

Dr. Laura Schlessinger is a talk radio host, a socially conservative commentator, and an author. Her radio program consists mainly of her responses to caller's requests for personal advice. Included in the requests for answers over the years have been some rather strange issues. One of them was from a mother who was having some difficulties with her teenage daughter – who asked: "I've had it with her. I would like to sell her into slavery, as approved by Exodus 21:7. . . In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?"

But, of course, as we learned last week --- no one would look at slavery in the Bible today and *interpret* it as God-approved – though at one point, the Bible was used to justify slavery. . . This mother – never got that memo. . . If you don't know – then let me be the first to tell you ---- you can prove or disprove almost anything by taking a line or two out of context from the Bible – it all depends on how you interpret those lines – and that's the trap being laid by the Pharisees for Jesus this week. . . on the issue of how Jesus will interpret the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Pharisees take the Law of Moses very seriously and literally. They were the ones who had taken the original Ten Commandments and had turned them into 613 different rules and regulations that all needed to be obeyed with equal importance --**IF** one was to be a good Jew.

So – they sent one of their own, a lawyer – to ask him "which commandment in the Law----- is the greatest?" They were sure whatever way Jesus answered the question – he would certainly turn some people off who would be rooting for one of the other 612 remaining commandments to be touted as the greatest. . .But Jesus not only knew the way to avoid the trap. He also knew exactly what the Pharisees needed to hear – and also knows what we need to hear.

When all is said and done – Jesus said that the thing that matters most in the law and therefor in life – is how much we love God----- and how much we love each other.

In a world ---then and now --- divided by hatred, suspicion, finger-pointing, and distrust ---- in a world where prejudice and greed occupy far more space than they should --- love is the only thing that matters. And this love is rooted in the Word of God where we discover that true love begins by accepting the love that God **FIRST** has for each of us -- and then allowing that love to flow from our own hearts.

God calls us to love in order that we might embrace all our sisters and brothers with the same intense love that God has for each of us. Each one of us, then, must become a mirror that reflects God's love to the world.

At the end of our lives, as we will hear in just a few short weeks on the feast of Christ the King – God will only ask us one question: did you care enough to love. . . to love me – and to love all those I put in your life?? How well we live our lives and how well we love is the only thing that will enable us to answer that question: NOT how well we kept the rules and regulations. How well we love – is the only thing in law and in life that really matters.