

St. Matthew A.M.E. Church
Bible Study
Monday, October 06, 2008

Last week we talked about that in order to be Disciples of Christ we have to love and obey God. Jesus said, "if you love me keep my commandments." (John 14:15) The reason it is not possible for many to be disciples is because we do not obey God. However, this is the secondary reason, the primary reason we are not disciples is because we do not love God. Our failure to be obedient to God is because we do not love Him. Therefore the primary question before us is how do we come to love God? This is important because nobody can make us love God. If we could be forced to love God there would be no problem. However, in creation God gave us choice, He made us free moral agents. We decide on our own whether or not to love God.

Not only can others not force us to love God, we also cannot force ourselves to love God. Just like saying to ourselves "I will not cough" will force us to stop coughing, continuing to say to ourselves, "I love God, I love God" will not make us love God. So if we cannot force ourselves and if others cannot force us how do we come to love God? Many people really want to love God but don't know how. The ways we can come to love God are found in His word. Let's see what God's Word says.

1. The first thing we must do to come to love God is that we must get to know Jesus. It is no different than it is when we come to love people in the world. We come to love people as we get to know them. We come to love God by getting to know Jesus. We will never come to love God without getting to know Jesus.
 - a. Jesus is the way to God (John 14:6)
 - b. evidence of God's love for us (John 3:16, I John 4:9-10, Romans 5:8)
 - c. God's sacrifice for us (John 15:13)

The more we get to know Jesus the more we come to know how much He loves us and what He did for us. When we come to know Jesus we don't have to say "I will love God" because we will be able to say "Jesus loves me this I know."

It is surprising but many people have not done the things that people do when they want to get to know somebody. When we want to get to know somebody we:

- a. Spend time with them
 - b. Try to find out as much about them as we can
 - c. See what they are like
2. The second thing we must do to come to love God is to see ourselves and our need as God saw and sees us. We must acknowledge that we are sinners and that Jesus died in our place. He was "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our inequities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5) If we believe as the Bible says we see His love and come to love Him. We are moved by the length that God went to save us and we commit our lives to Him and love Him because He first loved us. We are saved from a life of sin by the grace of His Son, Jesus the Christ. But none of this will happen unless we see ourselves as we are sinners. Those in the world don't acknowledge or love God because they don't see themselves as sinners. They don't even deal with the issue of sin, they don't know what sin is, and they are simply living life as they know it. So the commandments and obedience is not an issue with them.

3. The third thing we must do to love God is to commit to a relationship with Him by agreeing to live by His Word, this means to be obedient. And we are obedient to His Word because we love Him. Our relationship with Him becomes the priority of our lives and His Word becomes the standard by which we live. This is the most important decision we make in our lives because this decision now affects every other decision we make in our lives. Every decision we make is predicated on God's Word. There is no area of our lives that God's Word does not take precedence or have authority.

4. The fourth thing we must do to love God is to refrain from idolatry and love each other. Jesus says, "you shall love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, strength and your neighbor as yourself." (St. Matthew 22:37-40) If we keep these two commandments we will demonstrate our love for God and have eternal life. This is the demonstration and proof of our love and obedience to God.