

Daily Bible Study

“The Buck Stops Here”

Mark 12:28 - 34

February 12– February 18, 2012

THE LORD’S DAY & MONDAY –As we return to the Gospel of Mark we pick up and take as our text **Mark 12:28-34**. We have seen our Lord dealing with His enemies trying to catch him in his words and His teaching. They asked *“Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?”* and Jesus answered: *“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesars, and to God, the things that are Gods.”* Then we saw Jesus answer a question concerning marriage and the resurrection which we called an ignorant, insincere question because they didn’t want an answer as much as they wanted to catch and discredit Jesus. Now, we will see the question, *“Which is the first (foremost, greatest) commandment of all?”* which Jesus answers by going back to **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**. This incident is recorded only by Matthew and Mark. There is no exact parallel in Luke but there is a similar conversation in **Luke 10:25** and following. Mark’s account is the most detailed as among other things it includes the *Shema* (*“Hear, O Israel...”*), *“and with all your strength”* in the summary of the first commandment, and describes in some detail the scribe’s reaction to the words of Jesus as well as Jesus’ encouraging reply. Matthew leaves the impression the scribe did not act solely on his own but was delegated by the Pharisees in a meeting held with that purpose in mind (**Matthew 22:34-35**). Matthew also adds the familiar line, *“On these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets”* where Mark has Jesus saying, *“There is no other commandment greater than these.”* Read our text for the week, **Mark 12:28-34** *“Then 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?” Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O 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.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” So 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. And 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.” 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.”*

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me Your Word; help me learn the “greatest” commandment.

TUESDAY – Mark 12: 28 “Then 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? We’ve already seen from the previous verses in **Mark 12** that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees when He explained the Resurrection of which they did not believe (**Acts 23:7-8**) as a reality. His victory must have pleased the Pharisees since they also, like Jesus, believed in a bodily resurrection. So the Pharisees must have been pleased in a sense yet because Jesus handled the question so well they must be not pleased because they did want Him dead, not growing in popularity by answering the hard questions in front of the people. So again they decide to put him to the test (**Matthew 22:35**). They apparently choose a certain scribe (a law expert) to come do the questioning of Jesus. We don’t know all the specifics surrounding this *scribe’s* appointment but we do know that he knew Jesus had handled the previous question well (*perceiving that He had answered them well*). It appears that Mark records this phrase to tell us that this man may possibly be truly interested in Jesus wisdom and that he is investigating Christ on a serious level rather than merely attempting to discredit Him. We know that God (Jesus in the flesh) knew his true motivation. The question asked by this scribe could be expected as it was a question which attempted to sort out, the scribes’ traditional count of the 613 commandments (248 positive, 365 negative). We know they were famous for wrangling and arguing over the commandments as they debated which were more important, and as they added and took away from them as they felt. There is an important and true lesson here for us. Not that we add or take away from God’s law as we feel led but we must make choices concerning priorities lest we neglect the weightier matters of the law and focus too much on the minors such as *tithing mint, dill, and cumin*. It was Augustine who said, “Love God—and do what you like.” This may be a touch over simplistic but not by much as we shall see. So the man asks, *Which is the first commandment of all? Which (poia, “of what sort or nature”) is the first (prōtē, “first in place, rank, influence, honor, principal”)* commandment of all?

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to ask questions of You that are sincere and honest. Give me a heart that desires to learn more and more truth and search Sacred Scripture for answers.

WEDNESDAY – Mark 12:29-31 “Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O 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.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” We can summarize this entire section by seeing that Jesus reply goes deeper than the debated “lighter/heavier” comparisons and arguments to a clear, simple and precise statement of what is truly the most important command along with its inseparable counterpart. These two together summarize the whole Law. As Jesus starts to answer we find He uses **Deuteronomy 6:4** and following which are known as the “*Shema*” which comes

from the Hebrew word for “hear”. This statement which identifies the unique and exclusive nature of Yahweh the covenant Lord of Israel is recited twice daily by devout Jews. We then read of the command *And you shall love...* Jesus calls for this man and all who would obey Him to commit themselves in *heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength to love the LORD your God.* We have studied this wonderful portion of Scripture Wednesday evenings this past year in “Family Driven Faith” so I will not guild the lily here in the Bible study but point you to that teaching series for a detailed look into the “*shema*” and **Deuteronomy 6**. Suffice it to say, we understand and see in this call the unity and uniqueness of our God as well as our need for total commitment to Him and Him alone. Interesting is the little word Jesus uses in the Greek translated by the preposition *with*. The Greek is “ek” meaning “out of,” and it denotes source. We see it used in the English “ex”-it which tells us how to get out of a particular room or place. Jesus calls for a volitional love which comes “out of” the whole person. We see a bit of this comprehensive call of entire body/mind commitment to God in other Scriptures such as **Romans 12:1-2**. What we clearly see from this command and the entirety of Sacred Scripture is that the whole duty of man, the whole moral-spiritual law, can be summed up in one word, *love* (**Romans 13:9-10, 1 Corinthians 13**). **Verses 29-30** of our text tell us that this *love* must first of all be directed toward God.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: *Father, help me to see that my first responsibility is to see You as the God You are, revealed to me through Sacred Scripture by the power of The Holy Spirit and also to then commit my entire life to You by loving You with all the power, desire, and senses You’ve given me.*

THURSDAY – Mark 12:31-33 “*And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.*” So 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. And 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.*” Jesus continues on and then speaks of this love being directed toward one’s *neighbor*. Scripture assumes we will love ourselves which is true of EVERY individual ever born human and therefore we sinful, selfish, fallen sinners are commanded to *love our neighbor* (a generic term for fellow men) as we *love ourselves* (**Leviticus 19:10**). We must see that these two commands of loving God and neighbor; the two that summarize the entire law of God are intertwined and inseparably linked. Please understand that you can’t love God and not love your neighbor. Statements such as “I love God, I’m fine with Him it’s just people I can’t stand” are folly and untrue. The man who doesn’t love his neighbor does not love God as he ought either; according to Scripture, it’s impossible to do the one without the other (**1 John 4:20**). Remember, we have previously seen in **Mark 12** that man is God’s image bearer and this truth ties together our love toward both God and man. Jesus says *There is no other commandment greater than these*. This is because wholehearted love to God and one’s neighbor is the sum and substance of

the Law and the Prophets. To fulfill these commands is to fulfill all others. Finally, concerning the matter of *loving* let's make some closing observations. Remember that Scripture speaks of faith, hope, and love in the love chapter of **1 Corinthians 13** and concludes by saying the *greatest of these is love*. One reason is that faith and hope both take while love gives. Faith, given by God and exercised by a believing sinner appropriates the salvation that is already in Christ who is already the Savior. Hope accepts and anticipates the promise of eternal life and the future inheritance which are already laid up for the believer. Love, however, means *self-giving, self-sacrifice*; love gives away of itself and does not take from others. Also, all virtues are included in love as illustrated by the description of the kindness, patience, humility, etc... of **1 Corinthians 13**. *Love is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices* because when human beings love, they pattern themselves after God, for “*God is love*” (**1 John 4:8**).

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to love and therefore be like You. Because of Your grace, mercy, and love toward me all of this is even possible; my faith, hope, and love. Thanks.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY – **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*”. In ending **verse 33** with *to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices* the scribe unlike the Sadducees from the earlier encounter appears to have known the Scriptures to some degree; at least he seems to refer to passages such as (**1 Samuel 15:22, Psalm 40:6-7, 51:16-17, Isaiah 1:10–17, Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6–8**). Jesus seeing the man gave a wise answer, now responds, *You are not far from the kingdom of God*. This man appears to have the spiritual understanding and openness to Jesus that brought him near to embracing God’s kingdom by faith, the kingdom of Jesus’ spiritual rule over those related to Him by faith (**Mark 10:15**). As Lenski comments, “*Not far from*” means “quite near.” This man was so near to the kingdom because he realized that God required the love that is described in Deuteronomy. If he now went on and realized further that he had not loved God and his neighbor in this perfect way he would come to recognize his sinfulness and bow in contrition before God. And he would then also understand that the gospel in the words “*the Lord, thy God,*” meant that God’s rule of love and grace would cleanse him from his sins. To comprehend this would be faith and thus actual entrance into the kingdom.” Whether the man entered this relationship by saving faith and repentance is not known.

(Meditate)What is God teaching me from His Word today? (Apply)How can I put it into practice?

Suggestion for Prayer: Thanks God for giving me repentance toward You & faith in the Lord Jesus.