

THURSDAY

The Greatest Commandment

Mark 12:28–34 ²⁸Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?”

- Scribe = professional interpreter of OT
- Pharisees trying to entrap Jesus w/questions = this scribe fair-minded = perceived Jesus answered them well = drills down to HEART of religion = top priority ??
- Pentateuch = first 5 books of Bible = 613 commandments
 - 248/Affirmative = 365/Negative
- Scribes/Rabbis = didn't agree on which were most important
- Most religious leaders = antagonistic to Jesus
- This scribe courageous to show interest/appreciation of Jesus' words
- In response = Jesus quotes “shema” (SHA-MAH') = Hebrew “hear”
 - Jewish confession of faith = Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Mark 12:29 Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

- Lord is One = Hebrew “echad” = can indicate COMPOUND UNITY
- Christianity = monotheistic = Christians believe in one God
- Scripture describes Godhead / essential nature of God
 - as being shared in three distinct Persons
 - God—Father / Son / Holy Spirit = who are One
- Some mistakenly think in terms of addition = $1+1+1=3$
 - **Wrong mathematical formula**
- Correct formula = multiplication = $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1 =$ One to third power
- One = only number that can be multiplied / divided by itself
 - and still equal one

Mark 12:30 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.’ This is the first commandment. [top priority]

- Original language of “shema” [SHA-MAH’] Deuteronomy 6:4-5
 - Word “love”= faithfulness / loyalty = does not rule out concept of deep affection
- Love God w/ totality of who you are
 - **Heart** = seat of affection = center of physical / moral / intellectual / spiritual being
 - **Soul** = whole person / distinct individual existence
 - **Mind** = faculty of thought/understanding
 - **Strength** = power of your ability put into action
- Our love for God = should be fervent / thorough
- **How do we achieve?**
 - **2 Peter 1:3-4**
 - **Romans 5:5**

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

1 John 4:7–11 ⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another

- Jesus offers Scribe more complete understanding of our duty of love
- Goes step further = joins second commandment from Leviticus 19:18

Mark 12:31 And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

- **Matthew 22:40** On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

- Love for God = naturally results in love for others
- Neighbor = might be an enemy (parable of Good Samaritan)

Mark 12:32-33 ³²So the scribe said to Him, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. ³³And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

- Scribe recognizes loving God = more worthwhile than sacrifices / ceremonial practices
- Loving God = foundational to all religious service

ABSG. “One can imagine scowls from other religious leaders since the honest scribe has affirmed Jesus’ reply as valid, something no one else was willing to do.”

Mark 12:34 Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” But after that no one dared question Him.

- Jesus offers scribe = compliment / challenge
- Scribe understood requirements to enter kingdom = at threshold
 - but needed to love / obey = One who alone
 - could grant Him entrance
 - **Follow Jesus**