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Mark 12:18-34

Good News: Enter the kingdom of God

¹⁸ Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Jesus and asked, ¹⁹“Teacher, Moses wrote for us that *if a man’s brother dies, leaving a widow but no children, the brother must marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.* ²⁰ Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman; when he died, he left no children. ²¹ The second married her and died without leaving any children. The third did the same. ²² None of the seven left any children. Finally, the woman died. ²³ At the resurrection, when they all rise up, whose wife will she be? All seven were married to her.”

²⁴ Jesus said to them, “Isn’t this the reason you are wrong, because you don’t know either the scriptures or God’s power? ²⁵ When people rise from the dead, they won’t marry nor will they be given in marriage. Instead, they will be like God’s angels. ²⁶ As for the resurrection from the dead, haven’t you read in the scroll from Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to Moses, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?*^[b] ²⁷ He isn’t the God of the dead but of the living. You are seriously mistaken.”

²⁸ One of the legal experts heard their dispute and saw how well Jesus answered them. He came over and asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”

²⁹ Jesus replied, “The most important one is *Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord,* ³⁰ *and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*^[c] ³¹ The second is this, *You will love your neighbor as yourself.*^[d] No other commandment is greater than these.”

³² The legal expert said to him, “Well said, Teacher. You have truthfully said that God is one and there is no other besides him. ³³ And to love God with all of the heart, a full understanding, and all of one’s strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself is much more important than all kinds of entirely burned offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered with wisdom, he said to him, “You aren’t far from God’s kingdom.” After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

It is our second Sunday of Lent. We are starting our journey to the cross, death and resurrection. Join us tonight at 5:30PM at Shelbyville West St UMC for deepening our faith together. Last Sunday I encouraged you to give time to God. We open ourselves for realization that we are here for a short time and we are tenants in this life. All belongs to God.

This morning let us continue our journey through the gospel of Mark. In today’s reading we have two events happening around Jesus. First, is the Sadducees approaching Jesus. Sadducees were religious group who believed only in the first five books of Moses, they also were convinced there is no resurrection after death. I bet they probably already had a joke going

around in their circle about those who believed in life after death. They asked the same question to Jesus from made up story. Seven husband and one wife. Who will be her husband after death?

How many times, we have a truth in our minds and then we look for the Scriptures to support what we think? This way all of us can find to support what we want to be truth. For example: Matthew 10:34-35 “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

Jesus came not to bring peace but a sword? Didn't He say: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you (John 14:27)?

You can use the verse you need for your own agenda to support...Right? I can go much deeper and much more complicated verses.

But what Jesus said to the Sadducees? You are so wrong. You are seriously mistaken! You do not know the Scriptures or the power of God! Let's humble ourselves before the Word of God. Always be willing to learn, listen. I pray the same thing to myself. To have an open mind, that we do not know all and always keep a possibility of learning and recognizing that we might be wrong on something we have been so sure. Last week we finished our Bible study on the Creed. While I was listening to Adam Hamilton, there are subjects I highly disagree with him. I am not saying agree to all you hear from everybody. Do have your opinion. But be willing to hear, think, pray and choose where the Spirit leads you. Start with open and willing to receive mind and spirit.

Jesus says: “When people rise from the dead, they won't marry nor will they be given in marriage. Instead, they will be like God's angels. ²⁶As for the resurrection from the dead, haven't you read in the scroll from Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to Moses, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?* ²⁷He isn't the God of the dead but of the living. You are seriously mistaken.”

Sadducees did not even believe there is a resurrection after death. But they very strongly believe what is in the first book of the Bible. They knew it very well. So Jesus is using their knowledge and saying: Moses saw the burning bush, Exodus 3, and Lord told to Moses I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob. Sadducees knew very well they were dead long time ago. So if they believed there is no resurrection, why God would introduce to Moses as a God of the living ones if they are dead?...Is there is nothing after death, why God would say I am God of those who are gone forever? Jesus says: He isn't the God of the dead but of the living. We know they are dead, but Jesus is saying they live, because God is a God of living and he is the God of those who is not with us today. I do not know how about you, but that is a huge hope and promise to me. I do not know what kind of life it will be in heaven. But I am Ok to just know there is life with God. I do not know what does it mean: We will be LIKE angels... I am totally ok not even to have discussion about it. It is in God's hand and His plan, so it must be the best. It is enough for me to trust and live this life just knowing I will have a life with God after I will no longer be in this world. This is such a hope for me and for those who lost they loved ones. If Jesus says, that God is not the God of the dead ones, he is saying that Abraham Isaac and Jacob is not dead to be dead. They enter into life with God. Praise God for gift of life after life.

We can have the biggest and the greatest discussions about what heaven looks like, but I want to discuss and see what matters to God and what we can do now. Something we maybe even do not need to discuss...but just to submit and do it...

Gospel writer Mark moves us to what we should be focusing and what is very important. Sadducees left and scribe arrived. Of course with a question. This man was watching Jesus. He was impressed with His answers. Just think as a man with a PhD in religious studies asks Jesus: What's your take? What do you think is the most important command? I have counted up these commands, and there were 613 commandments in the Law. Which of these 613 commandments is most important? Which one is the core?

I believe that probably 99%, maybe even 100% of you would be able to tell me what is the most important commandment. We do not have a problem of knowing...

Jesus says: Our God is the one Lord,³⁰ and you must love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Last time when I was at the Fairgrounds for a hockey game, I saw Community North hospital advertising their work. One of the things they had on the table was a stress check card. You keep your finger on the black dot and then the color appears. By the color you can see how stressed you are. I wonder what would happen if all of us could see how much in reality we love God...I have no doubt we all love God. But what would our heart and life reveal? Do we truly love?

Think of the loved ones you have in your family. You children, your spouse, your parents, friends...I am certain you honestly love them. But as I think of myself I think how many times, or better say, how often it is hard to love the loved ones. It is hard to love the ones we love... There have been time I have been frustrated with my kids. One of the best advice I heard was when you about to put your kids in the time out... first put yourself in time out. It did miraculous in my life and parenting. When I get angry, upset, hurt, I act according to my feelings. But when I put myself in time out, I have at least a minute to breathe and pray. Even if still kids needs to face and recognize the consequences, - I am not acting out of my feelings. I had time to be reconnected to God and pray. I am recognized my feelings and had to time to evaluate and think,

If you are married, you will know how hard it can be to love, your spouse. I know I love my husband, very much, but just loving him daily can be pretty hard...Think of the daily frustration you face years after years. How about cleaning the house? How about putting things where they need to be? How about even being able to listen without already assuming we know what he or she is going to say and already cutting off and fixing in our own way. My love is even stronger than it was 12 years ago, but loving daily and acting out of that love instead of frustration is hard.

Isn't that how it is with our love to God. You can honestly say I love God. But do you live like loving him? How much you love God early in the morning? How much you love him when you hear: love me with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? With all who you are and all you have? If we are honest... We love God as long as I can have enough comfort, as long as

I can stay where I want to stay... As long as I do not have to give more than I think I can give, as long as I have my free Sunday morning or Sunday nights, Saturday evenings...As long as nothing happens to my kids, as long as I can keep on pleasing myself?

I once saw a cartoon entitled "The Baptism," where the person is completely underwater except for one hand, which is still sticking up out of the water. Clutched in that hand is the person's wallet. What is for you that you can not let go?

Our God is the one Lord, ³⁰ *and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, You will love your neighbor as yourself.* No other commandment is greater than these.

Loving God does not mean sitting comfortably, separating yourself from these crazy people. Loving God means loving your neighbors. It is so awesome come to the gathering of the believers, because there are so many saint makers around us. There are so many who helps our patient to grow, there are so many who helps us to start control our tongues, there are so many that helps us to truly grow in loving. One of the best name that is given to these people are _ Saint Makers. Yes, they help us truly to be saints. Loving them who are different. I mean loving. I am not saying tolerating. I am saying loving. Being in relationship, talking, giving and keep forgiving.

Scribe, the different kind of scribe. He understood that Jesus is 100% right. He says: *"Well said, Teacher. You have truthfully said that God is one and there is no other besides him."* ³³ *And to love God with all of the heart, a full understanding, and all of one's strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more important than all kinds of entirely burned offerings and sacrifices".* Legal expert understood and agreed. Loving these people, those whom who hardly can't stand and wish they would not be where you are. You wish this church would be great if only this would not be part of it. Or maybe I can not come to this Bible study because that crazy lady, this self righteous man is in there. Jesus says, this is how love God. You love those.

Scribe got it. He was sincere in asking and was admiring, agreeing with all what Jesus was saying. But listen to Jesus answer: "You aren't far from God's kingdom." You are not far away...??? Think about it. Would you like that kind of answer. When you are driving to a certain destination and your google maps or Apple maps says, you are one mile away form your destination. Certainly it is a good news, but is it good enough? You want to be in the place not close to the place. Whats is good to be not far away? I even have a better example. Does it matter where you drown? Close to the shore or in the middle of the lake? You are dead both cases...

Scribe got the right information, even was able to find what is the most important from most information. He got it. He loved Jesus answer. But why Jesus said: You are not far away from God's kingdom? Why he is not at the kingdom?

Knowledge is not enough? Agreeing is not enough? Could it be we need start loving God by loving, I mean loving and caring those neighbors? What faces and names God is bringing to your mind?

