

Scripture: Mark 12:28-32 *Also Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-28.*

My message this morning is simple. Today we come together to praise God and thank Him for our salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. We also come together for fellowship. The early church often met in homes and I am sure during nice weather they met outside and enjoyed God's creation. Luke tells us in the Book of Acts, in the 2nd chapter, how people came together to worship, like we are doing this morning. ⁴² *“they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”* ⁴³ *And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.* ⁴⁴ *And all who believed were together and had all things in common.”* (Acts 2:42-44) This passage teaches us that when we live in community glorifying Christ, we as individuals and as a community receive blessings and are to use God's blessings to bless others. Here in Acts, Luke gives us a snap-shot of community living as believers. Today, I see our coming together as continuing this wonderful teaching, tradition and command of Jesus. This passage begins with the church *devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching* because it is the inspired words of the Bible that changes lives - for the words of the Bible are infused with God. The Word of God gives us guidelines and rules to live by for our own good. Now, the Jewish leadership over the centuries added man-made rule after man-made rule and these rules became a burden for the people to fulfill. God gave 10 laws that guided peoples lives. We call these laws the 10 Commandments and they are found in Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

1. You shall have no other gods before Me

2. You shall make no idols
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain
4. Keep the Sabbath day holy
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. You shall not murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor
10. You shall not covet.

To these simple laws the Pharisees and Sadducees added many man-made laws. Do any of you want to take a guess as to how many man-made laws were added to God's 10? The answer is 613. I can memorize 10, but I would need a rule book to be able to consistently refer to - in order to see if I was following or breaking 613 rules. God's rules are meant to be understandable and He gives us the Holy Spirit to help us live out His rules. Rules should help us, not become a burden.

Do you enjoy games; all games have rules. I have here 2 games; Mancala comes from Africa; it is an old game and the rules are simple. The second, is Cribbage, it also is old and comes from England and the rules are much more complicated and I am learning this game. Each game has a set of rules. Last week I played the game 'Sorry' with my grandsons – many, many times – and even though they thought that occasionally the rules could change – the rules do not. To get together with family and friends; play games and fellowship is a joy. We do not run into conflict when we explain the rules before the games starts and everyone is on the same page. But the Jewish leaders kept adding rules to God's as time went by and that is not a fair way to treat people. Just like the problem with the

Pharisees have you ever played a game with someone who either does not want to play by the rules or tries to keep changing the rules? It makes it difficult to enjoy the game – just as the Pharisees made it difficult for the people to enjoy God.

God gave us His rule book – it is all contained here in the Bible. You might say, but Pastor, there is so much to learn, it is a big book. You are right, and God calls us to learn more about Him by studying the Bible throughout our whole life. The Pharisees did not like Jesus because He wanted to play by God’s rules and not their 613 man-made rules, they had made up in order to control people. Unset with Jesus the Pharisees were always trying to trick him and show the people they were in control. One day these Pharisees were questioning Jesus and He answered them with one good answer right after another and this frustrated them. So, a Jewish teacher of the law came in and listened to Jesus’ answers and thought he had a question that would trap Jesus. It was about rules or commandments. He asked, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”²⁹ Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’³¹ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.’³² And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.” (Mark 12:28-32) Jesus’ response was important that is why it is also found in Matthew 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-28. There is a lot to understand in the Bible, but if we learn the 2 things that Jesus said were the most important all the rest of God’s teachings will follow. Then as we live our lives, we can enjoy God and our lives the way He intended.

This why we choose Mark 12, verses 30 and 31 as the foundational verses for Canyon Bible Church, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart

and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’³¹ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.’ ” My beloved, we can help each other live this command of Christ!

Dear God and Father, help each one of us love You with all our heart and love others as ourselves. Father, thank You for Jesus, He saved us and gave us Your Holy Spirit so we may know You, love You and bless others in Your name! Amen!