



Not Far from the Kingdom

November 4, 2018

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: Jesus Christ, where else can I turn each day but to you? One day, I will make that final turn to you, and it will last for all eternity. Yet as in everything else, you set the pace, you take the initiative, and you are the protagonist. You will turn and look my way first and I, as I strive daily to do, will respond and gaze back into your eyes. This moment of prayer is a rehearsal for that final turn to you. Amen.

Petition: Lord, teach me to walk the way of generous love.

1. Mapping It Out! All of us can admire complete and faithful love. Christ's interaction with the scribe in today's Gospel spells out for us this love. This is the great

commandment. This is the key to our lives. This is a simple, all-embracing principle by which to live. Moreover, this is exactly what a "click-here" world wants. We want to simplify our lives. Christ makes the map of our life simple. We need to act out of love for God and unite all our strength, heart, soul and mind in this one endeavor: Love God. Are we complicating our lives unnecessarily?

2. Eyes on the Destination! Jesus Christ has made of his earthly life a perfect example of how we are to live. He demonstrates an unclouded love. He is truly single-hearted! He loves his father with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. We need to keep our eyes on Christ as our final destination. We can imitate him in his love for his Father. As Romano Guardini states, "The Lord's entire life proceeds from his Father's will. But it is in this [wisdom] that he is truly himself. He is truly himself in that he does not do his own will, but the will of his Father, and so fulfills the deepest and most private principle of his being. There is a word for this: love!" Could it be simpler?

3. Not Far! If we want to reach a destination, the shortest path is a straight line. When we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, we straighten our path. When we have other loves, competitive loves, loves that leave God out of our actions, that make us lose momentum and wander in all sorts of directions, we are not going to get close to the Kingdom. Can we not unite everything in a single-hearted love for God? If we do, then every email, phone call, meal, sporting event, errand, business meeting and class -- absolutely everything -- will take us to the Kingdom and not away from it.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I want a single-hearted life. I was made for you, and my heart will be restless until it rests in you. Instruct me in a love for you that will be exercised in all I do today and every day of my life until I surrender my heart, soul, mind and strength to you for all eternity.

Resolution: I will consciously live as much of this day as possible as an exercise of love for God, offering him each moment, activity and prayer.