



## Gospel Mk 12:28-34

*This is the first commandment, and the second is similar to it.*

One of the scribes came up to Jesus and put a question to him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must 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 must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.' The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared to question him any more.

## Reflection by Greg Sunter

Generally, in the gospels, the scribes are shown as antagonistic towards Jesus and when we begin this passage we may be expecting a trap being laid by the scribe. In Jewish tradition, a lot of teaching occurs through a question and answer style and often the question is related to a particular teaching from Torah. Here, the scribe approaches Jesus as a teacher, a rabbi, and poses a question just as he would to any other worthy teacher. He asks which of the commandments Jesus regards to be foremost. This could be an opening question to any teacher and one would expect it to be the start of a long conversation. Neither of the commandments Jesus quotes come from the Ten Commandments with which we are most familiar, but, rather, they come from other parts of Torah (the Law). His qualification of the first commandment – to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength – is a way of capturing the whole person. What Jesus is saying is to love God completely and utterly with your whole person. Then he follows up and adds another commandment – 'You must love your neighbour as yourself.' The scribe agrees with Jesus' teaching and adds that these are far more important than offering sacrifice. This is a pretty controversial statement from a scribe! Sacrifice has been the official form of prayer practised in the Temple for a very long time and he suggests that love of God and love of neighbour are far more important! It is because of this understanding about the priority of love over religious practice – the hallmark of the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaims – that Jesus pronounces the scribe to be 'not far from the kingdom of God.'

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# The Living Word

**Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B**

**31 October 2021**

## First Reading Dt 6:2-6

*Hear Israel, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.*

Moses said to the people: 'If you fear the Lord your God all the days of your life and if you keep all his laws and commandments which I lay on you, you will have a long life, you and your son and your grandson. Listen then, Israel, keep and observe what will make you prosper and give you great increase, as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you, giving you a land where milk and honey flow.

'Listen, Israel: The Lord our God is the one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let these words I urge on you today be written on your heart.'

## Responsorial Psalm

**Ps 17:2-4. 47. 51. R.v.2**

*(R.) I love you Lord, my strength.*

1. I love you, Lord, my strength,  
my rock, my fortress, my saviour.  
My God is the rock where I take refuge;  
my shield, my mighty help, my  
stronghold.  
The Lord is worthy of all praise:  
when I call I am saved from my foes.  
(R)
2. Long life to the Lord, my rock!  
Praised be to the God that saves me.  
He has given great victories to his king  
and shown love for his anointed. (R)

## Second Reading Heb 7:23-28

*This one, because he remains for ever, has an eternal priesthood.*

There used to be a great number of priests under the former covenant, because death put an end to each one of them; but this one, Christ, because he remains for ever, can never lose his priesthood. It follows, then, that his power to save is utterly certain, since he is living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through him.

To suit us, the ideal high priest would have to be holy, innocent and uncontaminated, beyond the influence of sinners, and raised up above the heavens; one who would not need to offer sacrifices every day, as the other high priests do for their own sins and then for those of the people, because he has done this once and for all by offering himself. The Law appoints high priests who are men subject to weakness; but the promise on oath, which came after the Law, appointed the Son who is made perfect for ever.

## Gospel Acclamation Jn 14:23

**Alleluia, alleluia!**

**All who love me will keep my words,  
and my Father will love them and we  
will come to them.**

**Alleluia!**