

SERMON FOR THE 3RD MID-WEEK LENTEN SERVICE, 2021
Two Very Significant Questions
Mark 12:28-37

Grace and peace to you all from our risen Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 12:28-37: **One of the scribes came to Him. When he heard them arguing and saw that Jesus had been answering them well, he asked Him, “Which Commandment is the first of them all?”**

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The first one is: ‘Hear, Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one, ³⁰ and you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength!’ ³¹ The second one is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself!’ There is no other Commandment greater than these.”

³² The scribe said to Him, “Well said, Teacher! You have told the truth in saying that He is one and that there is no other besides Him. ³³ Loving Him with all one’s heart, with all one’s understanding and with all one’s strength and loving one’s neighbour as oneself is also more than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered sensibly, He told him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

After that, no one dared to ask Him another question.

³⁵ While Jesus was teaching in the Temple, He asked, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself said by the Holy Spirit, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I put Your enemies under Your feet!”’ ³⁷ David himself calls Him ‘Lord’. Then how is He his son?”

The large crowd used to enjoy listening to Him.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

You and I ask questions every single day. Some of them are not all that important or critical, such as, “What’s for dinner?” or, “Did you watch the cricket last night?”

While many questions we ask every day are rather routine and not critically important, there are other much more significant questions that we ask at times, such as, “Will you marry me?” or, “Did you get the results of your blood test.” These are not everyday questions but are significant, life-changing questions.

Today, we continue our Lenten series by considering *what took place on Tuesday of Holy Week*. On Palm Sunday, Jesus had entered Jerusalem amid enthusiastic crowds. On Monday, He had taken significant action in clearing the temple grounds of the merchants and money-changers. Now, on Tuesday, we are confronted with two very significant questions, one that a scribe asks Jesus and another that Jesus asks the crowds in the temple area.

Jesus has just been in discussion with the Sadducees, the Jewish religious clergy. They did not believe in a resurrection from the dead. A lone scribe heard Jesus answering the Sadducees and was impressed. The scribes and the Pharisees would have enjoyed Jesus winning a debate over the Sadducees.

So this scribe, who more than likely had painstakingly written down hundreds and hundreds of commandments, things that one should do and things that one should not do, was genuinely interested in this great Teacher. He did not appear to be trying to trick Jesus but wanted to hear from Him. He asked, **“Which Commandment is the first of them all?”**

Jesus’ response with a two-part answer was a summary of all of God’s Law. **“Jesus answered, “The first one is: ‘Hear, Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength!’”** Jesus quoted the Old Testament, specifically Deuteronomy 6, verses 4 and 5.

Notice that the answer to this question begins *not* with what we should or should not do, but with God, with His being and essence. **“The Lord, our God, the Lord is one.”** He is one divine being, and He is the only one. As opposed to all of the false gods of the Canaanites throughout the Old Testament, the only true God is One, and it is this one true God to whom we should love with everything that we have!

But Jesus was not finished answering the scribe’s question. He added, **“The second one is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself!’ There is no other Commandment greater than these.”** Here again, Jesus quoted the Old

Testament, this time Leviticus 19:18. In these two responses, Jesus correctly summarised all of God's Law.

If you and I could love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, then we would never be in violation of the first three commandments. We would never fail to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We would never misuse His name, and we would always remember the Sabbath day, keeping it holy.

But you and I know how feeble and faint our love of God is at times. You and I know how many times we put ourselves first and God a distant second.

And if we could truly love our neighbour as ourselves - always and perfectly - we would never be in violation of the fourth through the tenth commandments. We would always honour our father and mother. We would never kill, let alone be angry with someone. We would never commit adultery, even in our thoughts. We would never take what belongs to our neighbour. We would never do or say anything that would hurt our neighbour's reputation and good name, and we would never have a passionate desire to have what belongs to our neighbour.

Here again, we come up short. It's not just the outward acts but the internal sins against our neighbour associated with these commandments that do us in. All of life toward God and toward other people is summarised in these two statements: ***loving God with all we have and loving neighbour as self.***

The good news is that the One talking with the scribe is the one God. He is the one God who had come to do what we could never do. He had come to fulfil the Law of God perfectly and completely. He alone loved God with all of His heart and soul and mind and strength. He alone loved His neighbour as Himself.

In fact, He would lay down His life for His neighbours - and they include you and me. We now appear before God in the merits of Christ and His cross - in the righteousness of Christ. It is as if we had perfectly fulfilled all of God's Law. By God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, you and I are now clothed in the perfect obedience of Christ. Because of this, the Apostle Paul writes, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1).

But now Jesus has a significant question of His own. This question would point to the miracle of God becoming man in Jesus Christ. Christ asks, “**How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?**” The scribes were the experts and the interpreters of the Old Testament for the people. The scribes were correct in teaching that the Christ, the Messiah, would come from the line of King David in the Old Testament.

Jesus quotes Psalm 110, verse 1, a psalm that David wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, concerning God the Father and the Messiah. He said, “**The Lord [God the Father] said to my Lord [the Messiah]: “Sit at My right hand until I put Your enemies under Your feet!”**” Jesus points out that David himself called the coming Messiah “Lord.” David referred to both the Father and the coming Messiah as “Lord.” So how could this Messiah be both the son and the Lord of David?

There is only one answer to that significant question, and the answer was standing right in front of the crowd in the temple that Tuesday. He is the God-man, Jesus Christ. He is 100 percent God and 100 percent man. He is the One who was there at the creation of the world with God and was in every way God Himself. He is the One who commanded wind and waves to cease, and they obeyed. He is the One who healed all types of physical infirmities and problems, removing them as if they never existed. He is the One who demonstrated His mastery over life and death by raising three people that we know of from death to life once again, and, as we shall gather together to rejoice and celebrate in a few weeks, He is the One whom death and the grave could not hold! He is the One who rose triumphant from the grave!

He was, is, and remains David’s Lord and our Lord. For “*God also has very highly exalted Him and given Him the name that is above every other name,* ¹⁰ *that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth may kneel,* ¹¹ *and that everyone may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil 2:9-11). God the Father has said to David’s Lord, Jesus Christ, “**Sit at My right hand,**” and from that place of all power and authority, Christ reigns over all creation. From that place, He cares and provides for us. From that place, He has answered all of our significant questions. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.