

# Service Sunday

## For the Glory of God and my Neighbor's Good

- from the Sauer Press

### **Mark 12: 28-31**

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, '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.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Jesus' answer to the scribe wasn't just a pithy answer to a pointed question. While his response satisfied the scribe's probing and validated his knowledge of the Jewish law, Jesus also lived the life that the commandments mandated. His answer here in Mark satisfied the scribe because it was directly from the Jewish tradition. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one..." is from Deuteronomy 6:4. Known as the "shema," this is the commandment that Jews are to keep in their hearts, teaching them to their children, fixing them on their foreheads, and writing them on the doorposts of their houses. Loving neighbor as self is familiar, too - it comes from Leviticus 19:18. The scribe commends Jesus for his accuracy, saying that "this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices," (Mark 12:33).

For Jesus, though, the greatest commandments were not only accurate legal answers to difficult scribal questions. Jesus himself actively lived out the commandments he espoused, glorifying God and working for his neighbor's good. In the Brethren tradition, have a beautiful reminder of this combination of loving both God and neighbor in the service of footwashing. When we read John's account of Jesus' last meal with his disciples, we hear a hint of Jesus' motivation for kneeling to wash their feet:

"And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet..." (John 13:2-5).

Jesus washed his disciples' feet because he knew that he had come from God and was returning to God. This posture of service - kneeling down to wash another's feet - gracefully combines the two most important commandments. Because Jesus knows that God is both the source and end of his life, he glorifies God by serving his neighbors. In loving his disciples, he also loves God. May we also learn to follow these great commandments, glorifying God and working for our neighbor's good.

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