

Thirty-First Sunday of Ordinary Time

Gospel Reading

04th November 2018

Mark 12:28b-34

Jesus is questioned by a scribe about the greatest commandment.

Background on the Gospel Reading

As we continue to read from Mark's Gospel, our Lectionary skips a chapter that helps set the context for today's reading. If we were to read the sections skipped ([chapter 11](#) and part of [chapter 12](#)), we would hear about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, his cleansing of the Temple, and the questioning of Jesus' authority by the chief priests, scribes, and elders. The context, therefore, for this Gospel is Jesus' growing exposure before the Jewish authorities.

Jesus is being questioned and tested by the Jewish authorities, yet the scribe who addresses Jesus in today's Gospel seems to be an admirer; he is not testing Jesus.

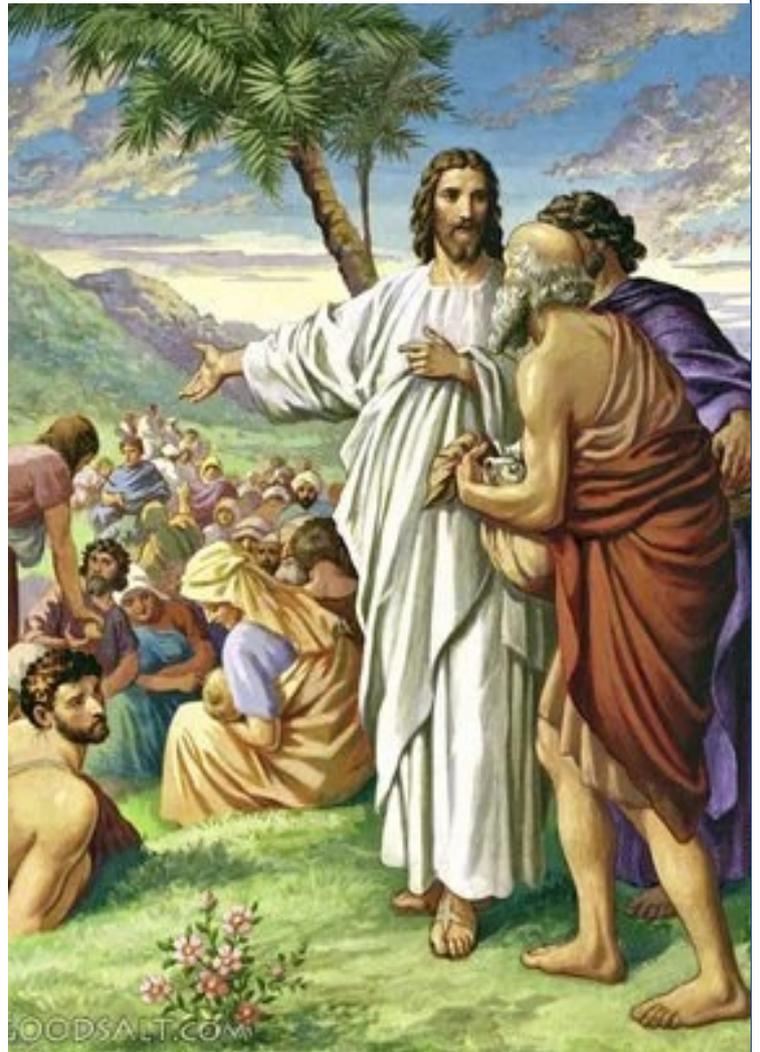
The question posed in today's Gospel requires Jesus to interpret the Law of Moses. The Mosaic Law consists of the Ten Commandments and many additional commandments, numbering into the hundreds. For a devout Jew, adherence to the Mosaic Law is an expression of faithfulness to God's covenant with Israel. The ranking of these commandments was regularly debated among the teachers of the Law.

Jesus was not the only Jewish religious teacher to connect these two commandments, love of God and love of neighbor. Both of these commandments were central elements of the religious tradition that Jesus learned from his Jewish community. Indeed, these commandments continue to be central aspects of contemporary Jewish religious understanding. Jesus' response to his

questioners proposed an integral connection between these two aspects of the Jewish Law. Love of God finds its expression in our love for our neighbor. Many believe, however, that this connection was heard in a new and fresh way when spoken by Jesus.

The scribe who questions Jesus in today's Gospel engages in a positive dialogue with Jesus. He agrees with Jesus' teaching that the commandments to love God and love neighbor stand above the commandment to offer worship and sacrifice in the Temple. With this dialogue, Jesus appears to close the debate with the Jewish authorities. Mark reports that no one dared to question Jesus further.

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