

Mk. 12:28-34 (LD 2) “A Tall Order”

For the Children: Imagine that a girl says to a boy who likes her, “You must show that you love me by moving Wellington city, stone by stone, to the top of the Rimutaka Pass.” This is an impossible task, which the boy will not be able to do. In the beginning, God gave man a task that was not impossible – to love Him and obey Him completely, in everything. But now that man is sinful, this has become impossible for us, even harder than the task that girl gave to the boy! God’s Law commands us to show total commitment to Him, but we cannot. The Law therefore reminds us that we need the Lord Jesus to cover our sins, so we can start serving God. **Questions:** How does this passage show that our love to God should be total? How did the Lord Jesus show His total love for God? How is love of other people related to love of God?

Introduction:

First Point: The Most Important Commandment

- The Shema: The Jews argued about which commandment was greatest. The Lord does not single out any specific law, but goes to the basic principles behind all the Law. He cites the Jewish confession, the “Shema,” from Dt. 6:4-5. The Shema reminds us that we need a total love and commitment to God – all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This derives from Who He is (Lord and God) and what He has done for us as “our” covenant-God.. It involves the whole inner person as well as outward action.
- All the Mind: Jesus mentions “all your mind” because that is how the Greek version of Dt. 4:5 reads. This means we must also seek to grow as much as we can in the understanding of Scripture – which must then be applied.

Second Point: The Second-Most Important

- Love of Neighbour: The Lord also cites Lev. 19:18 concerning love of neighbour as self – the other main principle behind the specific laws. After all, man bears God’s image. We honour God by seeking the welfare of the image-bearer, according to His Word.
- Second Is Not First: Yet we also recognize that we give glory to God, not to man. We seek our neighbour’s welfare in all of life – another “totality” issue – but we do not give our whole heart to him above God. Hence, this principle is “like” the first, but is also the “second” rather than the first.
- Our Christian Neighbour: In the case of brethren, we have an added reason for seeking their welfare: that the Lord Jesus has also laid down His life for them.

Third Point: More Important Than Sacrifices

- No Greater Commandment: The great importance of these 2 principles is seen in that one is called “foremost” and the other “second.” The Lord also says that no other commandment is greater. All the Law and the prophets depend on these 2 principles. We see the importance also in the Scribe’s comment that these 2 are greater than the sacrificial system.
- Mercy Not Sacrifice: The sacrificial system was central in dealing with sin in the OT. Yet God desired His people to uphold these 2 principles underlying the Law even more than He desired that they outwardly observe the sacrifices (Mic. 6:6-8; Hos. 6:6).

Fourth Point: Too Important to Ignore

- Not Far from the Kingdom: The Lord Jesus observed that the Scribe was not far from the Kingdom of God because he agreed with this teaching on the 2 principles. How we see these things is therefore tied up with our salvation.
- How We Use the Law: However, we are sinners, and cannot come close to attaining this “tall order” of total love and commitment to God, and respect for His image in man. We can only take the teaching here seriously by believing in Christ, Who has offered total love and commitment to God on our behalf, and paid for our failure to do so. We demonstrate that we have done so, by then making a small start in whole-hearted commitment to God, and love of neighbour as self.

Conclusion: