

Mark 12:28-34 "Love God"

1. Part of the human condition is that we wrestle with existential questions. (eg. Why am I here? What is the meaning, the purpose of my existence? Is there more to life than this?) What kinds of answers does our culture offer to such questions and are they satisfying?

Read Mark 12:28-34

The scribe is asking an existential question. It doesn't sound like one, so we have to hear it from the scribe's perspective. As a scribe he is committed to the Torah, the law of God, and would carry some core assumptions. Namely that humanity was created by God, and as such God holds the key to the meaning and purpose of our existence. The law is the means by which God communicates that purpose. So to ask what is the most important command, what is the law really after, is to ask why was I created? What is the purpose / meaning of my existence?

2. Reflecting on the passage you just read what is Jesus' answer to that existential question and does that resonate with your experience and understanding of human life?

Jesus' response resonates with the scribe but then he adds this is much more or exceeds whole burnt offerings or sacrifices. In the scribes mind life works like this. God wants us to live the good life, to live in obedience to the law, to try our best, but when we fail we can go to the temple and offer sacrifices. I can do 80% on my own, the other 20% I can get covered by a sacrifice. To which Jesus responds "You are not far from the kingdom".

3. What is Jesus affirming about the scribes' response? How is being in such a place a necessary part of the process for transforming the human heart toward love?

In the sermon Tim pointed out that Jesus highlights the Shema as the most important command. "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" The command is to see the living God as Lord of all and alone worthy of our worship.

4. If the primary command is to worship – it tells us that the problems in our world, in our lives, arise from loving things other than God – from ascribing ultimate worth to things other than God. How does loving things other than God (which the bible defines as idolatry) lead to the problems in our world, in our lives?

Read 1 John 4: 7-12, 19

1. These verses express a theme found throughout scripture, that our love of God flows from his love of us ultimately in Jesus. In what ways does coming to know the love of God more and more in Jesus lead to a love of God expressed in worship?
2. We become what we worship. How does our worship of the living God in Jesus lead us to reflect his love in our relationships with others?