

Scripture reading: Mark 12: 28B-34

One of the scribes came to Jesus and 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.”

Then the scribe said to him,

“You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that:

“he is one, and besides him there is this no other”;

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” —

this is much more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him:

‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’

After that no one dared to ask him any questions.

Meditation:

I was driving on West Avenue in Orland Park the other day and saw on a church bill board: “Yes, we are talking about politics this Sunday.”

Pretty brave, I thought!

You can relax: I am not going to talk about politics today.

But I would like to suggest to you that today’s reading offers something for you to consider as you go to the polls this Tuesday.

Because if our faith is to be authentic

it is not simply and only for our own well being and peace of mind.

That would only make it narcissistic and egotistic.

While authentic faith does, in fact, bring us peace of heart and mind

authentic faith also strives to bring that very same peace of heart and mind to others.

Authentic faith works for justice

**Authentic faith is made visible in acts of kindness,
compassion, generosity and forgiveness....**

And these characteristics, these values

is the evidence of the Presence of the Kingdom of God...

which was the primary message of Jesus’ life:

In our reading today we hear once again the two great commandments:

“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.”

**We are reminded, once again, that they are intimately connected,
and forever linked together.**

Love of God and Love of neighbor are of one piece...

One cannot love God without loving thy neighbor.

And when you love thy neighbor, you Love God.

**Which, of course, brings to mind that famous question that arose in Luke’s gospel: just
who is my neighbor?**

Which we all know was the beginning of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

**In Jesus’ day saying there was a ‘Good Samaritan’
was inconceivable.**

There was just no such thing.

It would be like us saying: the good Isis member

Jesus broke open the boundaries of group thinking...

**he shattered the boundaries of tribal thinking
so that we might recognize the needs of ‘the other’.**

We, who profess to follow his ways,

are called to show mercy to all who are in need,

not just to those who live on our block, or in our city or even our nation...

Remember the story in Mathew 25:

that when we did it for the least among us we did it to and for him?

When we comfort, feed and companion those who are lost,

forsaken, hungry ...

when we offer mercy and forgiveness to anyone ...
we do it to Christ,
we do it for him.

Jesus' teachings were true 2,000 years ago.
and they are still just as true and relevant today.

Some Christians think that love and compassion need only to be shown
to others who think like them.

That is not what he taught.

Some Christians think that Jesus' teachings have no place
in the 'real world' that we live in.

Jesus' lived in a very real world where violence, and scarcity and domination and fear were
very real.

and he said: over and over again,
"Do Not Be Afraid"
Love your neighbor as yourself.

So that meant they were to love the blind, the lepers, the tax collectors and the prostitutes,
even though they were the ones who were considered to be sinful.

He told them to love their enemies...do not be afraid...

Granted, sometimes when a truck blows a red light
and is barreling down upon us,
being afraid is the right feeling that causes us to act immediately

for our survival.

But, when you really think about it,

how many of our daily decisions are that life and death?

All other decisions and actions,

other than those needed for our immediate survival,

that are based in fear, rarely serve the highest good....

for ourselves or anyone us.

He knew that we needed to interrupt,

to stop,

the cycles of domination and oppression

with the Power of Love.

As Martin Luther King so wisely said:

Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that.

Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.

~Martin Luther King Jr.

The powers of this world have always tried to make

the people afraid of the migrant, the orphan, the stranger, the other...

He commanded us to love our neighbors AS ourselves..

because there is no 'them' and 'us' for we are indeed all one.

Do you need shelter?

Then help your neighbor to find somewhere to call home.

Are you hungry? Then feed your neighbor.

Do you need safety? companionship? forgiveness?

Then we must offer the very same to others, all others.

This isn't the way of the world.

It isn't what most people believe..

But it is the Gospel of His Good News.

It is the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

**It is the Gospel that offers me and you and the whole world
peace, love, and hope...**

**God's Kingdom on Earth real and it is palpable,
and it shall come to be...**

This you can believe, This you can trust...

but the choice is up to you....

**How you choose isn't a political question but a heart question,
a Life question:**

Do you choose to live your life in fear or in Love?

Amen.