

Significant Questions – Tuesday of Holy Week

Lenten Midweek #3 – 3/3/21 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Mark 12:28-37 Pastor Keith Besel

Introduction

- ✘ You and I ask questions every day. Some of them are more routine in nature, such as, “What’s for dinner?” or, “How did things go at work today?” or, “Did you watch the end of the hockey game yesterday?”
 - ➔ While other questions that we ask are much more significant, like, “Will you marry me?” or, “Did you get the job?” or, “Is the biopsy cancerous?” Those are not everyday questions but very significant and potentially life-changing.
- ✘ Today, we continue our Lenten series with a look at what took place on Tuesday of Holy Week. Last Wednesday we saw how, on Monday, Jesus took significant action in clearing the temple grounds of the merchants and money-changers in order to keep the opportunity for worship open to all and more faithful to God.
 - ➔ Now, on Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus confronts the people with two very significant questions; one that a scribe asks of Jesus and another that Jesus asks the scribe and crowds in the temple area.

I. We come up short regarding Question #1

- ✘ Jesus has just been in a conversation with the Sadducees; the Jewish group of religious leaders who do not believe in a resurrection from the dead. It just so happened, though, that one individual scribe heard Jesus answering the Sadducees, who were trying to trap Him and he was impressed.
 - ➔ You see, the Sadducees didn’t really get along with the scribes and the Pharisees. So this scribe would have relished watching Jesus win a debate over the Sadducees.
- ✘ This scribe, whose job it was to painstakingly write down and copy the hundreds and hundreds of commandments that the Pharisees came up with to control the people’s actions, words and lives, is now genuinely interested in this great teacher that he sees in the temple.
 - ➔ He doesn’t appear to be trying to trick Jesus. He actually wants to hear from Jesus: “Which commandment is the most important of all?” (v. 28)
- ✘ Jesus responded with a two-part answer that served as a summary for all of God’s Law. But it wasn’t a new answer. He quotes the Old Testament in Deuteronomy six and says, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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’” (vv. 29–30).
 - ➔ Notice that His answer begins, not with what we should or shouldn’t do, but instead He begins with God; with God’s being; with God’s essence. “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” This is what sets God apart from all of the other religions and so-called gods. He is one divine being – the only one!
 - ➔ In the Old Testament it was the Canaanites who believed in many gods, while at the time of Jesus it was the Greeks and Romans who were both polytheistic cultures; believing in “many gods”. But the only true God is one. And since we confess and believe in Him alone, than He is

the One whom we should love with everything that we have or we don't really believe that He is God!

- ✘ But Jesus isn't finished answering the scribe's question. He adds, "The second (great commandment) is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (v 31).

→ Here again, Jesus is quoting the Old Testament, this time in Leviticus 19:18. In these two responses, Jesus has correctly summarized all of God's Law; what we call today, both tables, or tablets of the Ten Commandments.

- ✘ If it were possible for you and me to love the Lord our God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength seven days a week and twenty-four hours each day, we would never violate any of the first three commandments – the first table of the Law. We would never fail to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We would never misuse His name. And we would always remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy in our lives.

→ But of course we all know how feeble and faint our love of God can be at times; how many times we put ourselves first and keep God a distant second.

- ✘ And, if we could truly love our neighbor as ourselves – always and perfectly, then we would never break the fourth through the tenth Commandments – what we call the second table of the Law.

→ We would always honor our father and mother. We would never kill or hate, let alone be angry with someone. We would never commit adultery, even in our thoughts. We would never take what belongs to our neighbor. We would never do or say anything that would hurt our neighbor's reputation and good name. And we would never have a passionate desire to have what belongs to our neighbor.

- ✘ But of course again, we all come up short; not just in our outward acts, but also in the internal sins that we commit against our neighbor. Yes, the truth is – matched up against the Commandments – we are all done in.

→ All of life – our actions and thoughts toward God and toward other people is all summarized in these two statements: loving God with all we have and loving our neighbor as ourselves. The scribe even agreed and said in verse 33, this "is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices".

→ On both accounts the people of Jesus' day and you and I still today all fall short in measuring up to what God expects of His people.

II. Christ lives the answer to our benefit

- ✘ The good news though is that the One who is talking with the scribe is the one true God in the flesh. He is the one God who came to this earth to do what we could never do. He came to fulfill the Law of God perfectly and completely; the "one who" Hebrews 4:15 says "in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin".

→ Only Jesus loved God with all of His heart and soul and mind and strength. Only Jesus loved His neighbor as Himself.

→ In fact, Jesus came in love to lay down His life for His neighbors on the cross – and that includes you and me.

- ⊗ Now, because Jesus has done that saving work to perfection, you and I are able in Christ's gift of grace to appear before God's throne of grace wrapped in the merits of Christ and His cross; in the righteousness of Christ; as if we had fulfilled all of God's Law to perfection.
 - ➔ This is now the Christian confession of faith, that by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, you and I are now clothed in the perfect obedience of Christ. And as Romans 8:1 boldly proclaims, "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus".

III. Jesus is the answer to His own question

- ⊗ With that very significant, life-changing question of Law and Grace answered, Jesus now addressed the scribe with a significant question of His own. It's a question that speaks to Jesus' very essence; the miracle of God becoming man in the person of Christ.
 - ➔ Jesus asks, "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?" (v.35) You see, the scribes were the experts; the interpreters of the Old Testament for the people. They taught correctly that the Christ; the Messiah; would come from the line of King David in the Old Testament.
- ⊗ So Jesus then takes the scribe and those listening to Psalm 110:1, a psalm written by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that talks about God the Father and the Messiah. Jesus begins His quote (and remember King David is speaking), "The Lord," that is God the Father, "said to my Lord", which is the Messiah, "Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies under Your feet" (v. 36).
 - ➔ What Jesus is trying to show the scribe is that David himself called the coming Messiah "Lord". In fact, David referred to both the Father and the coming Messiah as "Lord"; as the one true God who is only one. So, how is it that this Messiah could be both the son of David and the Lord of David?
- ⊗ There's only one answer to that very significant question. And that answer was standing right in front of the scribe and the great throng of people in the temple that Tuesday.
 - ➔ He is the God-man, Jesus Christ; who alone is 100% God and 100% man. He is the one who was there at the creation of the world with God; the one that John 1:3 says, "without Him was not any thing made that was made".
 - ➔ He is the one who commanded the wind and waves to cease, and they immediately obeyed. He's the one who healed all types of physical infirmities and problems, removing them as if they never existed. He's the one who demonstrated His mastery over life and death by raising three people – the widow's son at Nain (Lk. 7:11-17), Jairus' daughter (Mat. 9:18-26), and His friend Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-44).
- ⊗ And as we will gather here in this space to rejoice and celebrate in a few weeks, He's the one whom death and the grave could not hold as He alone conquered them both on that first Easter morn!
- ⊗ Yes, Jesus was, is, and remains David's Lord and your Lord and my Lord. For "God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name," says Paul in Philippians 2:9-11, "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father".
 - ➔ You understand the significance of that statement, right and how it answers the significant question Jesus asked of the scribe? God the Father is the one who said to David's Lord, Jesus Christ, "Sit at My right hand".
 - ➔ And from that place of all power and authority, Jesus now reigns over all creation.

✘ This is a life-changing, crucially significant question and answer from Jesus. For it is, from His place at the right hand of the Father; as the second person in the one Holy, Triune God, that Jesus now cares and provides for you and me right now today. From that place, in His Word and Spirit, He has answered all of our significant questions, for He alone is the Savior of us all! Amen.