

Sermon for Lenten Midweek #3

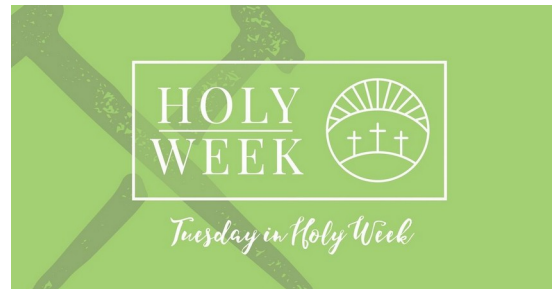
Date: March 3, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Epistle Reading: Galatians 5:13-23

Gospel Reading: Mark 12:28-37



significant

Sermon Text: Mark 12:28-37

Sermon Title: Significant Questions: Tuesday of Holy Week

Psalm : Psalm 42

Hymns:

LSB 848 – Lord, Whose Love through Humble Service

LSB 708 – Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart

LSB 933 – My Soul Rejoices

LSB 427 – In the Cross of Christ I Glory

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: Mark 12:28–37

One of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that [Jesus] answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”

Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And 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.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared,

“‘The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet.’

David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?” And the great throng heard him gladly.

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' Holy Name. Amen.

People ask questions every day. Most of them are probably not all that important. You know like, "How are you doing?" or, "Did you watch the game yesterday?" Wives know the challenge you sometimes have to think up something new things for dinner. My wife will ask, "What do you want for dinner?" To which I answer, "food." She has mentioned that my answer is not always all that helpful.

These questions are not really all that critical or important. There are other much more significant questions that we ask at times, like "Will you marry me?" or, "Did you get the job?" or, "What did the the biopsy tell you?" Those aren't everyday questions. Those are significant, life-changing questions.

Today, we will continue in our Lenten series on significant things, by looking at what took place on Tuesday of Holy Week. Jesus entered Jerusalem with an enthusiastic crowd on Palm Sunday. On Monday, He took significant action in clearing the Temple grounds of the merchants and money-changers. Now on Tuesday, we hear two very significant questions. One that a scribe asks Jesus, and another that Jesus asks the crowd at the Temple.

Jesus has just been in a discussion with the Sadducees, some of the Jewish religious clergy, who did not believe in a resurrection from the dead. A scribe heard Jesus answering the Sadducees and he was impressed. The scribes and the Pharisees would have enjoyed Jesus winning a debate over the Sadducees. They didn't really get along very well.

This scribe, who's job would have been to painstakingly copy down hundreds and hundreds of commandments on the pages of Scripture, is now genuinely interested in this great teacher. He's not trying to trick Jesus. He actually wants to know what Jesus has to say. He asks, "Which commandment is the most important of all?"¹

Jesus responds with a two-part answer that is a summary for all of Torah Law, all of God's Law, or rules for life.

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.²

Jesus is quoting the Old Testament, specifically Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

1 Mark 12:28

2 Mark 12:29-30

The answer does not begin with what we should or should not do. The answer begins with God. “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” He is the one, true, holy and living God, and He is the only one. He is utterly unlike all of the false gods people have concocted going back as far as history records. The only true God is one, and it is this one true God whom we love with everything that we have. The answer is not a matter of deeds, but of the heart and having a heart for God.

Jesus doesn’t stop there. He is not finished answering the scribe’s question. He adds:

The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.³

Here again, Jesus is quoting the Old Testament. Again He is quoting Torah Law. This time Leviticus 19:18. In these two answers, Jesus has summed up the entirety of God’s Law.

Love God.
Love people.

If you and I could love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, we would never be in violation of the Law of God. We would never fail to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We would never misuse His name. We would always remember the Sabbath day, by keeping it holy, but you know how feeble our love for God can be. You know how many times we put ourselves first and God, too often, comes up a very distant second.

If we could truly love our neighbor as ourselves, we would never be in violation of the Law of God. We would always honor our father and mother. We would never kill, let alone be angry. We would never commit adultery, even in our thoughts. We would never take what belongs to our neighbor. We would never do or say anything that would hurt our neighbor’s reputation or name. We would never have a desire to take what belongs to our neighbor, in goods, family or reputation.

Here again, we come up short. It’s not just the outward acts. It’s the the internal stuff, the heart stuff. The internal thoughts against our neighbor, that’s what will do us in. True life in God and toward other people is summarized in these two statements:

Loving God with all we have.
Love people as yourself.

3 Mark 12:31

That's good news if that's what God really wants. The good news is the One speaking with the scribe is truly God. He is Emmanuel – The God of creation walking among us. He is the one, true, holy and living God, and He is the only one. He is the one who came to do what we can't. He came to fulfill the Torah Law of God and fulfill it perfectly, fully and completely. He alone loved God with all His heart, soul, mind and strength. He alone loved His neighbor as Himself. In fact, He will, in just three short days now, lay down His life for His neighbors. As true man the concerns about that must be growing. As true God He is compelled to strive toward it because as true God you, by name, as an individual, are on His mind. His neighbor include you.

Jesus has a significant question of His own. Jesus asks:

“How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?”⁴

The scribes were the experts in the Old Testament Scriptures. They spent all day everyday copying them. That was their job. The scribes were correct in teaching that the Christ, the Messiah, would come from the line of king David in the Old Testament. Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1, a psalm that David wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, concerning God the Father and the Messiah:

The Lord [God the Father] said to my Lord [the Messiah], ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.’⁵

Jesus points out that David himself called the coming Messiah “Lord.” David referred to both the Father and the coming Messiah as “Lord” as greater than himself. So how could this Messiah be both the decedent and the Lord of David? You don't worship or humble yourself before those who come after you.

There is only one answer to that significant question, and the answer was standing right in front of the Temple that Tuesday speaking to a scribe. He is Jesus. He is the one who was there at the creation of the world, and is in every way God Himself. He is the one who commanded wind and waves to cease, and they obey. He is the one who healed physical infirmities, removing them as if they never existed. He is the one who demonstrated His authority over life and death by raising people from the dead. He is the One whom death and the grave could not hold. He is the One who rose triumphant from the grave.

He was, is, and remains David's Lord and ours. For:

4 Mark 12:35

5 Mark 12:36

God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.⁶

Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, a position of power and authority, and from that place of all power and authority, He reigns over all. From that place, He cares and provides for you. From that place, He has answered all of our significant questions.

Amen.

Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people

