

Series: “*Mark: The Servant in Action*”

Main Idea: In Mark 12:28-37, Jesus addresses the question of what matters most to God. In the first scene, He identifies the most important command (28-34). In the second scene, He identifies the most important person (35-37).

- I. The most important command (28-34)
 - A. A scribe asks Jesus a question (28).
 1. Some people think God is pleased with legalism.
 2. Some people think God is pleased with license.
 - B. Jesus answers the question (29-31).
 1. Love God with all you are and have.
 2. Love your neighbor with the same consideration you give yourself.
 - C. The scribe compliments Jesus (32-33).
 1. Obeying God is important.
 2. Loving God and neighbor is most important.
 - D. Jesus commends the scribe (34).
 1. What matters in God’s kingdom is not natural for us.
 2. What matters in God’s kingdom is why we need a Savior.
- II. The most important person (35-37)
 - A. Jesus asks a question about the scribes’ view of Messiah (35).
 1. They believed in Messiah.
 2. They believed in a deficient Messiah.
 - B. Jesus asks a question about David’s view of Messiah (36-37).
 1. He believed what we must believe.
 2. He did what we must do.

Take Inventory: Does what matters most to God matter most to me?

1. Is there evidence that I love God?
2. Is there evidence that I love my neighbor?
3. Is there evidence that I know the Messiah?

Today’s message is entitled, “*What Matters Most.*” Frankly, as the title indicates, there’s nothing we could talk about this morning that’s more important. Jesus Himself is going to address the question of what matters *most*, not in the court of human opinion, but *to God*.

As we open our Bibles to Mark 12, we’re entering a battleground, a spiritual warfare. We see two trials taking place in Mark 12-13. In the first, religion puts Jesus on trial. That’s verses 12 to 34. Religion has a problem with Jesus. Religious people don’t know what to do with Jesus. Oh, they can take a few of His words (and ignore the rest) and turn Him into a hero. But the real Jesus, the One who says they need to repent and put their total trust in Him, they have a problem with Him.

And of course, He has a problem with them. So, Jesus puts religion on trial beginning in 12:35 all the way through chapter 13. Let’s read our text.

Scripture Reading: Mark 12:28-37

What matters most to God? It’s easy to get sidetracked, to think we’re okay with God because our lives are filled with religious activity. Such was the case in his early years with John Wesley.

Wesley was born in 1703, the fifteenth child of a minister Samuel and his wife Susanna Wesley. Wesley’s mother faithfully taught him the Bible. He later obtained a solid formal biblical education and eventually was ordained as a priest in the Church of England in 1728. Kent Hughes shares what happened next:

**Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2004.

“Returning to Oxford, he joined a group of undergraduates led by his brother, Charles, and the later-to-be-great evangelist George Whitefield, a group dedicated to building a holy life. It was derisively nicknamed by fellow Oxfordians the ‘Holy Club.’ Though Wesley was not yet truly converted, he met with these men for prayer, the study of the Greek New Testament, and devotional exercises.

“He set aside an hour each day for private prayer and reflections. He took the sacrament of Holy Communion each week, and set himself to conquer every sin. He fasted twice a week, visited the prisons, and assisted the poor and the sick. Doing all this helped him imagine he was a Christian.

“In 1735, still unconverted, he accepted an invitation from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to become a missionary to the American Indians in Georgia. It was a great fiasco. He utterly failed as a missionary—undergoing miserable conflicts with his colleagues, and almost dying of disease. When he returned to England, he wrote: ‘I went to America to convert the Indians; but, oh, who shall convert me?’ His mission experience taught him the wickedness and waywardness of his own heart.

“However, not all was lost, because in his travels aboard ship he met some German Moravian Christians whose simple faith made a great impression on him. When he returned to London, he sought out one of their leaders. Through a series of conversations, to quote Wesley’s own words, he was ‘clearly convicted of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved.’

“Then, on the morning of May 24, 1738, something happened that Wesley would never forget. He opened his Bible haphazardly, and his eyes fell on the text of Mark 12:34—‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ Wesley said that the words reassured him. And well they should, because before he went to bed that night, he crossed that invisible line into the Kingdom of God. This text was to be Wesley’s life verse, a reminder of the shape of his life for the first thirty-five years of his existence.”²

Wesley’s verse is in today’s text, and today’s text addresses our question. *What matters most to God?* It so easy to turn pleasing God into a list, to think that if we DO certain things and DON’T do others, we can merit God’s pleasure. But that’s not true. What does matter most? In the two scenes of Mark 12:28-37, Jesus tells us. In the first scene, He identifies the most important command (28-34). In the second scene, He identifies the most important person (35-37).

I. The most important command (28-34)

The context is Jesus’ passion week. He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the applause of the crowd and the scorn of the religious leaders. Then on Monday Jesus entered the temple and started cleaning house. On Tuesday, in tag team fashion, the Jewish leaders came at Jesus and tried to trap Him in His Words.

11:27 The chief priests, scribes, and elders challenged His authority.

12:13 The Pharisees and Herodians asked Him a question about taxes.

12:18 The Sadducees came with a doctrinal question about the resurrection.

Not surprisingly, Jesus handled each question with wisdom and perfect tact. That seemed to impress one particular man, a scribe, who approached Jesus in the passage before us. He, too, had a question for Jesus.

² Kent Hughes, p. 114.

Notice verse 28, “And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, ‘Which commandment is the most important of all?’”

A. A scribe asks Jesus a question (28). In the NIV, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” In other words, *what matters most to God?* That’s a vital question. How we answer it has eternal implications.

The parallel passage, Matthew 22:34, indicates this man was an expert in the Mosaic law and that the Pharisees had sent him after Jesus silenced their rivals the Sadducees.

There’s a background to this scribe’s question. The rabbis counted the commands in the Old Testament Law. There were 613 of them, 365 which are negative and 248 positive.

Furthermore, the Jews typically divided the commands into two categories, the *heavy* and the *light* precepts. The penalty for violating the *heavy* commands was death. Two rabbinic schools, the strict school of Shammai and the more liberal school of Hillel, differed sharply over which commands qualified as *heavy* and which ones were *light*. Typically, the following were considered *heavy* commands: laws regarding circumcision, the eating of unleavened bread, Sabbath observance, sacrifice and purification.³

What do you say, Jesus? Which command is most important?

One time a Gentile said to the famous rabbi Hillel, “Make me a proselyte on condition that you teach me the whole law while I stand on one foot.” Hillel responded, “What you hate for yourself, do not do to your neighbor: this is the whole law, the rest is commentary; go and learn.”⁴

Even in our day there is debate about the very same subject.

1. *Some people think God is pleased with legalism.* So they promote a brand of Christianity full of rules. Do this, and this, and don’t do this...and God will be pleased. On the other hand...

2. *Some people think God is pleased with license. No rules!* is their motto. *Freedom!* is their cry. It’s the heart that matters to God, they insist. They gut Christianity of any sense of obligation.

Both sides need to give serious attention to what Jesus said next...

B. Jesus answers the question (29-31).

In verse 29, “Jesus answered, ‘The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’” Jesus begins by reciting what the Jews call the Shema, a word meaning “Hear” which comes from the first word of Deuteronomy 6:4. Pious Jews recite this confession of faith every morning and evening. “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.” It was with this sentence that the service of the synagogue always began and still begins.

The full Shema is Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41. Devout Jews put these three passages inside phylacteries, little boxes worn on the worshipper’s forehead and wrist during prayer times. The Shema is also put in a little box called the Mezuzah which was and is attached to the door of every devout Jewish house and the door of every room within it.⁵

The Lord is one. There are not many gods, but one. That being the case, what this one God says matters. We may take or leave others’ counsel, but not His. What He says

³ J. D. Jones, p. 466.

⁴ Taken from Wessel, p. 737.

⁵ Barclay, p. 295.

deserves our utmost respect. What He commands demands our absolute obedience. And just what does He command? It boils down to this.

He says in verse 30, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:5.

Love. That is, value, cherish, give yourself to. To whom?

Love the Lord. The Highest One, the One who is not on the same plane with us. He is the Master, owner, and king, and as such is to be *our* master, owner, and king.

Love the Lord your God. This is highly personal. The One you love must be *your* Lord and God. It follows then that you would love Him like this...

With all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Note the word Jesus repeats four times. **All, all, all, all.** What God desires is not a half-committed, partial, leftover kind of love. No. We are to love Him from the core of our being, with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

To put it simply, Jesus is telling us this.

1. *Love God with all you are and have.* Yes, serve Him for this is His world, but first and foremost, *love* Him. Give Him your heart and affection. Put Him first in the throne-room of your soul. Think of Him constantly in your mind. Devote your strength to Him and Him alone. Love the Lord your God with all you are and have. This is the most important commandment in God’s Word.

It really is. If we love God, everything else falls in place. Every time I sin it’s because I failed to love God. When I hurt my wife with a harsh word it’s because I failed to use my tongue in a way that expressed my appreciation for God and His good gift to me in Sherry. If I lust after pornography, it’s because I am failing in that moment to demonstrate love for my God.

It’s so fundamental that Augustine once said, “Love God—and do what you like.”

At this point, Jesus offers His questioner a bonus. “You asked for the most important command and I gave it to you. Here’s number two.”

Notice verse 31, “The second is this.” Matthew 22:39 says, “The second is *like it.*” In other words, these two commands are related, in fact, inseparable.

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus is quoting Leviticus 19:18.

Love your neighbor, He said. In other words, love the person next to you. This is not your world so don’t live like it is. Look around you. See your fellow human being. And love him.

That’s significant. The same word Jesus just used to sum up our responsibility to God He now uses to sum up our responsibility to each other. *Love*, from *agapao*, a wonderful action word which God Himself exhibits (“For God so loved the world”). And what does Jesus say is the standard for this love of neighbor?

Love your neighbor as yourself. We’re so prone to think of self. If I’m hungry I go looking for food. If I’m tired, I make sure I get rest. If I have a need, I do my best to meet that need. I have an instinctive resolve to take care of myself. But God (in Leviticus) and Jesus (in Mark 12) commands me to transfer that intense devotion to self to my neighbor.

To put it another way...

2. *Love your neighbor with the same consideration you give yourself.* Why does the fighting continue in Ukraine, and in Washington, for that matter. It’s the same reason for the fighting that occurs behind the closed doors of your home and mine. We fail to love the other person with the same tenacity with which we love ourselves.

And then Jesus concluded in verse 31, “There is no other commandment greater than these.” This is what matters most. Love God. Love neighbor. Some try to turn this into three commands, love God, love neighbor, and love self, and even insist you can’t love God and neighbor until you love yourself first. But Jesus clearly said there are two commandments. As you love yourself isn’t a command. In fact, it’s the problem. It’s actually an evidence of the last days, as Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:2, “For people will be lovers of self.”

Everyone loves self. Even the person who says he hates himself has a very high view of himself. It’s why he’s so upset with what he is getting out of life. He thinks he deserve better.

This is what sin is, and it shows up in self-promoting and self-abasing ways. We are enslaved to self. We want to be made much of, by others, and by God.

That’s why we need His commands. Self-love is a dead-end trap. It never satisfies. It always wants more. These commands are for our good. We need to learn to love God and love neighbor just like we so naturally love ourselves.

This is what God says to us in the Ten Commandments. Commands #1-4 are all about loving God. Commands #5-10 are all about loving neighbor. This is what He deserves, yes, and what will bring us joy too.

Jesus uses the same framework in His beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger for righteousness. He identifies the vertical. This is the heart of the person who loves God. Then He says, blessed are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. These address the horizontal, what’s involved in loving neighbor.

Do you see the contrast? According to the rabbis, the essential things were circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, and sacrifice. This is always the approach religion takes. Not so, says Jesus. What’s essential is a heart that loves God and neighbor.

My friend, it’s so easy to let religious ritual take the place of love. Case in point, the story of the Good Samaritan. A priest and Levite saw a wounded and bleeding man on the side of the road but refused to help him. Their justification? They were on their way to worship in the temple. They were willing to let a man bleed to death, with the self-justifying notion that they were very religious.

Notice what happened next in our passage. It’s rather shocking.

C. The scribe compliments Jesus (32-33). Verse 32 says, “And the scribe said to him, ‘You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.’”

You are *right*? Does he mean it? So it appears. And what does he compliment first? He says, “You have truly said *that he is one*.” Judaism is monotheistic. The Jews believe there is one God. This has been a point of contention for the Jewish leaders with Jesus again and again.

Remember the scene in John 10? Jesus said in verse 30, “I and the Father are one.” And in verse 31, “The Jews picked up stones again to stone him.” To which Jesus answered them in verses 32, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” And the Jews answered him in verse 33, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” To which Jesus answered them in verses 34-38, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son

of God'? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." At which point verse 39 says, "Again they sought to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands."

Yes, back and forth they'd gone over this point. So when the scribe heard Jesus quote the Shema, affirming that the Lord our God, the Lord is one, he breathed a sigh of relief, and said, "You are right, Teacher!"

But he didn't stop there. He took his compliment further, saying in verse 33, "And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

This Jewish teacher liked what he heard. He agrees with Jesus on two points.

1. *Obedying God is important.* He mentions burnt offerings and sacrifices at the end of verse 33. Were those necessary? Absolutely. God commanded them. Were they important? Yes. A first century Jew could not be right with God apart from them. Was obeying God important? Yes, and it still is. However...

2. *Loving God and neighbor is most important.* "To love God...and to love your neighbor *is more important* than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Is going to church is important? Yes. Is having your devotions each day important? Yes. Is giving your tithe to the Lord important? Yes. Is serving in a ministry important? Yes. But these are but means to an end. They are meant to teach and help us to do what *is most important, to love God, and to love neighbor.*

Both points are vital. On the one hand, God is not satisfied with hollow religious activity. Neither, on the other hand, is He pleased with love-talk that fails to show up in tangible ways in one's life, such as in devotions, faithful church attendance, and Christian service. Love for God and neighbor is what matters most, yes, and if we have them, it will show up in what James calls "pure religion" (James 1:27).

So the scribe commends Jesus. And what does Jesus do?

D. Jesus commends the scribe (34). "And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions."

Not far from the kingdom. Let's chew on that phrase. It teaches us two realities.

1. *What matters in God's kingdom is not natural for us.* I'll say it again. It is NOT NATURAL. Religion is natural. Loving God and neighbor is NOT natural, not for a sinner.

Let's be honest. Religion has been a big thing in the Bible Belt for a long time. Many people have "prayed a prayer" or "walked an aisle" at some point in their lives. They may have a Bible on their coffee table, and a picture of Jesus on a wall in their house. Ask them if they're going to heaven when they die and you'll hear, "Sure." Ask them why and they'll say, "Because though I'm not perfect, I've tried to live a good life."

It's a works-based approach to heaven. Just like the Pharisees had in Jesus' day, with their 613 commands. As long as you did your best at keeping the laws, you made it.

But this scribe grasped what others missed. Personal merit isn't enough. Doing your best isn't enough. God is concerned about something deeper. God requires something much more fundamental. *Love.* We must love Him with all that we are, and we must love our neighbor the same way we love ourselves. That's what He requires.

And that's what we lack. The reason we lack it is because we have a heart problem, which we inherited from our parents, who inherited it from theirs. The first man, Adam,

disobeyed God's command, and thus alienated the human race from the Creator. Ever since that fateful day, we have all entered the world with the same self-focused, sinful bent. What's natural to us is not loving God and neighbor. What's natural is pleasing self. What's natural is sin.

This brings us to the second reality.

2. *What matters most in God's kingdom is why we need a Savior.* The reason God sent His Son into the world is precisely this. We have failed to love God and neighbor and lack the ability to do so. We are law-breakers.

But Jesus Christ came to the world to be a substitute for law-breakers. He died in the place of rebels to make atonement for their failure. Three days later He conquered the grave. God promises to forgive any transgressor who will repent and believe in His Son.

Yet that's not all. God also gives the merit of His Son to whoever will receive His Son and believe in His name (John 1:12). In other words, God gives the forgiven lawbreaker the ability to love God and neighbor, through the power of His Son.

You are not far from the kingdom, Jesus told the teacher. Not far. What does that imply? Close, but not quite there. Did he ever make it? We don't know. We are nowhere told that this man actually did enter God's kingdom.

Ponder J. D. Jones' assessment: "'Not far from the Kingdom,' how aptly it describes the condition of many in our own midst. They have a wistful desire for the truth, they have an admiration for Christ, they have a keen interest in religion, they come regularly to worship and yet never take the final step and openly avow their faith in Christ. 'Not far from the Kingdom'—and yet not in it."⁶

The old adage is true. *A miss is as good as a mile.* Did you realize it's possible to be within an inch of heaven and yet go to hell? We can be a church-goer, a tithe-giver, even a church member. We may appear quite religious to the human eye, and yet come short of the Kingdom. To enter God's Kingdom, it's not enough to admire Christ. We must *receive* Him into our lives and *believe* in Him.

Back to John Wesley again. For 35 years Wesley was extremely religious, but it wasn't until he came to the end of himself that Mark 12:34 rang true for him: "You are not far from the kingdom of God." How did he enter the kingdom? His own journal tells the story of his second birth:

"In the evening I went very unwittingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, *Christ alone*, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, *even mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death."⁷

After that God used Wesley in mighty ways. He preached 42,000 sermons. He averaged 4,500 miles a year. He rode sixty to seventy miles a day and preached an average of three sermons a day. When he was eighty-three he wrote in his diary, "I am a wonder to myself, I am never tired, either with preaching, writing, or traveling!"⁸

But for Wesley, as it must for you and me, it all began the day he trusted Christ alone with simple child-like faith. It's not enough merely to be *near* the kingdom.

⁶ J. D. Jones, p. 470.

⁷ Taken from Kent Hughes, p. 119.

⁸ Kent Hughes, p. 119.

What matters most to God? To love God and to love your neighbor, that's what matters, that's the most important command. And that's why we need Christ.

But who exactly is the Christ that can save sinners? That question is the very issue Jesus addressed in the next scene.

II. The most important person (35-37)

In order to fulfill the most important command, you must trust in the most important person. You must believe in Christ. But know this. It must be the real Christ. The truth is, many believe in a different Christ.

Jesus exposes this very problem in verse 35. "And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, 'How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?'"

Notice the setting. Jesus is still in the temple courts. He has silenced His critics by skillfully answering their questions. Now He takes the offensive with a question of His own.

A. Jesus asks a question about the scribes' view of Messiah (35). Jesus refers to the scribes (NIV 'teachers of the law'). We just met a scribe in the previous account. Jesus now asks the crowd what the scribes believe? About what subject? About the Christ. *How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?*

Keep in mind that the word "Christ" is not a name, but a title. *Christos* and *Messiah* are the Greek and Hebrew for the same word. They both mean *the Anointed One*. In ancient times a man was made king by being anointed with oil, hence, the reason for this title. The Christ is the Messiah, the Anointed One that God promised to send to be King.

Based on Jesus' question, we gain two insights regarding the scribes.

1. *They believed in Messiah.* They talked about Messiah, a lot in fact. They were saying, according to Jesus, "The Christ is the Son of David." Of all the titles for Messiah in Scripture, this one is probably the most common, *Son of David*. The scribes loved to talk about the promise God made to King David. They talked and talked about the fact that one day, one of David's descendants would come and establish God's eternal kingdom. Yes indeed, the scribes believed in Messiah.

2. *They believed in a deficient Messiah.* That's Jesus' point in asking this question. "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?"

You say, "What's wrong with that? The Messiah was to be the son of David, wasn't He?" Yes, He was. But that's not all He was to be. He had to be more than David's son, if he was going to undo the problem that David had, that every human being has.

And this was the problem with the Jewish leaders in Jesus' day. Their Messiah was too small. He was the son of David, but only the son of David. He would rescue them, yes, that's what they believed. But from what? From political oppression? Yes. From economic deprivation? Yes. From sin, their *own* sin? No. They didn't see themselves as needing that kind of Messiah.

My friend, if we refuse to believe in Messiah, we will not enter God's kingdom, for sure. But know this. If we believe in a deficient Messiah, we will suffer the same fate and miss God's kingdom.

You say, "What must I believe about Messiah?" You must believe what David himself believed. "What's that?" you ask. Jesus tells us in the next two verses.

B. Jesus asks a question about David's view of Messiah (36-37). And what was David's view? Notice verses 36-37, "David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.' ' 37

David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?' And the great throng heard him gladly."

Jesus wanted the scribes (and us) to think carefully about David's view of Messiah. So let's do that. As we think carefully about David, we are impressed by two things. First, what he believed. And second, what he did.

1. *He believed what we must believe.* Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1. He specifically reveals two characteristics of this verse. One, these are the words of David. And two, these are the words of God the Holy Spirit. You say, "Was the Bible written by men or God?" The answer is *yes*. God the Holy Spirit used men to write it (see 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Now notice specifically what David said. "The Lord said to my Lord." David is referring to two persons, both identified by the term 'Lord.'

First, the *Lord* said. That's a reference to God, the one who possesses all authority in heaven and earth. Then, the Lord said to *my Lord*. That's a reference to the coming Messiah, one who would enter the world as a descendant of David.

Don't miss that. David refers to this coming ruler as one who is superior to him. He calls Him, *my Lord*.

Notice also that according to David, the Lord said something to this Messiah who would come. He said, "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet." The Messiah that David predicted received permission from God Almighty to sit at His right hand. But that's not all. God Himself said He would place all enemies under the feet of this descendant of David.

Let this sink in. David believed and declared that the Messiah would be two things. He would be his descendant, *and* his Lord. He would be a man, *and* one had the right to sit a throne right next to God.

David had many descendants who ruled on his throne, starting with Solomon. But only one fits this description, the One born to a virgin in David's line who conceived by God the Holy Spirit, the One the Scriptures call both "The Son of Man", *and* "The Son of God." That One, of course, is the One asking the question we're pondering.

Beloved, David believed that the Messiah was both *man* (his son) and *God* (his Lord). Do you believe that? To be saved from your sins you must believe in that Messiah. Yes, David believed what we must believe.

2. *He did what we must do.* What did David do? He made a public declaration. What was it? He declared that the coming Messiah was none other than, "my Lord." Hear his profession of faith, my friend.

He is *my Lord*. This is personal. Though king of Israel, David willingly submits himself to this Person.

He is my *Lord*. The word Lord in the Greek text of Mark 12:36 is *kurios*. In the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, it's this word that regularly translates God's name *Yahweh*. That's who David acknowledges Messiah to be, *Yahweh*, God Himself.

My friend, the Messiah came to reconcile sinners like David, and you and me, back to God. It's why He died on the cross, and there paid sin's penalty. And why He later rose from the dead. He did this to save sinners.

But to be saved, you and I must do what David did. We must come to grips with the Most Important Person. Jesus must be more than merely our example and friend, although He certainly is a friend of sinners. He must be our God and Master and Savior.

This morning we've asked the question, "What matters most?" We've also found the answer to the question, the one given by Jesus Himself. Now it's time to take inventory.

Take Inventory: Does what matters most to God matter most to me?

Be honest with yourself as you answer these three probing questions.

1. *Is there evidence that I love God?* This is the first and greatest commandment. Love God. Is there evidence that you do? What kind of evidence? you ask. 1 John 5:3 says, “This is love for God: to obey His commands.” If you love God you will obey His Word. Is there any command in the Bible you are presently neglecting? Is there anything that God has told you to do that you are refusing to do? Again, salvation is a gift, not the result of our obedience. But when God saves us, He gives us a heart that loves Him more than anything. And this love shows up by joyful obedience.

2. *Is there evidence that I love my neighbor?* Your neighbor is whoever God puts in your life. Your spouse, your kids, the fellow next door, the person at the border, the people living in countries who have yet to hear about Jesus. Are we seeking to meet the needs of these people with the same tenacity with which we care for our own needs? By nature, we are self-focused. But that’s why Jesus came, to transform us into people who truly love God and neighbor. Is there evidence of this transformation in your life?

3. *Is there evidence that I know the Messiah?* The real Messiah. Jesus Himself. If you know Him, you will not be content to give Him a corner of your life, nor will He be content to live in that corner. He who is Lord deserves and desires to be treated as Lord in your life and mine. Confess Him today and this week, as did David. He is *my Lord*.

Closing Song: #385 “*Near the Cross*” (all four verses)

Right Hand of Fellowship (for Preston and Brooklyn Hall)

Benediction of the month: Revelation 11:15b (NIV84) “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

Community Group Discussion:

1. Today’s message from Mark 12:28-37 was entitled, “*What Matters Most.*” After reading the passage again, discuss what most captures your attention in this text.
2. Beginning in Mark 11:27 and into Mark 12, the religious leaders try several times to trick Jesus into saying something that they could use against Him. Why were Israel’s religious leaders so antagonistic to Jesus? What do we learn about Jesus from how He handled their attacks?
3. In Mark 12:28, a scribe approached Jesus. What stands out about this man? How is he like the other leaders, and how is he different from them?
4. According to Jesus in verses 29-31, what matter most? Why do you think Jesus identifies *two* commands in His answer rather than one?
5. How does the scribe respond to Jesus in verses 32-33? Why does Jesus tell the scribe in verse 34 that he is “not far from the kingdom of God”?
6. What question does Jesus ask about the scribes in verse 36, and why? What do we learn about Jesus from this? What do we learn about how to minister to lost religious people?