbour. He is only saying we love ourselves not that it is right to or that we should.

Luke 17:7-10 (ESV) - 7 Jesus said, "Will any one of you who has a servant ploughing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? 8 Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? 9 Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"

That says it all! It proves that if Jesus said love your neighbour as yourself he meant do good actions and it is not about feeling good or loving. In fact he commanded that you must feel you are no good.

Loving neighbour as yourself seems to mean that you love your neighbour and yourself in that order. In theory, you can love your neighbour as yourself while still putting your neighbour first. You treat the neighbour as you would treat yourself. Theologians say is the same as love your neighbour as yourself but it is clarified better. Love your neighbour as yourself tells you to give the love you give or would give yourself to your neighbour. It does not mean you may love yourself. Indeed it forbids it. It is a mistake then to imagine that love your neighbour as yourself implies you must love yourself.

It can be argued that as Jesus thought its natural for us to love our neighbour as ourselves he only gave that as a commandment that has to be followed if we fail to love God only.

Jesus said that loving God is the biggest commandment implying that if we can't love God and love others we should love God instead of others. But that is hypothetical. This is another way of getting the point across that it should be all about God. Hypothetical means that we have to be the kind of people who if faced with that choice would care only for God.

Love is sacrifice. But you cannot really sacrifice for yourself but only for your neighbour - love your neighbour as yourself is about how you treat your neighbour not about how you value him or her.

The advice or command to love the sinner and hate the sin is telling you to love the sinner more than yourself. Even if you

could hate the sin and love the sinner, you are deluding yourself to manage it. You are demeaning yourself. If you demean yourself you can't think much of those who love you or of other people. You are also offering love based on lies and pretence to the sinner. Its not the real thing. Its true colours will show. Outright hatred would do less harm in the long run. But nevertheless, it is an attempt to devalue yourself to reward a sinner with love.

In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew we read how Jesus commanded that if somebody borrows things from us we must not look for them back. He said to turn the other cheek. These things indicate that Jesus meant we must love our neighbour more than ourselves.

Break up the commandment to love your neighbour as yourself. Have it as, "Love your neighbour." "Love as yourself." This does not indicate any approval at all for loving yourself. It only says you love yourself and so go and love your neighbour as much. It is worried about the neighbour not you.