

## CLOSE BUT NOT IN

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

Covenant Presbyterian Church

**MARK 12:28-34**

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In the Passover tradition heads of household ask a series of Scripture questions before the Haggadah (The Telling) ceremony itself. [Note Mark’s placing a series of questions to and by Jesus before the Passover.] The last question often involved two seemingly contradictory passages (cf. Mark 12:35-37). Sinclair Ferguson writes: If Mark is deliberately following this pattern, then the very way in which he composed the Gospel is meant to say to us: “Here are the questions which lead up to the true Passover; and here is Jesus, the One who can answer all the questions which the Passover celebrations leave unanswered.” It is a very skillful way of showing the final adequacy of Jesus by contrast with the preliminary nature of all of God’s deeds in the Old Testament.

**Mark 12:28-30, 32-34** Because the Lord our God is One we are to love him out of your whole heart, whole soul, whole mind and out of all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:1-8 4 “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.

The *Shema* (*Hear, O Israel...*) is what is put on a scroll in the little boxes on the doorpost of Jewish homes and was worn in the leather boxes worn on some orthodox Jewish arms and foreheads.

Because he is one (pure, undivided, complete, whole) our love towards him is to be whole. Mark proclaims God as one and yet announces via Jesus’ words (12:35-37) the divinity of the Son who is one with his Father (John 10:30). Important to Mark’s readers in Rome and for Muslims and others in our day as well.

**Love** here in 30\_31 is agape, characteristic of God and false (1 Cor 13) if a mere outward obedience without the affections of a renewed heart.

**Heart**-affections

**Soul**-person (spirit in body) In both Hebrew and Greek, the primary meaning of “soul” is life, referring to the totality of one’s being as an embodied person

**Mind**-from Vaticanus MS of Deut 6

**Strength**-assets from body, wealth, position

Luther clarifies that to break any of the Ten Commandments we have to break the first: no other gods before me.

Loving God: ...references to loving God. In addition to...parallels in Matt 22:37 and Luke 10:27, there are: Luke 11:42; John 5:42; 14:31; Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 2:9; 8:3; Jas 1:12; 2:5; 1 John 2:5, 15; 4:20; 5:2-3; Jude 21; Rev 2:4. John 14:15, 24; 21:15-17; 1 Cor 16:22; Eph 6:24; 1 Pet 1:8 refer to loving Christ.<sup>1</sup>

**Mark 12:31-34** Because the Lord our God is One we are to love our neighbors in the same manner we love ourselves.

The two are summary of the Ten Commandments (words) given Moses in Exo 20:1-17): 1 no other gods, 2 no making of idols or likenesses to worship and serve them, 3 no taking of the Lord’s name in vain, 4 keep the Sabbath day, then 5 honor father and mother, 6 no murder, 7 no adultery, 8 no stealing, 9 no false witness, 10 no coveting of neighbor’s house, wife, servants, animals, belongings.

Who is my neighbor? (in Luke 10 the parable of the Good Samaritan follows this teaching)

<sup>1</sup> Brooks, J. A. (1991). *Vol. 23: Mark*. The New American Commentary (197-198). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

**Leviticus 19:18** 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

**Leviticus 19:33–34** 'When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. 34 'The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

**12:31** *You shall love your neighbor as yourself!*

**Jonathan Edwards writes in *Charity and Its Fruits*:** It is not a thing contrary to Christianity that a man should love himself, or, which is the same thing, should love his own happiness. ...to destroy a man's love to himself, and to his own happiness, it would therein tend to destroy the very spirit of humanity; but the very announcement of the gospel, as a system of peace on earth and goodwill toward men ([Luke 2:14](#)), shows that it is not only not destructive of humanity, but in the highest degree promotive of its spirit. ...and it is impossible that such a love should be destroyed in any other way than by destroying his being. The saints love their own happiness.

Edwards goes on to say that charity/Christian love disposes us to seek the welfare of others even if at times we must forego or part with our own things. This is to live in Christ who (Phil 2:5ff) let go of heaven to lower himself even to death on a cross.

The scribe's acknowledgment that these loving God & neighbor are much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifice is based on many Old Testament statements by God to Israel. Cf., *1 Sam 15:22; Isaiah 45:21; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8*. In OT context these do not immediately foreshadow the end of sacrifices, but in Mark they do as Jesus approaches giving himself as a ransom for many.

The New Testament speaks much of the unity of love for God and love of neighbor: -Mat 7:12 -1 Cor 16:22  
-James 2:8-10 -Lord's Prayer: on earth as it is in heaven. -1 John 4:10-11, 19-20 -Rom 12:1; 13:8-10 -Gal 5:14

**Mark 12:34a** **Because the Lord our God is One with his Son, to be in you have to be in his Son.**

Jesus changes the focus from commandments which we cannot keep to the kingdom which we cannot rule.

The scribe was close in his profession of the two faceted commandment. He was closer than he knew to the King of the Kingdom.

To be in the Son is to be included in, covered by the Son's sacrificial death.

To be in the Son is to be included in the Son's resurrection.

**Colossians 3:1–4** Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Follow me, find your life in me, abide in me, die with me, be co-resurrected with me, eat my flesh and drink my blood, glory in me, know the Father and the Son he has sent, be sent as I am sent, love in the manner that I love...

1 C or 11: Recognize not only the physical body of Christ, but also the body of Christ the church: if you love God you will love your brothers and you will long for men and women of every tribe and tongue to be at the table with us.

I often think: "A life is like a day; it goes by so fast. If I am so careless with my days, how can I be careful with my life?" I know that somehow I have not fully come to believe that urgent things can wait while I attend to what is truly important. It finally boils down to a question of deep and strong conviction. Once I am truly convinced that preparing the heart is more important than preparing the Christmas tree I will be a lot less frustrated at the end of a day.

*Henri J. M. Nouwen in the New Oxford Review (Nov. 1986). Christianity Today, Vol. 33, no. 18.*