



# Daily Reflections

## June 4, 2020

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### Scripture

#### **Mark 12:28-34**

One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him,  
“Which is the first of all the commandments?”  
Jesus replied, “The first is this:  
Hear, O Israel!  
The Lord our God is Lord alone!  
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.  
The second is this:  
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.  
There is no other commandment greater than these.”  
The scribe said to him, “Well said, teacher.  
You are right in saying,  
He is One and there is no other than he.  
And to love him with all your heart,  
with all your understanding,  
with all your strength,  
and to love your neighbor as yourself  
is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”  
And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding,  
he said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.”  
And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

# Our Scripture Reflection

The scribes of the Pharisee (their lawyers) often debated as to which of the Commandments were the “weightiest” or most important. When the young scribe comes running up to Jesus to get his opinion, Jesus teaches him something he had never heard of before.

Jesus will combine a Commandment from Deuteronomy 6:5, known as the “Shema Israel” (Hear, O Israel, which was uttered by every pious Jew many times each day) with a Commandment from Leviticus 19:18 (Love your neighbor as yourself). In addition to combining them, Jesus will also widely expand the definition of a neighbor which at this time in Jewish thought was narrowly defined as a fellow Jew. In the powerful story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) Jesus will include as neighbor a bitterly despised outcast.

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## Food for your Journey

To translate the Hebrew word torah as simply "law" is misleading, because in the English language we tend to think of law mainly in its restrictive function. Our laws are a generally agreed-upon list of dos and don'ts, and not much more than that.

The meaning of torah is far richer. Rabbinical students are encouraged not just to memorize the law, but to meditate on it, to internalize it. Psalm 1 promises that those who do this will be "like trees planted by rivers of water." In the Jewish understanding, God's law nourishes the soul. God's law is life.

How different this is from the pinnacle of our legal education system, the bar exam! Bar exams are values-blind. They're all about knowledge. There's no guarantee that attorneys who garner near-perfect scores on the bar exam won't defraud their clients.

Studying torah -- the lifelong preoccupation of the scribe who questions Jesus -- is very different. It's really about learning God's way of doing things. This is why the scribe doesn't consider it a stretch for Jesus to answer his question about the most important point of the law by talking about love.

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## A Prayer from the Heart

Heavenly Father, Fill me up with the gift of Your love! May I then be inspired and motivated to live that love by imitating Your Only Son, Who lived and gave His life for all people. Amen