

Message for March 4, 2018

LIFE IN THE KINGDOM

The Second is this...

Mark 12:28-34a The Message (MSG)

²⁸ One of the religion scholars came up. Hearing the lively exchanges of question and answer and seeing how sharp Jesus was in his answers, he put in his question: “Which is most important of all the commandments?”

²⁹⁻³¹ Jesus said, “The first in importance is, ‘Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.’ And here is the second: ‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment that ranks with these.”

³²⁻³³ The religion scholar said, “A wonderful answer, Teacher! So lucid and accurate—that God is one and there is no other. And loving him with all passion and intelligence and energy, and loving others as well as you love yourself. Why, that’s better than all offerings and sacrifices put together!”

³⁴ When Jesus realized how insightful he was, he said, “You’re almost there, right on the border of God’s kingdom.”

The religious leader was genuinely impressed by Jesus' answers so he approaches Jesus with a question of his own: The conversation went sort of like this:

WOW I’m impressed with what you are saying, so let me ask you this: “Which commandment is the first of all?” This was an important question, and was a common question among rabbis. I don’t think it was a trick question at all. I think this religious leader wanted to get an answer.

Of the 613 commandments, the rabbis would debate which one was the first - the most important so they could use it to interpret all the others.

By asking Jesus what commandment was the first, he wanted His input.

Here is what Jesus says, He quotes the Jewish SHEMA, an important part to Jewish prayer:

Mark 12:29-31 New King James Version (NKJV)

²⁹ ‘Hear, O 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.’

But He doesn’t stop there:

³¹ And the second, like *it, is* this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

He was quoting from the Old Testament.

When Jesus tells us we are to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength He is quoting from Deuteronomy chapter 6.

And when He says we are to love a neighbor as oneself He is quoting from Leviticus 19. The religious leader knew what He was saying.

Jesus put these two commandments together to show us that the two go hand in hand. And are not to be separated.

He wanted to show that love for God is the source of love for the neighbor, And that the love for the neighbor shows that we love God.

Jesus teaches us that love for God and love for the neighbor go together, and that they form one commandment. Yet the commandments are also kept distinct (He lists them as, 'the first,' ... 'the second'). Jesus shows that we can’t ignore either of them.

In the Scripture we read in Mark, the religious leaders, who were the power brokers were sometimes seen as self-serving.

Their love was for themselves and not for others.

They don’t care about the oppressed and marginalized.

So this commandment to “love the neighbor” is aimed at us.

Through the gospel, Jesus is speaking to us and is telling all of us to love the neighbor. He wants us to love the neighbor as we love ourselves. But how are we to express our love to the neighbor as ourselves?

Before we think about how to 'love the neighbor,' the first question we ask is how do we love ourselves without sounding narcissistic.

The most basic way we show love to ourselves is the way we care for ourselves.

I would guess one of the first things any of us will do following worship is “look for something to eat”.

February has been a very cold month, we wear winter clothing, we turn up the thermostat, or we start our vehicles while standing inside to house.

Whenever we have needs, we fix it, we do this because we like to take care of ourselves, it's a natural response.

It's usually preservation, it's not bad to take care of ourselves.

This is our measuring stick for loving others.

If we do not love ourselves, we can't love others. By loving ourselves, Jesus intended us to see and meet the needs of others.

When you feel hungry... other people feel hungry.

When the weather is cold, know that others need warm clothes.

Encourage the discouraged. Comfort the hurting. Reach out to the lonely.

The Apostle Peter reminds us:

... be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.

1 Peter 3:8

Only a Love for God can empower us to rightly love ourselves and our neighbor.

Remember who you are and to whom you belong

AMEN