

Mark 12:28-34

March 12, '17

MARCH IN MARK
“THE CONSUMMATE COMMANDMENT”

(Before Scripture)

**DURING LENT THIS YEAR, WE'RE DOING
SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT.**

**WE'RE FOCUSING ON THE EVENTS THAT TOOK
PLACE IN THE LIFE OF JESUS DURING THE DAYS OF
HOLY WEEK, LEADING UP TO THE CRUCIFIXION.**

**THE REASON FOR DOING SO IS – AND YOU CAN
SAY IT RIGHT ALONG WITH ME – *“WE MOVE SO
QUICKLY BETWEEN THE ‘HOSANNAS’ OF PALM SUNDAY
TO THE ‘HE IS RISENS’ OF EASTER SUNDAY THAT WE
FORGET ALL THAT TAKES PLACE BETWEEN THE TWO.”***

**AND WHAT TAKES PLACE DURING THAT WEEK
THAT WE SO OFTEN IGNORE IS A FULL 25% OF THE
GOSPEL STORY!**

**LAST WEEK, WE BEGAN WITH ONE OF THE
EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE ON MONDAY OF HOLY
WEEK & TODAY WE'LL GO TO TUESDAY.**

**NEXT SUNDAY, WE'LL TAKE A BREAK FROM THIS
“MARCH IN MARK” SERIES BECAUSE OF OUR
CHRISTIANITY & THE ARTS C.S. LEWIS EVENT THAT
AFTERNOON.**

**DAVID DAVENPORT HAS DONE A LOT OF WORK IN
THE C.S. LEWIS FIELD – BEING IMMERSED & FAMILIAR
WITH ALL OF HIS WRITINGS & TAKING COLLEGE
COURSES & GRADUATE STUDY BASED ON HIS WORKS.**

**DAVID WILL BE PREACHING NEXT WEEK PRIOR
TO KEVIN RADAKER & “A VISIT FROM C.S. LEWIS”
NEXT SUNDAY AFTERNOON.**

**WE'LL PICK OUR SERIES BACK UP THEN ON
MARCH 26 AS WE MOVE TO WEDNESDAY OF HOLY**

WEEK AND THEN WE'LL COMPLETE OUR "MARCH IN MARK" ON MARCH 33 (WHICH IS ACTUALLY APRIL 2), LOOKING AT EVENTS OF THURSDAY, PRIOR TO THE MEAL, THE VISIT TO GETHSEMANE & THE BETRAYAL THAT TOOK PLACE THAT EVENING.

THAT WILL PREPARE US TO ENTER HOLY WEEK THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY – APRIL 9TH - PALM SUNDAY.

OUR SCRIPTURE READING THIS MORNING – THE TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK EVENT ON WHICH WE'LL FOCUS – IS MARK 12:28-34.

(After Scripture)

LET'S REMEMBER THE CONTEXT AGAIN.

JESUS ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM ON SUNDAY, RIDING A DONKEY WITH THE CROWDS WILDLY WELCOMING HIM.

THEN, AS WE LOOKED AT LAST WEEK, HE ENTERED THE TEMPLE THE NEXT DAY & ENGAGED IN A BIT OF STREET THEATER TO POINT OUT THE IMPORTANCE OF NOT TAKING UNFAIR ADVANTAGE OF THE POOR & AS WELL AS THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF WALLS IN GOD'S TEMPLE THAT SEPARATED PEOPLE FROM ONE ANOTHER.

HE THEN SPENT THE REST OF MONDAY & A GOOD PART OF TUESDAY INVOLVED IN DISPUTES & DEBATES WITH THE RELIGIOUS & POLITICAL LEADERS – THE SCRIBES, THE PHARISEES, THE HERODIANS & THE SADDUCEES.

THEY WERE ALL TRYING TO TRICK HIM, TRAP HIM, TEST HIM & TRIP HIM.

IN FACT, THIS PASSAGE BEGINS AT THE END OF ONE OF THOSE DISPUTES.

“ONE OF THE SCRIBES CAME NEAR & HEARD THEM DISPUTING WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND SEEING THAT HE ANSWERED THEM WELL, HE ASKED HIM ‘WHICH COMMANDMENT IS THE FIRST OF ALL...’”

YOU SEE, THIS SCRIBE WAS DIFFERENT.

HE REALLY WANTED TO HEAR WHAT JESUS HAD TO SAY.

HE ASKED HIM A QUESTION THAT WASN'T REALLY THAT UNUSUAL – ESPECIALLY IF HE FELT HE WAS LISTENING TO SOMEONE WHO HAD SOME REAL INSIGHT INTO SPIRITUAL MATTERS.

IN THE JEWISH LAW, THERE WERE 613 DIFFERENT COMMANDMENTS – THAT'S A LOT OF COMMANDMENTS!

**IT'S FAR MORE THAN THE TEN THAT OUR
CHILDREN LEARN IN THEIR BIBLE MEMORY
CONTEST!**

**THIS GUY GENUINELY WANTS TO KNOW – FROM
JESUS – WHAT THE MOST IMPORTANT
COMMANDMENT IS.**

**THAT'S REALLY AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING
QUESTION, ISN'T IT?**

**IT'S REALLY THE BIGGEST QUESTION OF LIFE
ITSELF.**

**THERE'S A GREAT SCENE IN THE GEORGE
CLOONEY MOVIE "UP IN THE AIR," WHERE
CLOONEY'S CHARACTER IS TALKING TO A YOUNG
MAN WHO'S ABOUT TO GET MARRIED AND HE'S NOT
SURE HE CAN GO THROUGH WITH IT.**

THE YOUNG MAN SAYS, “*I DON’T THINK I’LL BE ABLE TO DO THIS.*”

CLOONEY’S CHARACTER ASKS HIM, “*WHY WOULD YOU SAY THAT TODAY!?”*

THE FRIGHTENED & CONFUSED YOUNG MAN SAYS, “*WELL, LAST NIGHT I WAS LYING IN BED AND I COULDN’T GET TO SLEEP, SO I STARTED THINKING ABOUT THE WEDDING AND THE CEREMONY AND ABOUT OUR BUYING A HOUSE, AND MOVING IN TOGETHER, AND HAVING A KID, AND THEN HAVING ANOTHER KID, AND THEN CHRISTMAS & THANKSGIVING AND SPRING BREAK, AND GOING TO FOOTBALL GAMES, AND THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN THEY’RE GRADUATED AND GETTING JOBS AND GETTING MARRIED AND, YOU KNOW, I’M A GRANDPARENT, AND THEN I’M RETIRED, AND I’M LOSING MY HAIR, AND I’M GETTING FAT, AND THE NEXT*

THING I KNOW, I'M DEAD. AND IT'S LIKE, I CAN'T STOP FROM THINKING, WHAT'S THE POINT? I MEAN, WHAT IS THE POINT?!"

NOW THERE'S AN UPLIFTING MOVIE SCENE, HUH!?

WHEN THIS SCRIBE ASKS JESUS THIS QUESTION ABOUT THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT, I THINK HE'S REALLY ASKING THE SAME QUESTION THAT YOUNG MAN WAS ASKING – *"WHAT'S THE POINT?"*

HE'S ASKING *"WHAT MATTERS MOST IN LIFE?"*

JESUS DOESN'T DO HERE WHAT WE FIND THAT HE SO OFTEN DOES.

HE DOESN'T TURN THE QUESTION AROUND ON THIS MAN.

HE DOESN'T ASK A QUESTION HIMSELF.

HE SIMPLY OFFERS HIM AN ANSWER.

**HE KNEW THIS SCRIBE WAS GENUINELY,
RESPECTFULLY WANTING TO KNOW – FROM JESUS –
“WHICH COMMANDMENT IS THE GREATEST OF ALL?”**

**JESUS QUOTES A PASSAGE FROM DEUTERONOMY
– A PASSAGE THAT’S KNOWN AS THE *SHEMA* – A
HEBREW WORD MEANING *HEAR*, BECAUSE THAT’S
HOW IT BEGINS.**

**“*HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS
ONE; YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL
YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL
YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.*”**

**EVERYONE THERE WOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT &
PROBABLY RECITED IT RIGHT ALONG WITH JESUS
WHEN HE SAID IT.**

IT'S SOMETHING THEY WOULD HAVE RECITED EVERY DAY – SOMETHING THAT JEWS *STILL* RECITE EVERY DAY.

BUT JESUS DOESN'T STOP THERE.

REMEMBER – THIS SCRIBE ASKED JESUS FOR THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT – SINGULAR.

JESUS CONTINUES, SAYING “...*THE SECOND IS THIS, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’*”

UNFORTUNATELY, OUR FAMILIARITY WITH THIS PASSAGE AND THIS STATEMENT OF JESUS HAS DULLED US AS TO ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

IT'S SO FAMILIAR TO US THAT IT'S THE BASIS OF OUR CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT – THE STATEMENT THAT WE USED AS OUR CREED THIS MORNING WITH THE SYNOPSIS BEING “*HEADS,*

***HEARTS & HANDS FOR CHRIST IN SERVICE &
CELEBRATION.”***

**WE LOVE GOD & WE LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR WITH
EVERYTHING WE’VE GOT!**

**THE FIRST PART OF WHAT JESUS SAID WOULDN’T
HAVE BEEN SURPRISING TO THOSE WHO WERE
GATHERED AROUND HIM THAT DAY.**

**BUT TO ADD THIS SECOND COMMANDMENT &
PLACE IT ON VIRTUALLY THE SAME LEVEL AS THE
FIRST WOULD HAVE BEEN STUNNING!**

IT’S NOT THAT THEY WOULD HAVE DISAGREED.

**IT’S SIMPLY THAT IT HAD NEVER REALLY BEEN
PUT LIKE THAT IN SUCH A PROFOUND & SUCCINCT
FASHION.**

**HERE’S THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION OF THAT
YOUNG, CONFUSED & FRIGHTENED GROOM-TO-BE –
“WHAT’S THE POINT?”**

THE POINT IS TO LOVE GOD & LOVE OTHERS.

**THAT’S THE POINT – IT’S THE POINT OF LIFE &
THE POINT OF OUR VERY EXISTENCE!**

**I DON’T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I’VE SOMETIMES
FOUND THIS PASSAGE TROUBLING FOR A COUPLE OF
REASONS.**

**THE VERSIONS THAT WE FIND IN MATTHEW &
LUKE ARE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FROM THIS ONE.**

**IN BOTH OF THOSE GOSPELS, THE SCRIBE ASKING
THE QUESTION CONTINUES THE PATTERN OF AN
ATTEMPT TO TEST JESUS.**

**IN FACT, BOTH MATTHEW AND LUKE USE THAT
SPECIFIC WORD – “TEST.”**

IN LUKE’S GOSPEL, THIS EXCHANGE SERVES AS THE LEAD-IN TO THE PARABLE OF “THE GOOD SAMARITAN” – THE SCRIBE WANTING TO KNOW HOW TO DETERMINE WHO HIS NEIGHBOR IS.

ONE THING THAT TROUBLES ME ABOUT THIS STORY AS WE READ IT IN MARK IS THE RESPONSE OF THE SCRIBE WHEN JESUS GIVES HIM THE ANSWER TO HIS QUESTION.

HE SAYS, “*YOU ARE RIGHT, TEACHER.*”

DOESN’T THAT SEEM ODD TO YOU?

I MEAN, CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT THAT WOULD SOUND LIKE SITTING IN A CLASSROOM?

YOU’RE IN FOURTH GRADE, STUDYING AMERICAN HISTORY & LITTLE BOBBY, SITTING NEXT TO YOU, RAISES HIS HAND.

***“MRS. WOODRUFF, WHO REALLY WROTE THE
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE?”***

***MRS. WOODRUFF SAYS, “GOOD QUESTION, BOBBY.
THOUGH HE DIDN’T DO IT ALONE, THE PRIMARY
WRITER OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE WAS
THOMAS JEFFERSON.”***

***AND THEN BOBBY NODS HIS HEAD & SAYS, “YOU
ARE RIGHT, TEACHER, IN SAYING THAT THOMAS
JEFFERSON WAS THE PRIMARY WRITER OF THE
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.”***

***WHAT A JERK, HUH?! I MEAN, WHO DOES THAT
KIND OF THING?!***

***WELL, I SUPPOSE ALL THE “BOBBYS” THAT ALL
OF US HAVE KNOWN OVER THE YEARS.***

YOU SEE, I THINK THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS THAT WE CAN FIND TROUBLING ABOUT THIS PASSAGE.

BUT I'VE COME TO UNDERSTAND THE RESPONSE OF THE SCRIBE DIFFERENTLY.

I DON'T THINK HE WAS BEING A JERK IN HIS RESPONSE TO JESUS.

I THINK, PERHAPS, HE HEARD THE RESPONSE OF JESUS AND FOUND THAT IT CONFIRMED SOMETHING HE HAD ALWAYS FELT, BUT JUST DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO FORMULATE IT IN HIS OWN MIND AND SO HE'S FILLED WITH TREMENDOUS EXCITEMENT AND BASICALLY SAYS, *"YES! THAT'S THE WAY I'VE ALWAYS FELT! LOVING GOD & LOVING MY NEIGHBOR ARE REALLY THE THINGS THAT MATTER IN LIFE! THAT'S THE POINT OF MY VERY EXISTENCE! THANK YOU,*

TEACHER, FOR HELPING ME UNDERSTAND THAT & FOR CONFIRMING IT FOR ME!”

HAVE YOU EVER HAD THAT KIND OF EXPERIENCE – A TIME WHEN YOU HAD SOMETHING YOU’D ALWAYS FELT IN YOUR GUT – SOMETHING THAT BEAT INSIDE YOUR SOUL – CONFIRMED IN A CONFIDENTLY RELIABLE WAY?

IT HAPPENED TO ME MANY YEARS AGO WHEN I FIRST BECAME CONNECTED TO A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

I’D GROWN UP IN A DIFFERENT DENOMINATION AND I FOUND MYSELF SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE FROM ALL SORTS OF DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS.

I KNEW WHAT I WAS TAUGHT IN CHURCH & I KNEW THAT SOME OF WHAT I WAS TAUGHT MESHED WITH SOME OF THE THINGS THAT I HEARD FROM

**THOSE AROUND ME FROM DIFFERENT CHRISTIAN
PERSUASIONS.**

**BUT A LOT OF IT SEEMED DISCONNECTED TO
WHAT I TRULY BELIEVED DEEP INSIDE MY SOUL.**

**I FIGURED I MUST BE WRONG AND TRIED AS HARD
AS I COULD TO MAKE MYSELF BELIEVE CERTAIN
THINGS.**

THERE REMAINED, THOUGH, AN UNEASE INSIDE.

**IT WAS THEN THAT I BECAME CONNECTED WITH
A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FOR THE FIRST TIME.**

**IN A MATTER OF DAYS, I *HEARD* THINGS, *SAW*
THINGS, *READ* THINGS & *LEARNED* THINGS THAT
GAVE ME THE SAME EXPERIENCE OF THIS SCRIBE
WHO ENCOUNTERED JESUS.**

I FOUND MYSELF SAYING, “YES! *THAT’S THE WAY I’VE ALWAYS FELT! THANK YOU FOR CONFIRMING IT FOR ME!*”

WHEN YOU FIND CONFIRMATION OF DIVINE TRUTH THAT HAS ALWAYS RESIDED DEEP INSIDE YOUR SOUL, IT’S A EUPHORIC FEELING THAT IS UNMATCHED IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE!

THAT’S WHAT HAPPENED TO THIS SCRIBE WHO GENUINELY ASKED JESUS TO IMPART TO HIM HIS TRUTH.

I SAID THERE WERE A *COUPLE* OF THINGS THAT TROUBLED ME ABOUT THIS PASSAGE.

THE OTHER IS THE RESPONSE OF JESUS TO THE SCRIBE.

HE SAID, “*YOU ARE NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD.*”

HERE'S THE PROBLEM – IF JESUS HAS JUST SAID THAT LOVE FOR GOD & LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR ARE THE GREATEST COMMANDMENTS, AND IF THIS SCRIBE HAS SAID HE UNDERSTANDS & AGREES, WHAT'S LEFT?!

SHOULDN'T ONE LOGICALLY CONCLUDE THAT HE HAS FOUND THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

I CAME ACROSS A BOOK RECENTLY THAT HELPS ME UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM.

YOU NEED ONLY HEAR THE TITLE & SUBTITLE OF THE BOOK FOR THE ANSWER.

FIRST OF ALL, THOUGH, I HAVE TO TELL YOU HOW I FOUND THE BOOK.

I GOT ONE OF THOSE EMAIL DEALS THAT WAS “*AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE.*”

**IT WAS SOMETHING LIKE 95% OFF IF YOU BUY IT
IN THE NEXT TWO DAYS.**

**IT WAS IN A CHRISTIAN BOOK DISTRIBUTOR
CATALOG & AS I GLANCED AT THE TITLES, THIS ONE
GRABBED MY ATTENTION, BOTH BECAUSE OF THE
TITLE AS WELL AS THE HIGHLY-REGARDED AUTHOR
WHO HAD WRITTEN IT.**

**I ORDERED IT AND, AS YOU CAN SO EASILY DO
NOWADAYS, GOT IT WITHIN TWO DAYS.**

**I QUICKLY FLIPPED THROUGH IT & IT LOOKED
REALLY GOOD – GOOD ENOUGH THAT I QUICKLY
WENT BACK TO THE BOOK DISTRIBUTOR WEBSITE TO
SEE IF I STILL GET IT AT THE SAME PRICE.**

**SURE ENOUGH - \$1.99 FOR A \$25 BOOK WITH FREE
SHIPPING TO BOOT!**

**I ORDERED 8 MORE JUST IN CASE IT TURNED OUT
TO BE AS GOOD AS IT APPEARED TO BE!**

**SO YOU'RE SITTING ON THE EDGE OF YOUR PEW,
AREN'T YOU, WAITING TO HEAR THIS BOOK'S TITLE
THAT I FOUND SO IRRESISTIBLE.**

HERE IT IS – TITLE & SUBTITLE.

**WHAT MATTERS MOST – HOW WE GOT THE POINT
BUT MISSED THE PERSON.**

**REMEMBER THE QUESTION OF THAT NERVOUS
GROOM – “*WHAT'S THE POINT?*”**

**YOU SEE, EVEN IF WE GET THE POINT, THERE'S
STILL SOMETHING ELSE.**

YOU CAN GET THE POINT – AS THIS SCRIBE DID.

**YOU CAN UNDERSTAND AND ACCEPT THAT
LOVING GOD & LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR ARE THE
GREATEST OF ALL GOD'S COMMANDMENTS.**

**BUT EVEN IN DOING SO – EVEN IN GETTING THE
POINT – WE CAN MISS THE *PERSON*.**

**WHAT JESUS WAS SAYING TO THIS SCRIBE IS
THERE’S SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST BEING
IMPRESSED BY HIS TEACHINGS.**

**THERE’S SOMETHING MORE THAN NARROWING
THE FULL SCOPE OF GOD’S DEMANDS INTO TWO
SINGLE COMMANDMENTS.**

**WHEN JESUS SAID, “*YOU ARE NOT FAR FROM THE
KINGDOM OF GOD,*” HE MEANT THAT QUITE
LITERALLY.**

GOD WAS STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM!

**HE WAS QUITE LITERALLY “*NOT FAR FROM THE
KINGDOM OF GOD!*”**

**DURING THIS SEASON OF LENT, AS WE JOIN JESUS
IN JERUSALEM DURING HOLY WEEK, WE NEED TO
REMEMBER THIS UNNAMED SCRIBE.**

**IT'S GREAT TO LISTEN TO JESUS & BE IMPRESSED
BY HIS TEACHINGS.**

**BUT WE TRULY DISCOVER & EXPERIENCE THE
KINGDOM OF GOD WHEN WE COMPLETELY COMMIT
EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES TO HIM.**

**IT'S IN THAT TOTAL COMMITMENT TO JESUS
THAT WE FIND WHAT MATTERS MOST.**

**AND, CONTRARY TO THAT DEPRESSED GROOM,
WE GET THE POINT WITHOUT MISSING THE PERSON –
THE POINT OF LIFE & THE POINT OF OUR VERY
EXISTENCE. AMEN.**

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