



Nov. 4, 2018 Mk. 12:28-34 & Dt. 6: 2-6

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other Beck

Stone, Naomi. [Fountain of Eternal Life](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Human Nature](#)

[New Melleray Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

The eternal question for all people seems to boil down to “what is my relationship to the Creator to be like?” For most of human history the question was asked out of fear. Fear of abandonment, not having enough, of meaninglessness, of judgment, fear of _____ (you fill in the blank). No one challenged that fear based piety more than Jesus. In today’s reading, Jesus reaches down deep into the unasked question to what is the greatest commandment. When he sees that the scribe “gets it” he affirms his insight that God created in order to love. Nothing was to be held back and no one was to be excluded. All the rest of the commandments would be covered if we like the scribe were to “get it”. Is there anything keeping me from “getting it”?

MARK 12:28-34

One of the **scribes** came up to Jesus, and asked him, "Which is the first of all the **commandments**?" Jesus replied: "This is the first: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord **alone**! Therefore you shall **love** the Lord your God with all your **heart**, with all your **soul**, with all your **mind**, and with all your **strength**.' This is the second, ' You shall love your **neighbor** as **yourself**.' There is no other **commandment** greater than these." The **scribe** said to him: "**Excellent, Teacher!** You are right in saying, 'He is the **One**, there is no other than he.' Yes, 'to

love him with all our **heart**, with all our **thoughts** and with all our **strength**, and to **love** our **neighbor** as **ourselves**' is worth more than any **burnt offering** or **sacrifice**." Jesus approved the **insight** of this **answer** and told him, "You are not far from the **reign of God**." And no one had the **courage** to ask him any more **questions**.

DISCUSSION QUESTION: The scribe ask a question, gets an answer and then demonstrates that he “gets it”. What could help you “get it” so you too could be able to love and be loved without conditions?

PRAYER: Teacher Jesus, this scribe today was asking an honest question. In order to really hear the answer you gave him he had to open himself to a totally new way of understanding God. When he responds to your answer with obvious insight and joy, you give him two thumbs up and send him on his way encouraged by his new awareness of God’s love. Help me to be able to ask honest questions and then receive insights and courage to live in love. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

SCRIBES: This scribe was asking an honest question. Since Jesus often interpreted the law differently than the official temple explanation, people were confused as to whom to believe.

Have you ever asked a question of someone you considered being a 'teacher' and received an answer that called into question the traditional belief? How did you deal with the confusion that engendered?

COMMANDMENTS: People had taken the original ten and broken them down into 613 bite sized pieces thinking that would insure that would protect them from inadvertently breaking one of the original ten commandments. The average person could hardly even know all the 613 let alone have the freedom to follow all the fine points of interpretation.

Think about the impact that Jesus' condensation of 613 laws to two would have had on the people. How could that change their lives? What would it have done to the professional of the scribe? For the simple people?

ALONE/ ONE: The most important tenet of the Jewish religion was that God is One. In a world where there were gods for every unexplainable or unmanageable force/reality, this made the daily life of the Jewish people very different from their neighbors *Try to imagine the difference in the lives of those who believed that there was only one God to those who had many gods. What kind of things might distinguish these peoples? What problems would the Jews encounter when the King or Caesar declared himself a god?*

How about your neighbor who still worships many gods, and is having better luck than you are having? What if your wife or husband still worships other gods?

LOVE: It is hard to define the word love since it means so many different things to different people. Jesus seems to be saying that love is that which values someone/something over all else.

What goes into deciding what or whom you love? How do you decide what you value above all else?

HEART: The ancients thought the heart was the seat of all emotions, the source of the will, and the very essence of the person. It was the center of thought, courage, and motivation.

What does it mean to love some one/thing with all your heart given this understanding of 'heart'? How do you love God with all your heart?

SOUL: We are en-souled at birth, and our life is the process of developing that soul that is unique to us for all eternity.

The soul is that which is not bound by the limits of space or time. It seems to be enriched by experiences in this life. In what ways do you 'love' God with all your soul? How is this different from how you love God with all your heart?

MIND/THOUGHTS: Our mind is where we learn, decide, and reflect. It is the place where we assign meaning to experiences. In Dt. 6:5 it is not included in the commandment Jesus is quoting. Jesus adds this dimension to the commandment.

In a system that forbids adding or subtracting anything to the scripture, Jesus is challenging the understanding of the commandment. What does adding 'mind' to the commandment do to the way people would respond to Jesus' message? How does this added dimension affect you when you are called to decide something?

STRENGTH: Strength means power. Power to move, resist, persuade, enforce, or endure.

In what ways does your love for God empower you? In what ways does the knowledge that God loves you empower you? What strengths do you have to move, resist, persuade, enforce, or endure? How do you tap into the power of God for your strength?

NEIGHBOR: A neighbor is someone who is nearby. Each day we encounter many people, some we know and some we have never met.

What does it mean to love those who are nearby as you love yourself? Why do you think that God asks this of you?

YOURSELF/ OURSELVES: We are a composite of heart, soul, mind, and strength. We coexist with all of creation and cannot be understood apart from all creation. It seems that God, our neighbor, and we are united in one whole, and we are to love each in order to love anyone.

Do you love God and others easier than you love yourself? Why? Is there anything in your belief system that leads you into this temptation? How can this affect your faith life?

EXCELLENT: Something or someone that stands out above the average is spoken of as excellent. The scribe affirms Jesus' answer and incorporates the added dimension of mind in his recounting of what Jesus had said.

This scribe illustrates that he understands Jesus' answer when he elevates it above burnt offerings and sacrifices. Jesus affirms his response. How do you think this deepened understanding affected the scribe's religious life?

TEACHER: A teacher is someone who has learned something and is able to share that information with others.

What enables you to learn something? What keeps you from being able to learn? How do you recognize a teacher? Who are teachers for you? Are you a teacher?

BURNT-OFFERING: In the temple worship many offerings were burnt. It was thought that the smoke arising from the burning could reach God. Some even thought that this way the gods were fed.

In what ways do you offer something to God that recognizes your indebtedness to God as the giver of all gifts? How can you know that your offering has reached God?

SACRIFICE: To sacrifice is to give up something/one in order to render it/them sacred.

How can loving God be better than any sacrifice or burnt offering? What does this say about Jesus' understanding of God? How would that have challenged the accepted understanding of God in Jesus' day?

INSIGHT: To have insight is to have the ability to see into something/one. It goes beyond the surface knowledge.

How did the scribe's response tell Jesus that this man was very close to his own understanding of God? Do 'insight' and 'mind' have anything to do with each other? Is this man an example of what happens when you add mind into the equation?

ANSWER: To answer is to respond to someone/thing. The answer Jesus gave put an end to the questions for the moment. This came after a long series of challenges meant to discount Jesus. Those challenging Jesus realized they were getting farther from their goal with each question.

Have you ever been in such a situation? How do you think the scribe felt when he got the answer to his question? How about the others whose only intent was to do Jesus harm?

REIGN OF GOD: A reign of someone is that period where their word is the last word and where their will is law.

What do you imagine the reign of God to be like? What images do the gospels have that can help us with this question?

COURAGE: Courage is to have the heart to do or be something beyond the usual. It comes from the Latin word for heart [cour]. No one had the courage to ask Jesus any more questions. They had 'lost heart' for the challenge.

Compare the situation with the scribe who answered Jesus and the others who challenging Jesus. Do you think that the scribe had additional courage after Jesus' response? If so, why? If not, why?

QUESTIONS: A question is a form of quest, a search for that which is still unknown. It can be a source of information or challenge. One questioner truly was open to learning something new and the others only wanted confirmation of what they already knew.

How do you sort out the difference between these two positions? What feeling do these two positions leave you with when the answer is given?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mk. 12:28 // Mt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:30 // Dt. 6:4f; Mk. 12:31 // Lev. 19:18; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8; Mk. 12:34 // Dt. 6:4; Ps. 40:7ff; Mt. 22:46; Lk. 20:40;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Dt. 6:2-6; [Ps. 18: 2-4, 47, 51](#); Heb. 7: 23-28; Mk. 12: 28-34;

Revised Common Lectionary: Ruth 1:1-18; [Ps. 146](#); Heb. 9:11-14; Mk. 12: 28-34;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

There is only One Love that will lead and carry you across when you die. If you are already at home with Love here, you will quite readily move into the eternal home of Love, which most of us call heaven. Death is not a changing of worlds, as most imagine, as much as the walls of this world infinitely expanding. If you get love here, you have found the eternal home base and you will easily and naturally live forever. Life is not about being correct but about being connected. At all costs, stay connected! Richard Rohr

Divine potentiality—beautiful, fathomless, endlessly creative—projects itself into form in order to realize fully the depths of divine love.... The act of loving brings hidden potential to full expression, and the more intimate and costly the self-giving, the more precious the quality of love revealed. Cynthia Bourgeault

Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams. Love in dreams is greedy for immediate action, rapidly performed and in the sight of all. Men will give their lives if only the ordeal does not last long but is soon over, with all looking on and applauding as though on the stage. But active love is labor and fortitude, and for some people too, perhaps, a complete science. Fyodor Dostoevsky

The basic recommendation for the good life is not to love your neighbor *as much as* you love yourself, or even *in the same way* as you love yourself. It is to love your neighbor as *actually being* yourself. The fundamental *perception of selfhood* has to change before we can have the moral world we want. Pg. 141.

Bruteau, Beatrice. *The Grand Option: Personal Transformation and a New Creation*. South Bend, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2001.

There is a stage in the spiritual life in which we find God in ourselves – this presence is a created effect of His love. It is a gift of His, to us. It remains in us. All the gifts of God are good. But if we rest in them, rather than in Him, they lose their goodness for us. So with this gift also. Merton, Thomas *Thoughts in Solitude* by. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1986, p 54.

“We can either love God because we hope for something from Him, or we can hope in Him knowing that He loves us. Sometimes we begin with the first kind of hope and grow into the second. In that case, hope and charity work together as close partners, and both rest in God. Then every act of hope may open the door to contemplation, for such hope is its own fulfillment.”

Merton, Thomas *No Man is an Island* by. A Harvest/HBJ Book, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego, 1955, p17.

You were the beloved before you were born, and you will be the beloved after you die. That's the truth of your identity. That's who you are whether you feel bad or not bad, or whatever the world makes you feel or think or experience. You belong to God from eternity to eternity. Life is just an interruption of eternity, just a little opportunity for a few years to say, “I love you, too.” Henri Nouwen.

Centuries ago, Greek culture enlightened its people about basic human qualities through stories. Only those stories survived which made the most basic truths experientially evident to the majority of the populace. In this way, people grew to know themselves better

interpersonally, learned to make wise choices and were better prepared to protect themselves interpersonally from possible misuse by others.[Explanation why certain stories were included in the gospels] McDonald, Craydon D. Journal of Pastoral Care, Summer 1991. Page 151.

Hugo of St. Victor had an axiom, which said: "Love is the eye!" Only when we see through the prism of love do we see correctly.

Admiration is part of that. When we don't admire, we aren't seeing straight, pure and simple. Fr. Ron Rolheiser -

"The fire inside us comes from the way God made us, namely, to crave the infinite and be dissatisfied with everything else until that wide embrace is consummated." Fr. Rolheiser

At some ideas you stand perplexed, especially at the sight of human sins, uncertain whether to combat it by force or by human love. Always decide, "I will combat with human love." If you make up your mind about that once and for all, you can conquer the whole world. Loving humility is a terrible force; it is the strongest of all things and there is nothing like it. Fyodor Dostoevsky

You cannot really love your neighbor unless you love yourself first. The Lord said, "Love your neighbor *as yourself*." In a strange luminosity of the Trinity I realized that I had to love myself more than I did because God loved me. I found this out by listening to myself. I grew in reverence, love, and adoration of the God who created me and dwelt within me. I realized too that loving one's self included also loving God who dwells within me. It becomes interwoven, this love affair, like a piece of weaving. The warp and woof blends in some strange and uncanny way. Then I realized in depth that I was an icon of Christ. But I saw more, and I saw with a clarity that was incredible. I saw that I was an heir to my Father's love and to all his goods. I saw that I was a sister/brother to Christ, and that I indeed always walked in the shadow of the wings of the Holy Spirit. These realities apply to all of us who know how to listen. Doherty, Catherine de Hueck. Poustenia. Ave Maria Press, Notre Dame IN. Pages 159-160.1975.

But to love another as a person we must begin by granting him his own autonomy and identity as a person. We have to love him for what he is in himself, and not for what he is to us. We have to love him for his own good, not for the good we get out of him. And this is impossible unless we are capable of a love which 'transforms' us, so to speak, into the other person, making us able to see things as he sees them, love what he loves, experience the deeper realities of his own life as if they were our own. Without sacrifice, such a transformation is utterly impossible. But unless we are capable of this kind of transformation 'into the other' while remaining ourselves, we are not yet capable of a fully human existence

Merton, Thomas. *Disputed Questions* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, New York, 1960) Page 104

The deep knowing that is wisdom arises through the simple act of giving someone or something your full attention. Attention is primordial intelligence, consciousness itself. It dissolves the barriers created by conceptual thought, and with this comes the recognition that nothing exists by itself. It joins the perceiver and the perceived in a unifying field of awareness. It is the healer of separation. Eckhart Tolle

"Awareness of death is the very bedrock of the path. Until you have developed this awareness, all other practices are obstructed."—
The Dalai Lama

Mk. 12.28–34: The greatest commandment (Mt 22.34–40; Lk10.25–28). 29: Jesus quotes Deut 6.4–5 and Lev 19.18 (combining the two quotations may not have been original to Jesus: in Luke 10.25–28, Jesus elicits the quotation from a lawyer); when Hillel was faced with a similar question he summed up the law with a dictum that is not in the Torah: "Do not do to anyone else what is hateful to you" (b. Shabb. 31a; cf. Tob 4.15; Mt 7.12). Hear, Heb "shema"; the latter became the name of the prayer recited by Jews twice a day, composed of Deut 6.4–9; 11.13–21; Num 15.37–41. 32–34: Despite the context of the episodes before and after, the scribe answers Jesus positively and warmly, and Jesus responds in kind. Matthew and Luke omit these lines. Nowhere else does Mark depict scribes positively, but cf. Mt 13.52. 33: Hos 6.6; Mic 6.6–8. 34: Not far from the kingdom is presented as a warm response from Jesus, but it may be limited. Pg. 86. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

Love is not merely the Christian duty; it is the Christian destiny. - N.T. Wright

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle B 2005-6. Pgs. 168-171.

Bausch, William. Storytelling. Twenty-third Pub. Mystic CT. 1984. TWO BROTHERS: Pages 68-69.

Shea, John. The Hour of the Unexpected. Argus Communications, Allen TX 1977.

A PRAYER FOR THE SECRET SOLIDARITY FOR THE HUMAN RACE; Page 44.

Mitchell, Stephen ed. The Enlightened Heart. Harper & row, NY. 1989. LOVE FLOWS: Page 65.

Freeman, Sean. Parables, Psalms, Prayers. Thomas More Press, Chicago. 1985. SEE HOW THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER: Pages 55-57.