

“God’s Answers to Our Questions”

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Matthew 22:34-46

1 Corinthians 13

This is one of those sermons that could preach itself. All of you know these commandments. You have heard them before. Did you hear the scripture Jim Regnery read? Reading Paul’s words, “If I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge and have all faith so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

That’s the sermon for today. I could probably give this sermon in my sleep, but it’s no excuse for you to listen to it in your sleep, especially as warm as it is in the sanctuary today. I don’t get paid by the word, but I want to at least comment on a few things about the scripture today.

One of the Pharisees came to Jesus to test him, we read, with the question. I love good questions. Have you ever heard the saying, “One good question is worth a thousand admonitions?” This scripture is not saying that we should not ask God questions. God can handle our toughest questions. We don’t have to worry about embarrassing God or puzzling God so God can’t answer our question. God can handle our toughest questions. Many of us are like the Pharisee when we come to worship. We have similar questions ourselves.

What is the meaning of life?
Does it matter how I live my life?
Do I matter?

All of the *why* questions:
Why do the good suffer?
Why do I suffer?
Why did my husband leave me?
Why was my wife unfaithful?
God, why did you let my child die?

We all come to worship with similar kinds of questions, if not the same. We live in a culture that offers answers to our questions. During this time of year, politicians offer answers. Maybe one out of ten of their

answers is the truth. The rest are lies, because they will say or do almost anything if it means getting elected or re-elected.

Hollywood offers its own set of answers with its own set of values. I love sports as much as anyone. Sports offer another set of answers to our questions.

Wall Street offers certain answers to our questions. You can see how good those answers are.

You can call a 1-800 number, a psychic hot line, to get answers to your questions. This is a true story. Recently I was renewing a subscription to a religious journal to which I subscribe. There was a 1-800 number listed for customer service, but somehow in the fine print I confused the 1-800 number for customer service with the FAX number. The woman who answered the phone, I promise you, did not work for any religious magazine. I can't repeat what she said and I'm not sure about her name. Usually I'm pretty good about remembering names. I think her name might have been Brenda, but it wouldn't surprise me if her name were Tempest Storm or Bunny Hutch or Kitty Litter. I promise you that I hung up within at least five or 10 minutes!

You can call a 1-800 number or a 1-900 number and someone will visit with you for a price. How sad it is that some people are so lonely that they will spend thousands of dollars ruining their lives, ruining the lives of their families and others because they are searching for love.

Even Jesus had questions. At that most crucial moment on the cross, Jesus said, "My God, why? Why have you forsaken me?" God answers all of our questions at the cross. God answered Jesus' question in such a way that Jesus was able to move from "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" to "Into thy hands I commend my spirit," and "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing." At the cross, God said to Jesus, "You are the answer. You are the answer to all of the evil and malice and enmity and hatred in the world. You are the answer."

As a part of the church, we are called to move beyond the doubts and questions we have to trust and hope. And as a part of the church, God says to us, today, "You are the answer. Not Jesus, the word became flesh. Not the book that you call the Word of God, but *you*, the body of Christ. You are my answer to the world's questions today." Is that a little humiliating to consider? We are God's answer to the world's questions. We can be transformed. Even as I've seen persons who have suffered for months, I have seen God transform the pain and indignity of suffering into

the triumph of peace and hope. We also can be transformed when God speaks to us and when we believe that God will use us as a part of the body of Christ.

In the Bible Study Wednesday evening, one of the questions that we studied was, "If your life depended on it, how fast could you run a mile?" One of the persons at the Bible Study said, "What do you mean by a mile?" Well, by a mile, I mean 5,280 feet, 1760 yards. A mile. How fast could you run a mile if your life depended on it? Maybe six minutes, maybe eight, ten, twelve, or fifteen? Could you run a mile faster if you had a bear chasing you?

Did you notice the picture in the newspaper or see on one of the newscasts this past week about the four Kenyans who came to run in the Tulsa Marathon? There was a picture of them in the paper. On the newscast they were visiting some Tulsa school children. They were talking about the difference in their culture. It was nothing for them to go out as children and run five or ten miles. As they looked at both children and adults in our society, they were concerned about nearly everyone being overweight. When I looked at one of those pictures of those four Kenyans, I thought to myself, "Jeremy and I could probably get on one end of a teeter-totter and all four of them could get on the other end and Jeremy and I might balance things out, but we could never run a mile as fast as they do.

God doesn't command us to run a mile in two minutes or four minutes or ten minutes or twenty minutes. God does command us to love God. That's the first commandment, the greatest commandment. Jesus says a second is like it. God commands us to love our neighbors. We can obey that commandment. It's not impossible for us because we have been created in the image of a loving God who expects us and commands us to obey. . . to love God, to love each other.

There are many voices in our culture competing for our attention today. Celebrities, political figures, all kinds of persons who want to affect the way we live. There is one voice above all the others who says to us, "If you obey these commandments—if you love God with all the love you have, you will have more love left over to love each other. You will be a better spouse, a better parent, a better friend, a better employee." Among all of these competing voices, there is the voice of Christ that still says to us, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." This day and always, may it be so for each of us. Amen.