

The Simple Message of Jesus

by Rev. Robert J. Hater

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through
God's eyes.*

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Matthew 22:34–40)

These simple yet profound words distill for us the simple message of Jesus as we find it in the Gospels. This message lies at the heart of the New Testament and the challenge it offers to us as Christians.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." (Mark 10:14)
Children are simple and innocent.

Yet, as we grow up, life becomes complicated and so does the interpretation of Jesus' message. Simple at its core, its implications still challenge us two thousand years later.

Jesus' message of love invites us to follow him along the path of righteousness, justice, and mercy. He calls us to see and act through God's eyes, not the eyes of secular society. As we do so, we more easily appreciate Jesus' puzzling command to love our enemies, be good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who hurt us. (See Luke 6:27.)

Personal issues, social pressure, and business responsibilities sometimes tempt us to dilute Jesus' message. Our busy lives often push it into the background. When we keep it before us, however, Jesus' great commandment helps clarify our priorities.

Jesus commands us to love God and our neighbor. This involves commitment, sacrifice, forgiveness, responsibility, and accountability. Failing to love in this way often leads to sin, which is a distorted condition