The Royal Cubit

James 2:8 *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well*

One of the earliest records of precise measurement is from Egypt.

- The Egyptians studied the science of geometry to assist them in the construction of the Pyramids.
  - It is believed that about 3000 years before Christ, the Egyptian unit of length came into being.
- The "Royal Egyptian Cubit" was decreed to be equal to the length of the forearm from the bent elbow to the tip of the extended middle finger plus the width of the palm of the hand of the Pharaoh that was ruling at that time.
  - With this standardization and uniformity of length, the Egyptians achieved surprising accuracy.
  - Thousands of workers were engaged in building the great pyramids.
  - Through the use of cubit sticks, they achieved an accuracy of 0.05%.
  - In roughly 756 feet or 9,069.4 inches, they were within 4 1/2 inches of True Square.

In order to achieve this kind of accuracy in measurement they maintained a “Royal Cubit Master”.

- The "Master" was carved out of a block of granite to endure for all of time.
  - Workers engaged in building tombs, temples, pyramids, etc. were supplied with cubits made of wood or granite.
- The Royal Architect or Foreman of the construction site was responsible for maintaining & transferring the unit of length to workers instruments.
  - However, in order to maintain a high degree of accuracy, the worker *were required to bring back their cubit sticks at each full moon to be compared to the Royal Cubit Master.*
  - *Failure to do so was punishable by death.*

The punishment may seem sever, but the Egyptians understood that a standard that was not constantly matched to the original would lose its integrity over time.

- An errant saw blade, a dropped cubit, or a misplaced hammer blow could alter the structure of the Cubit and cause the subsequent measurements to be off.
  - In order to maintain an honest unit of measure, the cubit was checked each month to see how it compared to the original.

We discussed last week how that Jesus gave his church a tool by which to measure themselves.

- John 13:34-35 *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*
- This was the measure of authentic Christianity.
o This was the measure of the church.

• The attitude of love would be the bond that would keep them united
  o and would be the convincing demonstration that they had partaken of his
    spirit and purpose.
  o The world would identify them with him, by their love!

• He had loved them without reservation and without limit
  o and expected them to do the same –
    ▪ to love one another to the same degree,
      ▪ without reservation and without limit.
  o And, not only to love one another, but also to love others, even those that
    were not a part of the church!

• We learned last week that this love for others was an outgrowth of our love for
  God.
  o If we truly love God then we will love others.
  o If we truly seek God with all of our hearts,
    ▪ if we truly turn our hearts towards heaven
    ▪ and fall in love with God
    ▪ then we will also allow the love of God which is shed abroad in
      our hearts to shine thru us and into a lost world!

James lends great importance to that commandment, calling it the royal law.

• Saying, in our text, that if you fulfil the royal law, according to scripture, that you
  will do well.
  o He details that royal law as this:
    ▪ Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!

I would submit to you tonight a rather simple thought.

• If we are to measure our selves by that royal law
  o then it stands to reason that we must make sure that we are using a correct
    interpretation of the measure.

• If we are to measure ourselves against the command to love thy neighbor as
  thyself, then where do we go to get a true measure of what that means?
  o This question is the reason why I started tonight with the story of The
    Royal Cubit
    ▪ because it contains a very important principle, which the Egyptians
      understood.
  o They owe their ability to build such magnificent structures
    ▪ with a degree of accuracy that was far ahead of the technological
      age in which they were living
    ▪ to the basic understanding that the only way to achieve an accurate
      measure was to repeatedly return to the source of the original
      measure.

Tonight I submit to you the simple yet profound truth that if you want to know the
measure of authentic, genuine, Christ-like love – then you have to go back to the source!
• If you want to know the true measure of love then you must go back to the one who first loved you!
  ▪ If you want to know the true measure of what it means to love your neighbor as yourself then you must return to the words of Jesus who said, As I have loved you – that’s how you should love others!

• No other source can provide us with an honest and true measurement of what it means to have authentic love.
  ▪ So often we make the mistake of measuring ourselves against our peers or against the world in general.
    ▪ Those scales don’t provide us with an honest measure of ourselves.
    • If we rely upon those faulty scales we will miss the mark!

The life, words and example of Jesus Christ provide us with the master gauge of the royal law.

• The only thing that really matters is how our lives measure next to his supreme sacrifice,
  ▪ how do our lives measure next to his unfathomable love?

• The question is not how does my love measure next to your love.
  ▪ The question is not how does this church measure when compared to another church.
  ▪ The question is not how does my life stack up next to my brother’s life.

• No matter how we judge ourselves.
  ▪ No matter how the culture defines us.
  ▪ No matter how we rank compared to those around us.
    ▪ God’s measure of our lives is the only measure that matters.

• When we talk about authentic love the question is how does my love compare to the incredible love of God?
  ▪ For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten son.
    ▪ God so loved the world that He poured out of himself completely.
    ▪ God so loved the world that He bore my cross, carried my sins, and was burdened down with my shame.
    ▪ He drank the bitter cup for me.
    ▪ He faced my judgments in my place.
    ▪ He laid down his life for mine!

• We are awfully good at making ourselves feel good.
  ▪ We have this incredible capacity to fool ourselves into believing that everything is good when it really isn’t!
    ▪ This is why you can’t trust your own measure of authentic love,
      ▪ this why you can’t just “eyeball” this thing and expect it to all work out.

• The TRUE MEASURE of AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY is the incredible love of Jesus Christ!
  ▪ This is where we must measure our lives!
    ▪ This is the standard!
I would dare say, in this place tonight, that if we would truly measure our lives against his example, all of us would find a reason to fall on our faces before God and beg his mercy.

- All of us would fall short of the great example we have been given!
  - The world will know that we are his disciples,
    - because of HIS GREAT LOVE on display in our lives,
      - in our relationship with one another
      - and in our interaction with a lost world!
  - You want to take the measure, the breadth and height and width of what it means to be an authentic church?
    - It is found in the measure, the breadth and height and width of the love of Jesus Christ!

Luke, in his gospel, describes an encounter that is strikingly similar to the one that Matthew recorded in the 22nd chapter of his book, which we discussed in depth last week.

- However, there is a significant difference in the telling of the tale.
  - Some scholars would try to tell you that Matthew and Luke just remember the event differently.
    - Personally, I don’t buy that because my Bible says that ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God.
  - I believe that the encounter that Luke records is a follow-up encounter to the original that was recorded by Matthew.
    - In other words, I believe that the Pharisee lawyer or one of his buddies, having been confounded the first time, came back at a later time and attempted, once again, to trip Jesus up.
  - That encounter is recorded in Luke 10:25.

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he (Jesus) said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

So the question has to do with eternal life, how do you inherit eternal life?

- The answer, however, which was, in this case, provided by the questioner,
  - was, once again Dueteronomy 6:5:
    - Love God and love they neighbor as thyself.
  - This is the simple measure of what it means to be saved.
    - But the lawyer thinks he has found a loophole in this reasoning and presents Jesus with another question that is aimed at justifying himself:
29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

The goal of the lawyer was to limit the extent of the law’s demand and consequently limit his own responsibility.

- But the answer to the question is profound and rather than limiting the impact of the law, it increases it dramatically.
  - Jesus answers the question with a parable and, in that parable, we find the standard by which we can measure our love.

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

The distance from Jerusalem to Jericho is about seventeen miles, descending sharply toward the Jordan River just north of the Dead Sea.

- That old road curved through rugged bleak, rocky terrain where robbers could easily hide.
  - Even in a day when travel was normally full of hazards,
    - it was considered especially dangerous to walk the Jericho Road alone.
- But our story finds an unknown man, presumably a Jew, who is making that perilous trek from Jerusalem to Jericho when thieves overtake him.
  - They rob him, beat him, strip him and leave him for dead.

And by chance, on the same day there was a certain priest walking the same road, going the same direction… down.

- Not only a priest, but a Levite also, walks this same path and passes thru this same area.
- Now remember that the antagonist of this discussion with Jesus is a Pharisee Lawyer.
  - He will have a great degree of respect for both a priest and a Levite.
  - These are two men who live by the law, their life is centered around the fulfillment of the law.
    - No only that but, by nature of their presence on the Jericho Road, traveling down from Jerusalem we can easily deduct that they have been engaged in their religious duties and are only now returning home from their service at the temple.
- Both of these highly religious persons act in a way that is contrary to the measure of the law that has just been given, love thy neighbor as thyself.
Both of them chose to ignore the plight of their fellow traveler on the Jericho Road

- And, in an act that was completely devoid of love for the unfortunate soul, they simply moved to the other side of the road and passed him by, leaving him where he lay.

It has been suggested that the priest and the Levite refrained from helping the man because he appeared to be dead and they feared ritual defilement.

- But this simply wasn’t the case.
  - The direction of travel indicates that they were going from, not to, the temple.
    - These religious men had completed their religious duties for the day and they simply decided that the poor traveler on the side of the road wasn’t their problem.
- The story continues:

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

The third character in the parable is a layman.

- That is pretty much in keeping with the way the parable was unfolding.
  - We stepped from a priest to a Levite
    - and now from a Levite to a layman.
- However, Jesus adds a twist to the whole thing.
  - The layman that he describes is not a Jew, like one might expect, but is a Samaritan.
- Without spending too much time on the incredible significance of his nationality let me point out that the Jews despised the Samaritans.
  - They routinely travelled far out of their way just to avoid passing through Samaria.
    - Had the roles been reversed and had there been a Samaritan injured and a Jew passing by there is no doubt that, in the minds of the listeners, the Jew would have done exactly what the priest and the Levite did.
  - But in the parable it is the Jew that is injured and the lowly Samaritan that happens to be the third person to see him lying naked, wounded and nearly dead on the side of the road.
- And the Samaritan, against all odds, had compassion on the man!
There’s no good reason why he should have compassion on that Jew laying by the roadside.
- He must have known that if the roles were reversed he would never received compassion himself.
- He must have known that to the Jew he was despised, a mere dog, a mongrel a half-breed.
  - But all of that antagonism wasn’t enough to stem the tide of compassion that flowed from him!

Somehow, that Samaritan managed to love that Jew as he would love himself!
- And his love resulted in sacrificial action.
  - Rushing to where he was, he began to bind his wounds.
- Now we can readily surmise that the traveler wasn’t carrying a first aid kit.
  - And since the robbers took the clothes of the unfortunate Jew we can only imagine that the Samaritan began to tear his own clothing into bandages for the wounded man.
    - He turned to his own, personal supply of oil and wine and used that to disinfect the wounds and soothe the hurts.
    - And as if that wasn’t enough, he helped the man onto his own donkey’s back and walked to the inn where he implored the innkeeper to care for the stranger at his own expense, giving him funds out of his own pocket
      - and promising that he would pay more if it was needed.

After that emotionally charged parable, Jesus turns back to the lawyer and asks him the same question that gave rise to the whole story:

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

The Pharisee had asked, who is my neighbor?
- But Jesus now reverses the question.
  - The question is not who is my neighbor
    - but the question is, whose neighbor am I?
      - Who is a neighbor to the poor, lowly, destitute man that has fallen among thieves and robbers?
  - You see the Pharisee tried to put the focus on the neighbor,
    - tell me who am I accountable for?
  - But Jesus put the focus on the Pharisee, declaring that your neighbor is whomever you are neighborly to.
    - The carnal approach is exclusive,
      - define the parameters within I must display love:
        - Who is my neighbor?
  - But Jesus’ approach is inclusive,
there is no limit to the boundaries of authentic love!
No one is excluded by Jesus’ definition.
Anyone and everyone can be your neighbor by the way he defines it.
  • In other words, authentic love is defined by the one doing the loving, not the one being loved!

• Let me bring it home – before I ever loved God, he loved me!
  o When I didn’t deserve his love, he first loved me.
  • When I wasn’t worthy of his love, he showered me with his compassion!
  • This is the measure of authentic love – Jesus Christ loved the unlovable!

Romans 5:6-8  For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Do you want to know how responsible we are to demonstrate authentic love?
• Do you want to know how much we should love people?
  o This is the measure.
  o This is the standard.
    • This is how your love is to be measured!
    • This is what it means to have authentic love!!!!

Furthermore, love is demonstrated in action, not just in words or mission statements.
• Love results in sacrificial action on our parts.
  o The Samaritan man gave of himself,
    • he gave of his goods,
    • he gave of his time,
    • he gave of his provisions,
    • he gave of his finances,
    • he gave all he had to give
      • and then said, if takes more just let me know and I’ll give more!

• Folks I’m talking about the measure of true, authentic, genuine love.
  o Our love, the love we show one another,
    • the love we show to others around us,
    • even the love we show to absolute and complete stranger
      • is measured against a cross,
        o it is measured against the love of Jesus Christ,
        o it is measured against absolute sacrificial love!

How important is it to have that kind of love?
• Before the parable, the question that started the discussion with the lawyer was this:
Notes by Pastor Tony McCall

The Pentecostals of Lake City

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The Royal Cubit

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36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

How important is it?

- This is how important it is:
  - God does not bestow eternal life on those who reject the command to love!
  - This is why James calls it the royal Law,
    - this is why Paul says in Romans and Galatians that all the law is fulfilled in it.
  - Because authentic love is a heaven or hell matter!
    - How do I inherit eternal life?
      - Go, and do likewise!
  - Those who reject the command to love as they have been loved
    - demonstrate the fact that they don’t really realize how much they need the love of God themselves.
      - They show a distain and a lack of respect for the measure of God’s love in their lives
        - and they give testimony to the fact that they haven’t really received in their hearts the full measure of God’s love!
  - This is why Jesus can say that LOVE is the identifier of the church,
    - because to those to whom His love has been given,
      - love becomes the expression of their salvation!

I’m going to go to one more text, one that is very familiar to all of us:

Luke 7:36-47

36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,
38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

The outward demonstration of your love for God and for others gives testimony to the extent of God’s work in your life.

- Where much has been forgiven, much love flows!
  - But where little has been accomplished, little love is demonstrated!
- When the command is to love as you have been loved, little love is an absolute insult to the one who has loved you!
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Close

We can all get self-righteous and we can all get sanctimonious

- and we can justify our actions and explain away our lack of compassion
  - and we can reason within ourselves that what we have done is enough
• and we can convince ourselves that we have truly loved as we have been loved.
• But may I remind you tonight that He measures your life not by your reasoning or your carnal understanding,
  o but He measures you against the cross!
• God looks to the heart and judges men according to His word.
  o God judges your actions according to His principals.
  o God judges your intentions against His perfect will for your life.
  ▪ Unlike our judgment, his is precise, exact, unerring and honest!
• If the measure of a cubit is the distance from elbow to fingertips on the king,
  o then the only true way to properly define a cubit is to go to the king and compare your cubit to his.
• Every one of us would be well served to make a visit tonight to the throne room of heaven and measure the demonstration of his love in our lives!
  o To whom much is given, much is expected!

I want to challenge you tonight to make sure that you are measuring yourselves by His standard for your life.
• I want to make heaven my home.
• I want to be numbered among the righteous.
• I want God to count me among those faithful followers of Christ.
• I truly want to inherit eternal life.
  o If that’s your desire tonight then I invite you to examine yourself,
    ▪ just as Jesus invited the Pharisee to examine his life against the incredible love of the Good Samaritan.
      • How do you measure up when you consider the love of God?

I would dare say there is room for improvement in every life.
• Let u go together to the throne of God
  o and let us place our lives in his hands
    ▪ and let us get our perspective more in line with his perspective.
    ▪ Let us measure our lives by his measure!