



Mark 12:28-34. One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: *Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, 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." The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, *He is One and there is no other than he. And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself* is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I come before you humbly. As one who has frequently fallen into sin, I am aware of my weakness. Your great love, though, assures me that your grace can keep me on the path to holiness.

Petition: Lord, help me live according to the New Testament.

1. Getting Beyond Myself: A scribe asks Jesus a pointed question and assumes that there is only a one-step answer. In fact, Jesus goes beyond a one-step response and links love of God with love of neighbor. "Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness" (2 John 1:9). Christianity is not strictly a me-and-Jesus affair; such a faith can fall into self-centeredness and disdain for the world. We are called to be leaven in the world, to bring light to the darkness. Jesus wants us to be his arms and legs and voice in the world. Am I content to say prayers and make weekly Mass — but to do little else? Might God be asking me to get more involved in the parish? In the school? In some kind of charity work?

2. The Gift of Self Is the Greatest Gift: The scribe senses that burnt offerings are not enough. Burnt offerings are something external to us. We let

go of things (money, used clothes, old furniture) much faster than we let go of our time, our way of thinking. We give things but not ourselves. Am I loathe to give more of my time to help the Church? Why?

3. Fear of God's Demands: The scribes understood that Jesus was raising the bar on religious observance. Sacrificing a sheep or a goat wasn't enough anymore. Christ wanted them to give of themselves — and that left them uneasy. The Old Testament sacrifices were giving way to the New Testament sacrifice — the very sacrifice of self. That's what Jesus wanted; that's what Jesus himself gave. He gave himself up to a cross to confound our self-love. Does it scare me to die to myself? To my whims? What is Jesus asking of me that makes me uneasy?

Conversation with Christ: Lord, you know it's costly for me to let go of my own way of thinking, to give of my time. Help me realize that this may be the more perfect offering that you seek from me.

Resolution: I will offer to do a favor that is costly in personal terms.