



AUTO-SERMON TRANSCRIPT

2023 Celebration & 2024 Vision

Following, 1 of 5 from January 7th, 2024

"Jesus deserves our undivided inner-life."

Mark 12 by Michael Lockstampfor (@miklocks)

[\[https://www.ocalaneighborhood.church/watch-a-message/following-1-2023-celebration-2024-vision\]](https://www.ocalaneighborhood.church/watch-a-message/following-1-2023-celebration-2024-vision)

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[Music]

they're loud we apologize but not really we we get loud we get crazy we have a good time back there second is that we we teach God's word every single week we go through God's word and we studying in different ways we go through through skits through games we talk about it we discuss it and if you could listen to some of the things that comes out of the kids' mouths these kids get it when when Jesus says the faith of a child like that's a big like they get it they understand who Jesus is and it's really exciting so let's talk about some of the things that God did in 2023 first off uh we had a graduation we had someone come out of kid nation and come hang out with you guys we affectionately call you the oldsters so um that's Riley lock Stamper who you've seen him beating on the drum here so Riley's been serving and Riley grad graduated out of kid nation into hanging out with you guys so that's worth of a round of applause

right we also had something cool happen in that a year ago we did this and we talked about in 2023 hoping that God would show up and in terms of volunteers right if you're if you've ever heard anybody talk about children's ministry for more than five minutes you know they're going to ask for volunteers right but God showed up we had four different women show up and serve Faithfully in children's ministry for the entire year and the coolest part about it was if you talk to him it was all like the Holy Spirit nudging them and them responding to it so just seriously Grace thank you so much for the way that you stepped up yeah give it up for Grace it's so

awesome and and um somebody you guys might not be aware of that that's been doing a lot is is Ashley Riki as well Ashley's not with us today but Ashley has a um teaching background so it's really cool when she fills in because she actually is good at it um and I don't mean that I mean in comparison to me right I get back there we just go crazy she has a plan she has a curriculum it's really really cool um and then also uh Miss Jesse right here who is just stepped up and like helped the all of the all of the children's ministry in regards to um the the small kids right running all of that we had a plan where we were going to put together a calendar so that everybody knew when everybody was going to serve and then I didn't do any of that and then Jesse did it all and it's just been great and phenomenal and then Sarah's stepping up and continuing to do that my wife just huge blessing for people

that Faithfully serve God in the way that they take care of our kids so one last round of applause for all those

ladies some other stuff um we studied Exodus we studied Joshua we studied judges now you guys may be aware of this but kids do really well with narrative right so when you can tell the kids the the story they can really get behind it they can understand who the characters are they can tell you who's doing what what the motivations were and they can really wrap their head around it but we tried something a little bit different this year we went into Epistles with kids that was yeah we got quiet real quick yeah um we we studied Philippians we studied Galatians and we tackled a little bit of Romans we're going to get into more of that this year but guys they got it they understood it it was really exciting stuff and if you head back back to kid nation right on the back side of that door you can see the painting project that they've been working on for illustrating Philippians and illustrating Galatians so in Philippians they learned about the humility of Christ and what he did in the fact that Jesus is God and became man and served in the way that he redeemed us they learned that these kids the second thing that they learned in Ephesians which is really cool and I'd like to get the kids to come help all the kids let's get up on the stage and not break anything come on come on let's go all right so something that we do is um when we teach them a lesson we've learned that they they really can wrap their head around it when there's something physical so not only do they actually understand the words but when it's physical they can really wrap their mind around it so you guys want to teach the ERS Ephesians let's do it okay so we learned in Ephesians something really really cool right the idea was that Jesus saved us by grace through faith okay so we're going to teach you guys kid nation style how to understand that so Grant what's our symbol for Jesus okay you guys got it Jesus the King right so Jesus what about saved saved like Superman oh you guys are weak come on stand up come on come on you're going to do it too you're going to do it too okay so what what's Jesus Grant Crown right he's the king okay and how do we do saved saved us he's like Superman come on hands on him let's go now what about us us right Jesus saved us what about Grace this one's kind of hard Grace it's a gift Jesus has given us the gift of Grace he saved us by Grace what about faith what second one second what about faith for oh God goggles right putting our God goggles on seeing things the way that God says it is okay so oldsters you're now being quizzed Jesus saves come on say with me Us by grace through faith nice job give it up for the kids can we can we do well Grace can we point Auntie Grace oh that's a good point you want to tell you want to tell them what you just

said he he said for Grace we should point at Auntie Grace that's really good all right go have and seat go have and seat go have seat good job guys way it be all right so that was 2023 now now in terms of 2024 here are some things that we'd like you guys to be thinking about and praying about um if you haven't noticed our playground could use some work yeah yeah yeah yeah so um we're in the process of thinking through and praying through what that looks like so we would just ask that that uh that you would think about that and then also again it wouldn't be a children's ministry thing if we didn't ask for volunteers but it's not that we're asking for volunteers we're asking that God is going to show up in the same way or even greater than he did in 2023 because God moved in the lives of people and that affected these kids it changed Eternal Destinies because the kids are not the future Church they're the church and thank you for everything that you guys did and the way that you serve God I'm going to stop blubbing um okay so that's 2024 that's what we're going to be doing um now let's transition to um the next section that I have so uh we did some really cool things um not just in kation but also we studied quite a few sermon series here in this

room right we got that that on the bulletin you flip that over so you guys studied Through The Sermon on the Mount Exodus Romans 1 Samuel Hebrews and our value series is that a lot of scripture that super weak is that a lot of scripture that's a ton of scripture look at all look at all those and we got even more coming this year God uses his word to speak to the body and the way that we interact with it with one another on a Sunday morning this is celebrating this is what we do we're celebrating Jesus and everything that he has done that's the whole design of Sunday morning now while that's going on we also have small groups now small groups is another component of what it is we do we have four small groups that are going strong right now so one is digital the rest are meeting physically and interacting with with people directly but those small groups those are designed for the learning aspect of following God together because this is great and we learn a lot in this room studying God's word together we really do but the spiritual maturity and the learning more about what God has in your life we have seen over and over and over again a lot of that happens in those small group settings so we would we would encourage you to get plugged into one of the small groups if you want to start one of the small groups get with Pastor Michael Jesse myself you and we'd love to talk to you about what that looks like because you could actually provide an opportunity for someone else to get plugged in and and respond to the Holy Spirit you feel that that's god pushing us forward because celebrating is awesome there's a reason that we do it every single week learning is part of moving us on to that next step so that's just some of the stuff that um I I was honored to be able to present to you so I'm gonna hand it over to Pastor Michael and he's going on to tell us a little bit

more hey thank you [Applause] Ryan I get a lot of credit for things that are oftentimes Ryan's idea and so um if if you think that oh he's like the children's Pastor he is not really that like he actually is is a brilliant thinker very strategic um and I don't know if you've ever had a conversation with him but he just makes you feel cared for just by talking with him he's such a gift to our body and I'm so thankful for him um and thankful for um his heart to follow Jesus and to step into uh step into calling um yeah so thank you Ryan thank you to our kid nation volunteers I just want to say that our kid nation graduation rate conversion into volunteer service is 100% there's not a kid who doesn't leave kid nation that doesn't immediately start serving somewhere so all of our sound booth is is occupied by Kid Nation graduates um we've got kid nation graduates that are I can't even think of where they're at that they do the the offering they do the readings um they're playing the playing on the worship team so if you if you're like oh man I wish the church would stop asking me for volunteers uh then you need to start praying and giving towards kid nation because that's where our volunteers are coming out

um this year we did something brand new uh that we called an overflow offering uh the last uh or this the Christmas Eve Sunday we we took up a special offering um at the end of the year uh that supported two things one this summer our air conditioner died we took out a small loan to be able to uh pay that back \$330,000 to be able to purchase that and so we got a brand new air conditioner and so this overflow offering 2/3 of that went towards reimbursing that loan that we took out the other third went towards an organization called water for good and what they do is they drill wells in the Central African Republic but they don't just drill Wells and then leave they they drill Wells they train people to maintain the engines and the motors and the pumps and make sure everything works so they train locals give them jobs and then they partner with local churches so that when they build a well uh the people actually come really near the church property and so they have this association with living water and the church property like it's a really really cool Ministry and really

empowers Ministers of the Gospel to have an opportunity to meet needs of their neighbors and to love them well so those were the two things that our overflow offering were were going towards our goal as Neighborhood Church was to raise \$15,000 they looking at the room I'm like

\$115,000 okay it is my privilege and to celebrate the work that Jesus has done through our hands and through Lakeland and Sebring to report to you today that we raised a total of \$15,800 with the [Applause] Overflow so what that means for us is that our we've got about \$10,000 left on our loan which is a much smaller portion than the 30 we started with but what that means for our our neighborhood churches like we're not we're not big we're not massive we're not BL but our gifts last month mean that there's a thousand people 1,000 people in the Central African Republic that will have clean water for one year and if that's not life changing I don't really know what is so really grateful uh to Jesus to be a part of that um that's our first kind of foray as a church into supporting missions here in CA uh the church in Sebring has been doing it for years and we've just kind of been on life support and trying to get our feet underneath us and so this year we're moving into um seeing how Jesus is moving across the the world and that's really exciting too um here closer to home um God's blessed us with some Ministry to our neighbors local community uh yesterday at this In This Very Room we celebrated the first wedding that I think we've done in at least 15

years

um so congratulations to our Newly Weds Dale and Joanne thank you so much for being here this

morning if you thought church was boring you should know that there are people on their honeymoon here this morning they thought this was a priority we've been uh We've made it a regular habit to have a neighborhood Meal which is just a caran meal uh uh on the last Sunday of the month open anybody who wants to come we've had a brilliant brilliant opportunities to just meet with people who are coming in off the streets who are just happen to be driving by at the right time who pull off who come in for food but more than once folks have come in and said hey I just came for the meal and then we have spent significant amounts of time praying and counseling them so those neighborhood meals have gone great and uh Miss Sarah is hiding somewhere Miss Sarah is often our main chef and coordinator and so she uses her gifts for that so thank you Sarah for all your work and everybody who's brought food this

year we had a great time in December celebrating Christmas with that format um and we also had an opportunity this year to do what we call the shindig uh which is just a party in the backyard live music and we had almost a rough count of about a hundred people on the property that day uh which a brilliant opportunity to just show people uh that Jesus loves them he wants to meet them where they're at um this is real small but I thought it was significant we started last year we did a Bible read through um read the whole thing cover to cover in 2022 and so when I reported like our YouTube views I was like this year is weird because we've got this thing where we've got you know uh 36 hours of straight video on our Channel blah blah blah so we did that actually again this year and so 2022 and 2023 the content that we put out was actually actually very similar and yet we had a 12% growth in YouTube views and 36 new subscribers and I don't know what that means or what God's doing there but just to know that we're a little church in the woods that has Fiber Optic internet connection for some reason and so we just decided we would live stream and

publish videos and meet our neighbors on the internet and God is bringing them and connecting with us there too so um we've been able to partner with a couple of organizations in town one of which is the Grateful Hearts Ed education Resource Center uh which is a homeschool kind of a supercharged homeschool Co-op is kind of the fast way to talk about it but they partnered with us um on the shindig so there were a number of volunteers and a number of people that were working the shindig and a couple of guests that came from that that really helped us uh nail the shindig because we can't do it all by ourself so it's beautiful to collaborate with them um we also regularly collaborate with wear gloves um and we host they do a dignity Center which is a place where folks who have needs financial needs can come and work and earn what they need and we host one of those here so uh Thursdays sometimes on Tuesdays when we have enough work folks come and they're in our on our building doing work putting together parts for closet made which is not particularly spiritual but as we get to work beside them as our volunteers come and serve them have the opportunity to hear about what's actually going on in their lives and the things that are going on with them and so we've had a number of spiritual conversations and um in in that environment and so we're grateful for our opportunity to partner with wear gloves and host a dignity Center here um there's uh another way that we connect with neighbors that is way way way under the radar um we've we've partnered with an organization called glue which is basically an advertising uh an advertising agency for Jesus so they run ads on TV they run ads on on the internet all over the place YouTube videos but the ads tie whoever responds to the ad ads to a church in their zip code and so a year and a half ago or so we we started uh we signed up for that and we're like I'm like who's going to actually connect with us and I did not go back and count but there have been hundreds of neighbors who have texted us and either I have responded or Audra has responded she's done some incredible counseling through text message in the middle of the day with people that we will never meet and have no idea like what God does in the long run but in the moment of their crisis they had somebody in Neighborhood Church who was able to pick up the phone and point them to Christ and I thought that was beautiful Ministry and thank you so much for your [Applause] ministry we partner also with the Great Commission Bible Institute which is a one-ear uh how do they say it one year One book one goal so they study the Bible all the way through for one year um we hosted them here for our their Bible read through our Bible read through we kind of shared that they read the whole thing cover to cover to start off their year um and I've been down and ministering to them uh presenting to them an opportunity to do an internship there um and it's just been really beautiful having them here to see the relationships that have grown not just with me as the teacher um but with you as as host families that got that welcomed those students into your home um to build relationships with them I know there have been even literal snail mail letters that have gone back and forth between young people young people writing letters can you imagine that like that's not a sign that God's doing something I don't know what is so I'm really grateful for that we've had a number of guests this year who have attended either our our celebrations here on Sunday morning or one of our groups a number of people we've already talked about have have stepped up and begun to volunteer which is beautiful um

and we've uh we've been laboring here since 2014 um before we ever called ourselves Neighborhood Church just trying trying to point people to Jesus and for a long time we did not talk about membership not talk about partnering we were just kind of trying to survive and so this year God brought to us nine people who committed and said I want to be a Ministry partner I want to belong to Neighborhood Church this year so we went from four to 14 uh Ministry Partners um in 2023 which is which is just beautiful and I'm so grateful for that

*Following, 1 of 5 from January 7th, 2024
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but

and for all of the things that that we have worked hard on all of the things all of the metrics some measurements of success that we can point to I just have two more um we were privileged to baptize two people that wanted to start their and continue to follow Jesus well make a public declaration that they're going to follow Jesus with their whole heart we had two folks in our congregation that wanted to do that and we had three people this year that I know of who made a firsttime profession of faith that they want to put their trust in Jesus and want to walk with him all their days so I that's I don't know what else to celebrate other than that people following Jesus in

Bap that's um that's our mission our mission here as neighborhood churches to invite our neighbors to meet and to follow Jesus we want them to to uh be introduced to him and meet him wherever we show up and just continue to invite them to follow him um so what are we doing in

2024 I've got uh first thing is to pray um when we started when we started the process of even changing our name I didn't know what we were going to go into um but this was 2020 January 2020 my big strategic plan was to pray which I'm super grateful for because I could do that all of 2020 without having to go anywhere so that was great God helped us out so we went out and we covered over our sign um and just all it said was we pray for you that was all we were trying to do in 2020 and and the Lord started something that year um that we're we're celebrating even today and so as we look at 2024 uh my big my big plan is to keep praying um by his grace uh somebody ran over our sign I don't know if you've noticed um a fella uh had fallen asleep at the end of a really long shift and he and he drove through our sign and it's been a long time um it's been a long time to get it replaced and I was frustrated by that until I realize that what God has done is is put a we pray for you sign back in that place again um and so I have just been encouraged as I reflected on what we're doing in 2024 that that we should probably be praying if if losing a sign is a sign at all um then let's commit to pray together um it doesn't matter what we do if God doesn't do it and go before us um so what do we pray for pray for our neighbors um your neighbor is anybody who you have contact with anybody you have influence over anybody that you interact with anybody that you live near anybody who you work with like literally any human that you might actually meet as your neighbor um and so pray for them pray that God would be doing stuff pray that that you would be placed in a position where you can point them to Jesus um and also pray for new and for growing leaders um I got a an invitation at the beginning of December to come up and meet with some other pastors statistically um I think it's something ridiculous like 80% of pastors that are serving today are over 60 and and within uh within the next two years uh it's something like 60% of pastors will be within or past retirement age um so when you look at the people that are serving and leading the church most of them are old there aren't there aren't young people that are stepping up and saying I'm going to follow the call of God to lead and sheer ered the flock of God and so I don't know that I have a great solution for that except to ask that God would send laborers for the Harvest to ask that God would raise up pastors and as I'm thinking I'm watching Ryan communicate to you with four young men the big idea of aians and I'm like we've got 100% volunteer rate coming out of kid nation like what who where are the Pastors in that group and it might take some time but I think God is moving there too and so let's continue to pray that God would continue that work not only that he would call new pastors but that the the leaders that we have would continue to grow um there's a there's a group of men

that have been meeting all 2023 that are exploring what what what Biblical gospel centered eldership and church leadership ought to be um and and and um moving towards some training for that um so as we go through 2024 be praying for new and for growing leaders um and and pray for teams um a leader uh a leader is great uh but any leader worth their Sal um understands their own weaknesses and surrounds themselves with people that are going to help them um are going to help them do the thing that they feel called to do and so they need teams as people step up and begin to lead uh they need people to be leading and to work and to ser serve and and to and to learn um the the the way the Bible describes my job is to equip and empower the Saints so my job is not to do the ministry my job is to give you the tools that you need and the motivation that you need to go and do the things that God is calling you to do um and so I'm just praying that he would give us the strength to be able to do that this year um there's a couple of seeds a couple of ideas a couple of opportunities that we might start more uh worship celebrations um I'm not interested in adding more services on Sunday um because I know that there's neighbors that work third shifts and they've got weird schedules and so how can we meet those people where they're at um and so I'm praying through that I don't have definite answers but as we look at 2024 there may be some new celebrations that are popping up um that we may ask for your help in in making sure that they can happen um and there's uh there were some ver that we didn't talk about when we were going through the series living as sacrifices that series focused in on um on on Romans chapter 12 right around Romans chapter 12 and there was a verse that we didn't talk about but like really got it's it's it's teeth in me and I really wrestled with this um be eager to show Hospitality be eager to show Hospitality I thought well that's great I married a woman who's a great cook like I can I can be eager to connect them to my wife and she can show hospitality and the Lord would not let me shake that be eager to show hospitality and over the coming months as he began to work that verse into my heart the thing that I began to see is that um one I was not eager I was not going out and looking for opportunities to show Hospitality to people and two our facilities the way that we take care of our building inside and outside our property is an an expression of our hospitality so as we're going through 2024 I'm looking at our facilities I'm looking at the the space the 10 acres that we're planted on here and saying God how can we use this to be eager to show Hospitality to our neighbors so that they can meet you here and they can be invited to follow you here um so we've got some teams that have already committed uh some leaders that have already stepped up to lead teams to to think about painting and furniture and and design things and re redo the stage and and all kinds of things but our facilities inside and out will be changing this year um and then finally uh one of the things that Ryan's kind of already hinted at is that one of the ways that we grow is when we grow in our knowledge like we we sometimes just need to learn things and this has been a weakness of our church um for for years I've known it's a weakness we've dealt with some other things um and this year the Lord's leading me to like actually button down and do some teaching um so there's three classes that are that are that we're going to do in the spring the first one is a baptism class so if you are uh if you are you've been following Jesus and you haven't been baptized you've got some questions you're interested in what that looks like this is the place to explore this is the place to ask those questions why would we do this what does it mean all those kinds of things and that's going to be next Sunday uh from 3: to 5: uh which is kind of a quick turnaround but it's not the quickest turnaround I've done um because next week we're actually going to do a baptism celebration on a Sunday morning which is something that we've never done as neighborhood church we typically go out to the lake and we'd make a whole Saturday picnic Affair and go out and celebrate baptisms there um but Tanya is going to be uh moving and she said hey I want to be on that list of ministry Partners I want to be somebody who belongs to this body and is on

Mission um and God is moving her to Las Vegas of all places and she's like I I would like to be baptized so I can be a Ministry partner before I leave and so I met with her we did a a baptism class one-on-one this week and then next Sunday she's going to be baptized on on Sunday morning which is something else to

celebrate but if you two have been considering baptism you're like wow that was so fast I didn't know well next Sunday we're going to do a class and we're going to shoot to do a baptism celebration on a Saturday probably the first or second weekend in March I haven't looked at the calendar yet so I will give you those dates um second is is Walking With Jesus and that's going to be on Tuesday starting January 16th and we're going to go through this book it's called the common rule it's a real simple book in fact this book was so frustrating to me because I realized before I started that if you read these two pages you've read the whole book it's all all the content is here on these two pages it's very simple and the idea is just this that we are the sum total of our habits and so what if we had some habits that drove us to connect with Jesus and so there's eight habits that we're going to look together today and so this class is not so much as a learning class as it is getting a group of people together to practice some ways that we can walk together with Jesus so I'd encourage you to sign up uh for those and then last is what's in the Bible one of our core values is we trust the Bible one of the things that I'm more and more aware of is that we don't actually know what's in it and so here's a class that we try to go through all the way through the Bible Genesis to Revelation what's actually in this thing um and do that in 13 weeks if if the Lord if the Lord Wills us to move that fast I've never actually done it I've tried now twice to do it in 13 weeks and have not done it at all so hopefully that will be on time um but those are the the three classes that we've got going on okay we cool are we uh I would like to now shift a little bit one I'd like for us to to pray together um and then I'll share just a real quick message before we close is that okay beautiful um before we do that though can we um can we sing I don't I know I'm not allowed to like lead the singing But like do we know the doxology yeah so is anybody else feeling encouraged this morning yeah okay so let's let's stand together and we'll sing praise God from whom all blessings flow Praise Him All Creatures here below Praise Him above ye Heavenly hosts praise father God and Son and Holy Ghost amen praise God from whom all blesss flow Praise Him All Creatures here below Praise Him above ye

Heaven praise Father Son and Holy

[Music]

ghosten Our Father in heaven Hallowed Be Your Name Your Kingdom your will be on earth it in give us this our daily us ours as we also have forgiven our and us not into tempt but deliv us from evils is the kingdom glory for amen amen let's sit

together I've already said um our mission as Neighborhood Church is to invite our neighbors to meet and to follow Jesus um meeting we've we've done a lot of work on and so as we begin 2024 what do we mean when we say following Jesus so our series as we start off is following I'm just going to give you a couple of verses um and invite you to and and I'm going to do what they call salting your oats have you heard of salting your oats you've heard the phrase you you can lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink but you can also put salt in The Roots so you can't make them drink but you can make them thirsty so this is a salt kind of morning I'm not going to explain everything if you have more questions and answers then continue to engage with us um it's a new year uh people are in

*Following, 1 of 5 from January 7th, 2024
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the habit of making New Year's resolutions right is anybody who's like really on Team New Year's resolutions like I love New Year's resolution I'm so excited about it okay perfect y'all are like me either you don't really care that much or you're against them my attitude towards New Year's Resolution generally has been just bahug um because preach because did you know that there is a day now that is that is that is recognized as quitters day quitters day the day that everybody quits their New Year's resolution is the second Friday in January going into the second weekend you're like I don't know about that I didn't really I wasn't really that into it um almost universally though New Year's resolutions are about like self-improvement um according to Forbes uh to who did a who did a survey this year these are the top five New Year's resolution improved Fitness improved finances improved mental health lose weight or improved diet which all of those kind of seem redundant or interrelated right those those are the top five New Year's resolutions um there uh and but New Year's resolutions almost universally are geared towards self-improvement like I I I'm I want to improve my fitness um foolish is the man who say who makes his New Year's resolution I want to improve my wife's Fitness right like that's not a good goal don't do that New Year's resolutions are typically about me and and we're in church on Sunday so we can pretend to be spiritual maybe our New Year's resolutions are spiritual in nature of like I want to get closer to God I want to walk closer with God which I think is is brilliant I think it's a good and honorable goal and I would even say that it's probably the Holy Spirit that's leading you to have that goal however there's there's a small caveat that I think sometimes uh we forget and I don't know if anybody else will tell you so let me tell you clearly this morning Jesus doesn't want to be added to your life he's not interested in being a small modification to what you're already doing Jesus doesn't want to be added to your life he wants to be Lord of all your life all of it you say okay that's a strong statement where are you getting that from well I try not to say anything that I didn't get from scripture so I invite you to open with me to Mark chapter 12 in these blue Bibles um I'll tell you the page number

in these blue Bibles is on page 1059 if you'd like to follow along we're going to be in Mark chap 12 and we're just going to look at a couple of verses real

quick Mark chapter 12 I'm going to begin in verse 28 I'm on page 1059 in the blue

Bibles Mark is uh is a is a collection it's a biography telling the the story of the life of of Jesus and this chapter in particular is interesting because it's a it's a time where where there's a bunch of people who were coming to Jesus and they want to trip him up so there there's a group it appears there's a group that have surrounded Jesus and there are a bunch of people who don't want to follow Jesus but they want to ask him questions so that he looks foolish and so they're they're asking him leading questions they're trying to trap him into saying something that's wrong and so in this barrage of questions in in uh in verse 28 you've got a group of people called the scribes these are like religious people who their job was to copy copy the Bible and they asked Jesus this question to try and trip him up verse 28 and one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another these other people that are trying to trip Jesus up and seeing that he Jesus answered them well asked him which commandment is most important of all Jesus answered the most important is this here o Israel the Lord Our God the Lord is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul with all your mind with all your strength the second is this you shall love your neighbor as yourself there is no other commandment greater than these and the Scribe said to him you are right teacher you have truly said he is one and there is no other besides him and to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself uh is much more than all whole burnt

offerings and sacrifices and when Jesus saw he answered wisely he said to him you are not far from the kingdom of God and after that no one dared to ask him any more questions so somebody comes up to Jesus and they ask him what is uh what's the most important commandment what's the the best thing that you can do um and and let me just take them out of order um the one that's probably not offensive is you should love your neighbor as yourself we're coming off at Christmas time peace on Earth goodwi towards men everybody kind of agrees that you should not be a jerk amen yeah you should love your neighbor as yourself right um even even people who have no grounding in God or religion they're like you should just like you should be a decent person you should not be out trying to hurt other people you should love your neighbor as yourself like nobody is really offended by that right however that's not where he starts he he he adds that kind of as a bonus answer but he starts with you shall love the Lord um can you read that yeah that's bigger up there than it is the one I'm looking at okay you shall love the Lord your

God now this um this is a little bit of a a stickier question love God really like if I am a good person if I love my neighbor well if I live a good life and I'm not out hurting people I don't kill anybody like if I'm a good person does it really matter if I love God can't can't I can't I be good without having to have God tell me what to

do do I need to love God um and I asked you that question because someone asked me someone close to me asked me and uh I had not quite ever thought about it in that way but it is a question that has I have chewed on now for weeks um and I have an answer it it may or may not be satisfactory to you um but this is this is where I've landed can you be good without God the answer is yes but only if there is no

God if there is no God and you happen to be good or make good choices then you have done good without God if however God exists like in reality if you believe that there is a God there is no actual way for you to do good without God it can't happen because you're like oh well you should just be a good person you should you should like you should love other people you should go out and you should serve people where does that idea come from if there is any encouragement any fellowship and love any Harmony of the spirit it comes from Jesus like God has has from the beginning even in the law commanded that we should love our neighbor as ourself if there is any goodness in the world it's there because it's a reflection of God's character and so if God exists even if you reject him if you happen to do good you can only do good because God allows it to happen which is kind of a catch 22 which is why I say it's not satisfactory because if you're a person who's skeptical and you're like I don't really believe in God that seems like a copout Michael and I understand but you've gotta you've got to answer that question of does God exist or not and if he does even the good that you've done without him he has put people in your life who have taught you right he he has surrounded you in a country that that uh at some point gave honor to Christian principles he he has surrounded you with people in an environment that's that are going to lead you towards doing right he is he he has put somebody in your life who taught you it's not okay to just run around and punch everybody in the teeth because that's what I want to do right that's just me and my kids okay but if we have learned that those things are not okay then that principle has come down to us from God so if God exists you cannot do good apart from him because how are you going to trace where the good idea came from how are you going to trace where that good motivation came from you cannot take credit for anything you were born with nothing somebody had to change your diapers so you did not generate the idea of

morality love God is that really necessary yes but only if God exists and so if God exists then we should love God and Jesus deserves our undivided inner

life because I don't know if you're like me but the question that comes to my mind is like how do you love the Lord how do you actually do that how do I say like I can say I love God but how do I know that I love God and Jesus says here you should love the Lord your God with all of your heart with all of your soul with all of your mind and with all of your strength that's all of you I don't know if there's any part of you that could be left out of any of that you should love the Lord your God with all of those kinds of

things Jesus deserves our undivided inner life this is the greatest commandment the second one is like it love your neighbor but the greatest is this that you would love the Lord your God with all your heart soul and mind and strength so if you're going to follow Jesus that means you surrender to him the renovation of all of you so what does that actually look like I'm remember I'm salting I'm not going to give you all of the answers the first thing is you got to lay a foundation to put Jesus first you have to say I'm I'm giving it over to you I'm going to love the Lord love the Lord my God like my life is going to be about what God wants my life to be about I'm going to surrender to him put Jesus first then if I'm going to love the Lord with all my heart all of my motivation all of my emotions the things that I'm inspired to do then I'm going to have a life that celebrates what Jesus does that's what this is when we get together on Sunday it's to celebrate the work of Jesus we come here with the purpose of being inspired and motivated that we walk out of here wanting to walk with Jesus because I need that I cannot generate Motivation by myself I am not that disciplined and so I come and I borrow from you and I and we together fix our eyes and celebrate Jesus so that we're motivated to follow him then we gather together um with all of our soul um because we can do some celebrating here we can have some feelings here but we cannot really we don't have time or space to really care for one another here and so caring for our souls we actually the Holy Spirit does in smaller groups that meet not on Sundays so when we gather to celebrate I tell you you should probably take the things that you're feeling and work them out with some other people who can care for your soul because when you're struggling odds are you're going to need a friend to walk with you through that and I can't walk with everybody at the same time and you mostly don't want me to you've got friends that are better counselors than me so we love the Lord Our God with all our heart by our motivations we do it with Gathering and and and uh care care for one another's Souls um and then we grow in our understanding it's it's not helpful to say that we love somebody that we cannot describe so those of you who know my wife uh Jesse if I were to tell you I love my wife so much she's got the most beautiful red hair you would say I think you are confused she does not have red hair we need to have accurate knowledge about the people we say we love God is the same and so we have to learn from him the best place that I know to learn from him is his word where he tells us who he is and what he's like um and then all of those things if we do all of those things and we never serve we never put it into action and love other people well then we become like the Dead Sea you know why the Dead sea is

dead yeah because all of the rainwater all the minerals everything washes down to that lowest point and because it's the lowest point on Earth it has no Outlet it does not ever pour out and so it only collects collects collects collects and it kills it nothing can live in the Dead Sea and our faith too if we choose never to serve and never to put our faith into action shows that maybe we've not been as renovated as we thought we would so Jesus deserves our undivided inner life and we should love him love the Lord with our heart soul mind and

strength by celebrating Gathering learning and serving putting him first above all else and that's what we'll talk about for the next couple of weeks because Jesus deserves our undivided inner life one question how are we devoting our whole selves to Jesus this year how are we devoted voting our whole selves to Jesus this year let's pray father thank you so much for your word I thank you that we have so much uh so much to celebrate here in a small congregation in the woods thank you that we are not outside your sight that you are moving your word is living and active and you are convicting and you are giving New Life Lord I Thank you for the way that you are drawing people to yourself who who who would rather do anything than walk with you and so Lord I know that it's often pain that motivates us to come to you so Lord I pray that you would meet people in their pain and their low times that you would give them life and strength and encouragement that they would that they would trust you to surrender their life to you and I pray that you would make us to be a church that that can love on and Care well for people as we grow in in our motivation in in our soul care in in the ways that we learn in the ways that we serve we can't just generate this on our own Lord we ask that you would go before us and prepare the way that we might walk in it thank you for the good news that your son has paid the full price so that when we say we love you you hear it ring true Lord help us to put our faith in Jesus this day this week this month this year to the end of our days would you find Us Faithful it's in your name we ask

[Music] amen