

No Turning Back- Living the surrendered life

Lesson 17

So what's most important to you?

Mark 12:28-34

What matters most to you? I've been thinking about what matters most...lately.

Kim was hospitalized last Monday... for two days she was in the hospital she repeatedly said she wanted to go home. Somehow I can relate. There's something about being home!

Speaking about being home--let me ask you: If your house were on fire, what would you grab as you escape?

- Your children?
- Your wallet?
- Your computer?
- Your passport?
- Your personal documents?
- A precious photograph?
- The wristwatch your grandfather gave you?
- A stack of letters from someone you love dearly?

Under these circumstances--and as you look on from a safe distance as everything else is burned to ashes you realize something peculiar. You realize that under these circumstances the significance of what you've just done. You have made important choices. These things are more valuable to you than tables and chairs, china and glass, clothes, books, electronics, and all the thousand other things that find a place in a home.

Under these circumstances you would discover what matters most.

As I was thinking about Mark 12:28-34 I realized that the lawyer's question to Jesus was really one of those "the house is burning" type question.

- Being faced with the whole volume of Jewish law, which commandment really matters?
- Which one will you grab onto in a moment of crisis?
- And I wonder what the significance of that choice is?
-And by only choosing some--what are you saying about the others?

I can really relate to the lawyer's question! Jesus, tell us what is most important.

- I mean this is all we need to hear...
- Honestly, this is all we want to hear...
- We do not want to do the deep thinking you seem to think we need.
-So Jesus, we're asking you to boil it down for us.

Tell us what is most important.

I can sense the desperation. Jesus, can you just for once speak clearly?

- Not in Parables.
- No more talk of self-denial and following you to God knows where. **Bottom line Jesus, what are the things we need to take with us as the house is burning?**

That's a fair question. But let me warn you.

Many of you know that I love to garden... especially tomatoes. Another hobby of mine is to harvest those tomatoes into sauce. The process of saucing is to slowly boil down the tomatoes by boiling out 40% of the water content. Let me warn you though...if you were to ever opened a jar of my tomatoes and take a big bite, you'd spit it out! Boiled down stuff can have a real bad taste to it. Handled properly, you get the best tasting stuff.

Surprisingly Jesus boils down the answer to that desperate question:

Love God with all you are.

Love those around you, and see them through the eyes of God.

Do these things, and you are not far from the kingdom of God.

I'm struck by what Randy Harris shares regarding serious bible study. **"If I take this text seriously, what would I have to change in my life?"**

Each time we come to Scripture, we should ask that question. Our habit is to interrogate the Scripture rather than letting the Scripture interrogate us. There's a huge difference in asking questions about the Scripture and allowing the Scripture to call me into question.

Read Mark 12:28-40

What??? I told you it would taste a little weird.

Although-- this is a pretty good statement of faith isn't it? Looks good in the jar.

But did you notice v. 34b

"You are not FAR from the kingdom of God."

To follow the true Son of God, you might think that a statement of faith would cinch the deal. After all I've heard Jesus and the lawyer say that the center to it all is "Love God, Love Your Neighbor." I remember Jesus confronted with the trick question in Matthew 22, and this being his answer.

When the teacher of the Law comes to Jesus in Mark 12, he agrees with Jesus that this is the core of faith and what would become the gospel.

But it's Jesus reply in 12:34 that gets my attention: **"You are not FAR from the kingdom of God."**

What's missing? What would cinch the deal?

Is it the call to discipleship by way of taking up your cross and following Jesus? Perhaps. But what is it that moves us from "not far" to "Okay, you're in"?

One time Charlie Brown said to one of the other kids in a comic strip, "I love mankind. It's people I can't stand."

-Sorry, Charlie Brown. Doesn't work that way, which I think is the problem in this text.

When Jesus speaks here, it is obvious that the teachers of the Law love the Law. They love to speak about the law. They love to talk about the Law. They love to meditate on the Law. They have thousands of laws explaining the law.

The problem came when they were confronted with the ones for whom the Law is written.

Mark 12:28—“Most Important” **12:39** “Most Important”

The teachers wanted to know what the most important command was, but they also wanted the most important seats.

Question: Can you really have it both ways?

-What gets you all the way in to the kingdom?

-What bridges the gap?

-What makes people notice and say, “Well there goes someone who is a part of the Kingdom of God?”

I believe Jesus would say this: **It is not whether or not you believe in “Love God, Love Your Neighbor” but rather, how you live it out.**

And we know that Jesus can say this to us right? He can say it because that is the way he lived his life for us. We know that Jesus loved us because he laid down his life for us. But in this boiled down fashion—he told us that we ought to lay down our lives for one another. And this is worth thinking about.

The goal is not just loving God’s Word, but living God’s Word. “The purpose of having God’s word take root in your heart and mine, is so that we can blossom into being a living, breathing, and walking illustration of God’s love.”

The goal is not just knowing God’s Word, but knowing who God’s Word is speaking too.

- Loving God is seen in our cares for others.
- Loving God means we will be in relationship with others.
- Loving God is never expressed in harming another human being

“Love for Neighbor is Love for God put in flesh.”

Our pious love for God remains just that—piety, if it is not expressed in love for our neighbor. A pious love for God remains just burnt offerings and sacrifices. It has a lot of good smells to it, but it somehow misses the mark.

Amos 5:18-24 The Day of the LORD

18 Woe to you who long

for the day of the LORD!

Why do you long for the day of the LORD ?

That day will be darkness, not light.

19 It will be as though a man fled from a lion

only to meet a bear,

as though he entered his house

and rested his hand on the wall

only to have a snake bite him.

20 Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light—

pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

21 "I hate, I despise your religious feasts;

I cannot stand your assemblies.

22 Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,

I will not accept them.

Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,

I will have no regard for them.

23 Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.
24 But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!

NLT- 24 Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, a river of righteous living that will never run dry.

MSG. 24 Do you know what I want?
I want justice--oceans of it.
I want fairness--rivers of it.
That's what I want. That's all I want.

Ask Jesus how a much a person loves God, and he will say: "just look at how they treat another person."

Ask yourself that same question: How much do I love God? Then look at your life and ask: How do I see and treat other people?

How do we treat our neighbor? How do we live with our kids, or our spouse? How do we treat our parents? How do I look at the person I work next to? How do I see those who have "less" than me? How do I see those who have more than me? How do I see those at church? How do I see my church leaders (Shepherds and the ministers)?

You see the question is How much do people matter, to me? I mean it's worth reminding me and saying "Scot, you have never looked into the eyes of someone who does not matter to God." Every time you make eye contact with a cab driver, a waiter, a floor cleaner, a millionaire, a GenXer, a elderly woman in a rest home, a minority person, an illegal immigrant, someone who believes differently than you do either morally or religiously, a politician who votes the opposite way you do--**matters to God!** And if they matter to God than they deserve my love.

How's that for boiling it down?

This Word from God today is a challenge to us. But it's worth critically thinking about: Would anyone looking at us—our church, our lives, anything that claims to be "Christian"—Would anyone ever guess that Loving God and Loving Neighbor is the reason we live?

To put it another way--when crisis comes, what remains solid in this church and in your life? Is it a wholehearted love of God and our neighbor that defines us? Or is everyone trying to save his or her own skin?

Let me bring you to the place that Jesus is leading everyone of us to, today. Let me bring you to the place where we are called to not turn back and to live the surrendered life. Let me bring you to the cross so that you can see Jesus--but more importantly so you can see what mattered most to Jesus.

Oh we know what he preached, but now lets look at what He lived!

Luke 23:32-38 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. **33**When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his

right, the other on his left. **34**Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

35The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."

36The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar **37**and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

38There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Here's your chance to respond today as the body of Christ: Today, as you leave this place and enter your home, I hope you'll look around and ask, "What's most important to me... what matters most."

God's hope is that it is love for Him and others!

And the church says... amen!!

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