

The Risen Christ empowered His followers to “go proclaim” the Good News about Him to the whole creation (Mark 16). He said, “as you are going, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28).

In this Great Commission we hear clear echoes of the “Great Commandment” related in Mark 12:28-34.

In Jesus’ day, experts in the Old Testament debated “light” and “weighty” commandments. Jesus reproved them for paying entirely too little attention to weightier matters of the Law. Listen to His response when they asked Him which was the greatest commandment:

“The most important is, Hear, O Israel: The LORD alone is Lord and God.” His hearers would know immediately that Jesus was reciting the “Shema” from Deuteronomy 6 – since faithful Jews would have prayed it at least twice daily. This reminded them there is only one God, the LORD, the Creator and Deliverer – the God who gave the Ten Commandments so they could be like Him (Exodus 20).

Jesus continues the quote: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength.” This reminded them that ONLY the Lord should receive the undivided devotion of their entire being – ALL that they are.

Heart and soul and mind and strength are aspects of the whole person, created in God’s image. In the New Testament, the word “heart” refers primarily to reason some 200 times; to emotions 195 times, and to the will 165 times.

Do not believe with only your mind, for then your faith will struggle to experientially know Christ and assurance of salvation, and lack power for living. Do not believe only with your emotions, as your faith will experience mostly ups and downs of doubt. Do not believe only with your will, for then you will struggle on – with only human determination, and lack knowledge and experience of Christ. Believe with ALL you are.

The first four of the Ten Commandments refer to your vertical relationship with God – having no other gods, making no idols, not taking His name in vain, and keeping the Sabbath. Only when you are in right relationship with the Maker can you be in right relationship with your fellow man.

Jesus continues: “The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.” This is your horizontal relationships – honoring parents, no murder, adultery, stealing, false witness, or coveting.

And notice you are to love God “more” than yourself – more than anyone or anything, with ALL you are. But you are to love your neighbors AS yourself. You could never love God too much, but you could easily love your fellow man too much or too little.

Problem is, no one can keep “the greatest commandment” let alone the ten. And that’s the purpose of God’s Law – to point us to the Savior. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, became a man to live a perfect life, die a perfect death, and rise a perfect resurrection – to pay for sins, conquer death, and give new spiritual life to all who believe in Him and receive Him as Savior and Lord.

Jesus perfectly fulfills both the vertical and the horizontal relationships. You see this clearly when you comprehend the cross of Christ – the beams which bore the Body and Blood which paid for sins.

Do not be like the scribe of whom Jesus said, “you are not far from the kingdom of God.” Rather, be IN the kingdom of God – by being born again from above, as Jesus explained to Nicodemus (John 3). For all who receive Him, believing in His name, become children of God as they are reborn by God (John 1).

As your whole person embraces Christ, loving Him with ALL you are – heart, mind, soul and strength – He transforms you, as His life lives through yours. Then not only do His commandments become promises about your new life in Him, but you are empowered to be His witnesses, to go and proclaim.

You will tell all you know about Him, including how He fulfills the Great Commandment for you and in you – so that His truth and grace overflow through your life to all those around you. That’s good news!