

be in verses 28 through 34 today. Mark chapter 12, verses 28 through 34. The title of the message this morning is The Center of the Issue. The Center of the Issue. Mark chapter 12, verses 28 through 34. Once you've found that passage, if you would stand with me in honor of the one who gave us this word as we read our text together this morning. Mark chapter 12, beginning in verse 28. It reads, and when one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, he recognized that he had answered them well and asked him, what commandment is the foremost of all? Jesus answered, the foremost is here, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. 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. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said to him, right teacher, you have truly stated that he is one and there is no one else beside him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding, with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as himself is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he had answered thoughtfully, he said to him, you are not far from the kingdom of God. After that, no one would dare to ask him any more questions. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we are so thankful to come together this morning by your grace that this body that is your body has been gathered here by your grace, by your sovereign will, and that we were able to sing praises to you. And I pray, Lord, that we were given the grace to sing in spirit and truth that you were glorified by our song and that it be glorified as we continue our worship and the preaching of your word. I pray, Lord, that you'd remove any distractions from me, any hindrances from me, that your word would be spoken exactly as you intended it to be, and that the impact of this word would be placed on the hearts and minds of the people in this room or anyone that hears it by the working of your spirit within them. We completely acknowledge our utter dependence upon you and ask, Lord, that you would give us grace to continue to worship and rest in you today and going forward. We ask this all in your name and for your glory and your holy name. Amen. All right, you can be seated. Mark chapter 12. So the center of the issue, we've been making our way through Mark. We're all the way up through chapter 12 now, and over the last few weeks, the portion of Mark that we're going through, we've seen several interactions between Jesus and the Sanhedrin. Last week, we specifically saw the Sadducees, and this is another, sect of the Sanhedrin, the scribes, the scribal guild that's now approaching. So now there's a single scribe that's coming, which is a little bit different than what we've seen before. Generally speaking, over the last several weeks as we've seen interactions, it's been a group of people approaching Jesus. But here we have a singular scribe that's coming as part of the Sanhedrin. The altercation here though in Mark where the scribe approaches is that the first and only time in Mark where a scribe approaches him amicably. He's coming not as a group to attack him. He's coming as someone who asks a question. You'll notice in the reading that we

just did, there's no words of hostile intent. There's no trying to trip him up, language from Mark. There's nothing as far as a negative interaction in the heart of the scribe coming. In fact, this is the only time in all of Mark that Jesus commends a scribe as well. So this is a very unique situation as far as the gospel of Mark goes. Now, as far as the next couple of altercations with the scribal guild, you're going to see as you move forward, even as quickly as closing out chapter 12, you're going to see other altercations with the scribes as he continues, as they continue, I should say, trying to ask him other more entrapment questions, but this is the one time that this particular guild comes to him in an amicable fashion. Now the scribes themselves, the scribal guild is a group of men that were specifically trained and were very gifted at transcribing copies of the law. The primary job that they had was to write more copies of the law. So they would be very diligent. The extreme, the links that they would go to to ensure accuracy, to ensure they protect the name of God, things like that were astounding. They were very skilled, very intelligent. And then they were also responsible in a lot of ways of teaching and interpreting scripture as well because they were so familiar. So they constantly copied it if there's any group in the Sanhedrin that likely knew the law and the prophets like the back of their hand. It was the scribal guild. So that gives you a little bit of context of this particular part of the Sanhedrin and the interesting thing that we're gonna see today is this particular man, this particular scribe, unlike all the other altercations that we're going to see and mark, this particular scribe is being able and having the gift to be able to understand or at least beginning to understand the overarching teaching of God in the Old Testament. We're going to get through that here shortly. But this particular text is packed with a lot of truth. And the truth of scripture is what we apply to our lives. So you can't jump to an application by reading a couple verses and going, yep, this is how this impacts me, we have to understand the context of it, understand what the original author was intending to say what the original recipients would have heard, extract that truth and apply it to our lives. And there's a lot of truth to extract in this text. So we're going to dig in here and we're going to go very deep in understanding what Christ is teaching from this conversation with this scribe. So number one, first and foremost, point number one, first and foremost, that's verses 28 through 31. So I'm going to reread those few verses to refresh our memory. And when one of the scribes came and heard them arguing, he recognized that he had answered them well and asked him, what commandment is the foremost of all? Jesus answered, the foremost is here, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, 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. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. So the scribe has come if you remember from last week the Sadducees and Jesus were having an argument about the resurrection and Jesus by his authority corrects

their misunderstanding of the Old Testament and Mark specifically notes that this is while that conversation was still going on. So the scribe comes up and he hears this and he hears them arguing. I use the word argument for the discussion between the Sadducees and Jesus because that's what Mark uses. He calls this an argument that they had when we discussed that last week. But as a scribe approaches the wording of the old language of the Greek in the original language of this text, emphasizes the word heard. Greek structures its sentences differently, and it can emphasize words better in that language than you can in English, so that the emphasis of that is that the scribe heard what Jesus was saying. So there's an emphasis about him hearing. And it's interesting that Mark notes that he recognized that Jesus had answered well. So he had to have heard the whole answer that Jesus gave, and that Jesus answered well. So he's already understanding Jesus's authority. He's understanding what Jesus is saying. I mean, there's absolutely no hostile language whatsoever as this scribe approaches. So this is an amicable approach of this scribe. And knowing the expertise of the law, it's no wonder that he has the ability to say that Jesus pointed to the Old Testament well, and obviously understanding what Jesus was saying. But this scribe does something that is common in that particular time, which is to come and ask a question. The reason why I say it's common is, in those days, the scribes were known for coming to ask particular teachers about the weighty things of the law. So in the Old Testament, there are 613 laws that are broken down into different things such as, for example, 365 prohibitions and then 248 positive commands. And so the idea here is the scribes would come and ask a teacher, which of those laws, which of those prohibitions are weightier than others. Now, you may say, well, all of God's law is weighty, and I would agree with that. But even Christ understood in Matthew 5:19, he says, if anyone breaks the least of these commandments, so he understand there is some hierarchical structure for the law of God. So it was very common for the scribes to come ask a teacher to test them to find out what do you consider to be the most important thing. So this was a very common interaction of those days. But the way that he words this is it loses a little bit in the English language. So in the English, it says what commandment is the foremost of all your translation may say first of all, But in the original language, the word for all does not modify commandments. The sense of this question is actually what is the most, excuse me, is not what is the most important commandment, but rather which commandment supersedes everything and is incumbent on all humanity. So the idea here is what is the most weighty? It's not just the most important, but it's the most incumbent on all humanity. It supersedes all other commandments. This takes all the authority. And so this particular scribe is coming to Jesus with a very common question to understand where he's coming from. So again, this is an amicable approach. This was a common practice. This isn't like the Sadducees last week or the Pharisees the week before that where they came up with a hypothetical question trying to trip him up. This was a common

normal practice. So after the question has been asked, Jesus answered, and you'll notice that this is again, a more amicable conversation. Because Jesus doesn't respond with a question. He answers his question directly. And every other altercation that we've seen so far, we've seen the pattern of a question being asked of Jesus, and Jesus replying with a question. So in other words, they're beginning an argument or a debate. Jesus always asks the question or a question back to them. But in this particular conversation, Jesus comes right out of the gate and answers the question head on directly to this scribe. He not only answers it directly, but he answers it extremely thoroughly. What Jesus does is begin by quoting he says the foremost is and then quotes Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4 through 5 it reads in the original here Israel Yahweh is our God Yahweh is one you shall love Yahweh with your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might this is called the Shema and the Jewish religion. This was something that was considered one of the utmost and highest level of the Old Testament, the highest authority in the Torah, the Torah, excuse me. And this was actually quoted by most practicing Jews twice daily, if not more. So this would be something that they would recite the Shema in the morning, they would recite it in the evening. And so this was the idea. And if you look at Deuteronomy chapter six as a whole, you'll see later on that it says, this is where we get the instructions to teach your family about the Lord and his scriptures day and night while you're walking, while you're sitting on basically all activities of life. So they took that very literally and they would recite the Shema twice daily, if not more. And so he quotes something that they all would have been extremely familiar with and points to the most and foremost highest commandment, which is to love God. Now, if you'll notice, though, when I read Deuteronomy chapter six versus what Jesus quotes here in Mark chapter 12, there's something additional that Jesus adds in verse 30. Jesus says, of course, that love your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Then he adds, and with all your mind and with all your strength. So Jesus adds an extra phrase to the original law to take this a step further. And that's why I said a moment ago that he answers it extremely thoroughly because not only does he point to the greatest commandment, but he adds another level of human composition to the mix. So Jesus is ultimately quoting that loving God with every fiber of who you are as a human being, every facet of your human makeup is the most important commandment. I remember a moment ago when I said that the way the scribe words this question is, what is the highest commandment? It's not so much about the first one on the list, but which one holds the most weight for all humanity. And so Jesus tells him, he doesn't correct the question, he understands exactly what he's saying and says, the highest commandment for all of humanity that supersedes all others is that his creation, God's creation is to love Yahweh with all parts of them. Now, why did Jesus add something extra? You may be asking, why did Jesus add something extra? Because he has the authority to do so. That's that's the bottom line that that's the the succinct

answer. Jesus has the authority to tell us how to worship him. The Creator has the authority to tell us and to define for us what law supersedes all others. We've seen example after example over the last several weeks and all throughout Mark of Jesus exercising his exousia or his divine authority. Jesus has the authority to stipulate exactly and precisely how we are to worship God, the most important law, how we are to interact with God, our position before God. And so he adds another level of intensity here by telling us every piece of fabric of human fabric, or excuse me, human makeup, the fabric of human makeup, that we are to worship and love God from all of those. Now, he also doesn't leave it at that, as he does with both the Scribes and the, excuse me, the Sadducees and the Pharisees over the last couple of weeks. He gives them more than they even asked for. And then in verse 31, he adds on, the second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandments greater than these. So he then quotes, first he quotes from Deuteronomy chapter six, and this quote in verse 31 comes from Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 18. It reads, you shall not take vengeance and you shall not keep your anger against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am Yahweh. So Jesus, by his authority, is both adding to the Shema, another level of depth, but is proactively giving the scribe the second greatest commandment as well. And this is extremely important. Extremely important to understand that he is taking these two commands out of 613 and putting them together. Why is that so important? Because no one in Jewish history, in every writing throughout the centuries, ever put those two commands together. Never. It was never listed as the first and second command in all of Jewish history in every single extant writing. Now each of those had some writings about each of them separately, but Jesus is the only one that brings the two together. And those are largely in different areas of the law. They're not anywhere near each other. And so by his authority, he is telling us not only what is the greatest commandment, but what is the second greatest commandment as well. So this is something that we have to snap ourselves into attention. We have to understand what this means, because this is clearly an important answer. This is an amicable conversation. This isn't a hostile rebuttal or correction, like the Pharisees or the Sadducees interactions. This is Jesus teaching this scribe who approaches him amicably how to interact with God. So let's look at this for just a moment understand what these four different things mean. in our minds. So obviously to love your God with all your heart would be your emotion. To love your God with all your heart would be your emotion. To love your God with all your soul would mean your spirit. To love God with all of your spirit. To love God with all of your mind would be our intelligence. Loving God from our intellect. And then strength actually means will, you might think it means a physical, but it's actually your will, the desire, the what drives you to do what you do. And so those four things, emotion, mind, or excuse me, emotion, spirit, intelligence, and will. And so those are the four breakdowns of the human makeup. Everything can be

categorized that what it sums up to be a human being. Those things are under that category. You can put them somewhere under one of those four headings. So what this ultimately means is that it is a total response of love from every facet of the human makeup. That's what God intends for his creation. And remember, this is the law that supersedes all others. It's not just about being number one on the list. This supersedes everything is for all humanity. God expects this from his creation. And to take it a step further, when Jesus says each of these words in the original language, he adds on the prefix X, E-X. And it actually adds a level of meaning that carries with it a meaning of from the source. From the source. So that means it's not just that we love the Lord with that part of us, but we love Him from that part of us. It's not just about loving God with the mind, it's about loving God from the mind. It's not just about loving God with the heart, it's about loving God from the heart. And there is a distinct difference if you think about it. There's a distinct difference of caring for someone with heart, compassionately, or loving them from your heart. Do you see the difference? You can have actions that are compassionate. So having a heartfelt response, but to truly love someone like your spouse, for example, it's from the heart, you love them from the center of who you are. It's everything in you that is love. So this is much deeper than what we maybe would read in the English language. This is everything about us should love God from those positions that he has created us with. And then by adding the second, he's showing the true heart for his people for the rest of his creation. Because to love God with all of your heart, you then overflow with that to the interactions horizontally. So you have the vertical approach of the first commandment. And then you have the horizontal outworkings of that first commandment based in the second commandment. And he puts them in a very good order here, loving God first and loving neighbor second, because you can't truly have the love of God working out to your neighbors if you don't have it with Him first. And then Jesus adds on at the end, there is no other commandment greater than these. There is nothing greater than these. Matthew words it a slightly different in Matthew 22 in verse 40. He says on these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets. Ultimately the core of the issue is these two things. That's the core of the issue. Jesus says the entire Old Testament hinges. That's what law and prophets means. That is a way of summarizing the entire Old Testament. Everything in the Old Testament in the Old Covenant hinges on these two commands, which no one at all in Jewish history had ever put together. Jesus, by his authority, comes in, deepens the level of the Shema, and then adds on the second commandment, and by his authority says, these are the greatest commandments. Everything else hangs on these. And I want us to understand this from a couple different perspectives. Number one, we have to understand why this is so important, is because we have to view the Old Testament through the lens of Christ. We must view the Old Testament through the lens of Christ. He is the summation. He is the culmination. He is the climax of the Old Testament story. And if

we do not read the Old Testament through the lens of Christ with correct Christology and understanding how he teaches, how he interprets it, the authority with which he directs people with questions like this to different portions of the Old Testament, we will misunderstand it. and we will not grow in our knowledge of God's redemptive plan. We must look at the Old Testament through the lens of Christ. Now, I found a quote this week that really sums up these two commandments well. Jesus' answer avoids the danger of mysticism, which results in a detached and disembodied love of God, as well as the danger of humanism, which acts toward humanity without reference to God and without the understanding that human beings are inviolable creatures of God. That is just such a perfect way of summarizing the importance of these two commands being put together on the authority of Christ. And the last thing to note here before we apply this, because there's a lot of truth packed in here. So we're going to talk through applications more in depth than what we often do. But the same word for love in verse 30 is the same word for love in verse 31. It's agape, that means the love of God. So why that is so important is because it supports what I just said, that you cannot properly love your neighbors without properly loving God first. But it also means that it's the same kind of love going out to our neighbors with which we love God and he loves us. These two commandments go hand in hand and Christ makes that extremely clear. So now that we've looked through the important truths in these first few verses of our text, I want us to look at a few points of application. First, I want us to rest and recognize once again, the authority of Jesus. That is first and primary truth that we see in this, the authority of Jesus. He has exercised his exousia to put forth the center of the law, the greatest commandment along with the second. This is for the scribe, the disciples, and ultimately us to hear. And again, this is something that no one had ever done before. And because of his divine authority, the case is closed. There's no room left for argument. There's no room left for debate. There's no room left for us to go, oh, I really liked the first one with loving God, but I really don't like people that much. You don't have an option. I don't have an option. I worked in customer service for 17 years. Believe me, if anyone has a reason to not like the general public, I've taken over 700,000 calls in my life. That gives you an idea. I don't have a choice to not love my neighbor. We have to understand that Jesus, who has the divine authority to tell us what the greatest commandments are, with a solid open shut case, we do not have the ability, nor should we have the gall to question those two commandments. Everything we do should filter through these two. Why? Because Christ said everything that God said hangs on these two. Loving God and loving those around you, in that order. But this is a mighty revelation of Christ's authority. This gives us a perspective on him at another level of authority that even the conversations with the Pharisees and Sadducees, we didn't even see that level of authority. He is taking upon himself to speak for God because he is God. And we have to recognize that and rest in that and rest in his authority and

who he is. Secondly, so that that's the first thing we see, we see the overarching authority of Jesus, a perspective on him that we get to stand in awe of and worship. But then there's also practical things for us to do because of the laws that he said. Number one, we must acknowledge that Jesus commands us to love God, not only with, but from every facet of who we are. We are commanded to love God from the heart. We are commanded to love God from the soul. We are commanded to love God from the mind. And we are commanded to love God from our strength. So how do we grow in that love is a constant renewed focus on the gospel of Jesus Christ. So you may be asking me, you know, I do love God. But how do I love him from those areas? What bolsters me? How do I have that ability? You don't is the long story short. None of us can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and love God more deeply. It's like faith, you can't conjure up more faith. Where does that come from? From the Spirit of God working in you. And so what he does is bring to our remembrance, and I would encourage you with the preaching of God's Word and exhort you to constantly live your life in light of the gospel. Because when you truly understand who you are before God and who he is, And then what he did for you by giving his life for you and for me, the sacrifice that he made the redemptive plan that he put in place, the revelation of himself in scriptures, and the astounding, never ending grace that he shows to his elect. Does that not conjure up love? Does that not bring you to a deeper level of love? When you begin to understand with your mind what He did for you, you can then love Him more from your mind. When you understand what He did in following the will of the Father to go to the cross, You can love Him from your will because you understand that He's working the way He worked His will out. When you understand that the root of His grace comes from the love of His children, and where that stem, that stem of love that provoked him to do and follow his father's plan of redemption, and you understand the depth of that love, you can love him from your love. Do you see how focusing on the gospel and what he did brings you to a deeper level of love for him because of what he did? It all resides in Christ, it all focuses on Christ and what he did. And then as your love grows, guess what happens? You then start doing the other commandments because you want to show him your love. And as your love and appreciation for Christ grows and your praise and worship of him grows, you then want to please your father, not as of a way of keeping him happy or this extra burden of the law, but you want to do things that please the one that you love. Do you see how following him stems from this first commandment and everything else hangs there? And so we have to understand that we are commanded with a commandment that supersedes all others to love our God with every facet of our human makeup. Let us look to Christ and rest in what he did to develop that love. Thirdly, we have a second commandment here. So our third point of application is from the second commandment, verse 31. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. This is the second greatest commandment. Christ said that all the law and prophets hang on these two. And we know that he put them in a



specific order as we've talked about, loving God first, because loving God first then plays out and is exercised in our love for our neighbors. And this is something that we have to continually work on and has so many practical practical applications. I can't cover all of the practical applications that we can talk about here, but I want to focus on us as a church body. How can we serve in our families in our church? Because so often we think about our neighbors as those who live out in the world. And yes, we need to love them and show them the love of Christ. But primarily, our closest neighbors are those in our household. Our second closest neighbors are those in our church body. And so we are going to focus today on those two. So love everybody. I'm not saying to only love the church and hate everyone else. I'm just saying from a practical perspective, for the sake of time, we're going to focus on those two things. So when you're at home or when you're in the body, it's not just about serving, it's about our very basic interactions. Is the love of God displayed when we don't acknowledge those around us in the body? Whenever we may possibly ignore or we've had a bad day and someone says hello and we just don't have it in us to say hello, there are times that we need that and there are times that we have those rough days, but how are your interactions with the body? Are they loving? Are you going out of your way to show those in the way that you handle phone calls or text messages? Are you attentive and timely in responding to people around you, to your neighbors, to those as part of the body? I know those may sound like minuscule things, but the minuscule things is how we show love, is it not? It's not in the big grandiose gestures. I'll use marriage as an example. You can have and have this great anniversary thing once a year flowers. I don't know Valentine's Day maybe if you're you're you focus on that. But you may have this one big event per year where you love your wife, man, right? We buy the flowers. There's a six foot teddy bear that really just scares me sitting in the corner. And you have all those the candy and the flowers and all those things. But if you don't love your wife in the day to day service and interactions, do you think she understands that you love her? There's no different with our neighbors. You can have a big service to someone. You can come and mow their grass or something along those lines. And that's that we should be doing that. We should be serving one of those. But our day to day, hour by hour, week to week interactions of how we come in and greet people, how we interact with people, how we have people over for dinner or fellowship or whatever the case may be. We have to be showing the love of God that he shows us that agape love and all those little interactions as well. That's how the body works because we cannot show the first commandment without Exercising the second commandment You can say you love God all day long, but if it's not flowing out from the exercise the second commandment Do you actually follow the first one? So we must make sure that no one in our body or in our homes ever feel outside or ignored or anything along those lines. We are a body brought together. They are our closest neighbors and we ought to, by the second commandment, love them as ourselves. Now, of

course, that also means we have grace for those who may have a bad day, we have the positive intent, I like to speak about positive intent a lot. In other words, you trust the positivity of the positive intent of the person you're interacting with. So the flip side of that coin is yes, we need to be as best we can joyful and acknowledging people and shaking hands and all those things. But then also having the grace that when someone is having a bad day, we recognize that we trust the positive intent. In other words, they didn't mean to stop me or not shake my hand or give me a high five or whatever the case may be. We don't have five enough. I just realized that whatever the case may be, we have to trust the positive intent. You guys see both sides that same coin of how the love of your neighbor goes out. All right, point number two. Sorry, I knew this was gonna be a little bit longer one today, guys. Point number two, the beginning of understanding. So now we've looked at the first and foremost, we've looked at the first and foremost commandment, what supersedes everything, and the second one, and we've dug all that truth out of there. But now we're gonna finish this conversation as we begin to see the beginning of understanding in the mind of the scribe, verses 32 through 34. And the scribe said to him, right teacher, you have truly stated that he is one and there is no one else besides him. 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 himself is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he had answered thoughtfully, he said to him, you are not far from the kingdom of God. After that, no one would dare to ask him any more questions. So he addresses, the scribe now answers Jesus and addresses him as teacher. And then he says, you have truly stated. Your particular version may have something slightly worded differently there, but this is an exclamation in the original language. This is basically him saying, well said, well said. And this is the same emphasis that he has when the scribe came to him earlier. This is the same connotation of whenever he recognized that he had answered them well. So the scribe is impressed by this answer, emphasizes well said. calls him teacher and then repeats back the Shema to Jesus with one small difference. Anybody else catch the difference? He doesn't repeat back Jesus's addition of the mind. He doesn't fully understand Jesus's full authority to be able to do that. Like a good scribe who's been dictating and rewriting the Torah word for word for word for word, and was graded on it, and knew that if you mess up on it, anybody ever realize that if you mess up on a scroll, you have to throw the scroll away, because you can't just tear off a page or delete, like you have to throw it. So the attention to detail that he had to have in his role was immense. And so like a good scribe, he leaves off what Jesus has said. And I think this goes partway into understanding why Jesus said he is not far from the kingdom of God, but not in it yet, because he doesn't fully understand who Jesus is. But the scribe repeats back the Shema and the extra edition of Leviticus 19. But then he says something afterwards. That is truly astounding. Verse 33, he adds on,

is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Now why is that so interesting? Because up to this point, we've been in the Torah. The commandments came from the Torah, Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Now this scribe is bringing an understanding from the prophets as well, to give us an overarching view of what God expects from us. This quote comes from multiple different Old Testament passages. I'm not gonna read them for the sake of time, but I'll give you the references. These are just three examples. First Samuel 15 in verse 22. Hosea 6 in verse 6. and Micah 6 verses 6 through 8. Each of these speak to the idea of God telling someone or the nation of Israel as a whole that he does not delight in their offerings and sacrifices and their burnt offerings and the cult practice, just the normal practice of the temple. That's not what brings him delight. It's the heart of the issue, the core of the issue, which is their heart is far from him. And so if you read through those texts, you'll see ultimately Yahweh is telling Israel in one case, he was telling King. Oh, Saul, there we go. My went blank King Saul, because he didn't follow him, that it was wasn't about the burnt offerings that Saul had given it was about his heart and following the commandments of God. And so this scribe understands that it is not just about commandments and following outward religious duties. It is about the heart is about loving Yahweh. And so he makes this connection. Now, of course, in order to understand the Old Testament, as we've went through, Mark, we've talked about this multiple times, only the Spirit can give you a correct understanding of the Word of God. And so he's been giving at least a small gift to understand the connection of those passages and interpreting them rightly. And so in verse 34, Jesus says, And when Jesus saw that he had answered thoughtfully, he said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God. You are not far from the kingdom of God. Now, why would Jesus tell him he's not far from the kingdom of God? First of all, let's acknowledge that Jesus is the one that has, and the only one that has, the authority to acknowledge when someone is in the kingdom of God or not, or near the kingdom of God or not. This is another example of his authority, because they've been discussing the Torah and law, and suddenly Jesus brings in the kingdom of God. Completely changing the topic. only he has the authority to speak to who is not far from the kingdom. But why would he say that the scribe is not far from the kingdom? Because in order to enter the kingdom of God from an overall teaching of scripture, the overarching message of scripture is one must be brought to a place of realizing one's position before God before one can see the need for God. And so ultimately, this scribe is simply acknowledging that the law and the practices of the law, the sacrificial system is in and of itself could not save. But you could only love God to be right with him, love God with every facet of who you are to be right with him. He's beginning to make this connection. He's just not all the way there. And so he's beginning to recognize his position that these offerings, these, these things that I've done, I'm even on the board of directors of the temple, if you will. I'm even on the board of directors who's telling all these people to make all these

sacrifices and do all these things to be right with God. But God tells me, I have to love him with every fiber of who I am. That's the first. Sacrifices don't do that. Sacrifices don't show that you love with every fiber of who you are. That's a physical act. And so he's making that connection. And so now that Jesus has made this connection, Ultimately, what has been expressed to this scribe is that even the most sacred of duties, if not within us, with a love to God and a love to those around us have no meaning. And us being part of the church have the gift of other books of the New Testament. So if you would turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Because Paul tells us this exact same thing. 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verses 1 through 8. Paul gives us this more in detail, more practical outworkings of what essentially this scribe is saying. 1 Corinthians chapter 13 verses 1 through 8. Paul, of course, is writing Corinthians to correct one of the most egregious churches in the New Testament. And he writes them and says, in verse one, if I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and know all the mysteries and all the knowledge, and if I have all the faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And I forgive all my possessions to feed the poor. And if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. And then to make sure the Corinthian church knows what love is, he then describes it. Love is patient. Love is kind, is not jealous, does not brag, is not puffed up. It does not act unbecomingly, does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered. It does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love never fails. But if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away. If there are tongues, they will cease. If there is knowledge, it will be done away. So Paul teaches the Corinthians the same idea that this scribe is coming to that you can do all the right things outwardly, you can do all the sacred things. And as Paul brings up here, you can even give your life and martyrdom for God. But if it's not with the love of God and from the love of God for him and your neighbor, it means absolutely nothing. Do we understand the gravity of these two commandments? When we look at Paul's extra details, do we not understand the love that we should have? Do you see what the truth is of this text? That it's not simple words. I know this is easy to read, but there's so much more here than what maybe we've seen before. We have to understand that everything must come from the love of God and the love of neighbor. So with that reply, Jesus essentially shuts them all up, just quiets them down. The end of verse 34, after that, no one would dare to ask him any more questions. No one would dare to ask him any more questions. By Him exercising His authority, Jesus has shown He has the divine authority to interpret and explain and even modify the very Law of God. He has positioned Himself with the highest level of divine authority, the highest level of His exousia has been put on display. He is God. Because you have to remember, in the Jewish

mindset, the law was everything. It represented God Himself. It was sacred. In fact, I've been to a common Jewish synagogue, a modern, excuse me, a Jewish synagogue within the last few years, and they literally kiss the Torah as it's marched around the room. They pulled up a very sacred box up on the stage and they walk around with it in a covering and they kiss it because the law is held to that high of a standard. And yet Jesus Christ came in with His authority and told them the right way to understand it. What a powerful and amazing authoritative Savior that we serve. And so with this authority, we have a few applications to make on point number two. Jesus surpasses the authority of the law, his authority surpasses the authority of the law. Now, don't run away with that statement and say that means I heard Jesus tell me that I don't have to follow this law or that. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is the divine authority of Christ supersedes. But another thing that we see from his authority is that Christ and Christ alone has the authority to pronounce those who are close to the kingdom or in the kingdom. We have a savior who saves his people. It is his decision, not ours. He determines who is close to the kingdom. And then one last point, and you may have already understood this or be thinking this, but one last point of application. Similar to a point of application from point one, all things that we do in the name of God mean absolutely nothing if they are done without love. If you come to worship here in church and don't do it out of love for God and love for those around you, it means nothing. If you give a gift in the offering plate and you don't do it out of a love of God and love for this body, it means nothing. If you read the Bible without a love for God, it means nothing. Those are all things that we should be doing, but I want us to understand as we've seen over and over again in Jesus's interaction with the Jews of his day, it is not about the outward, it's about the inward. Just as he destroys the Pharisees in Matthew chapter 23 and calls them whitewashed tombs, because the outside looks good, but the inside is full of dead men's bones. The center of the issue comes down to loving God with every fiber of who we are. And everything stems from that. So in conclusion, we saw today a scribe that came to ask Jesus a question to judge whether he gave the right answer about the law. But in the end, Jesus ultimately passes judgment on that scribe telling him he's not far from the kingdom of God. And along that conversation, we learned extremely important key truths about what God considers to be of utmost importance. But I want you to leave from here with the primary thing coming from here being Christ coming from this text because we rest in His authority. He is the Sovereign One. He is the Creator. It is His authority, which commands all things. There is not a, as R.C. used to say, there is not a rogue molecule in the universe. And we get to rest in that, rest in the completed work of our Savior. And then from that point of appreciation, gratitude for what He has done for us, we love God and we love those around us. This is the center of the issue. And next week will be continue in Mark chapter 12. Devin will be preaching. Thank you, Devin. I don't see him now. But there he is. Devin, thank

you for preaching next week already giving you a preemptive. Thank you. He'll continue in chapter 12. So come to hear him. I'm taking a week of vacation this week. It's been a while, so I'm not preparing a sermon this week. So Devin has agreed to give me a week off because I have a week from my other job as well this week. So pray for my wife if you would. I usually don't spend this time talking about personal things. I just wanted you to know what was coming up this next week so you'd understand. I have a week off from my normal job. And then Devin has agreed to preach here. And then pray for the team as they go on. But when you leave here today, please rest in the authority of Christ. Be focused on loving Him and loving those around you. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for the opportunity to come together and learn about you, to understand your authority, to see it as the superseding authority that it is. that you have the authority to interpret even the law itself. And that by giving us those two greatest commandments, you have given us the focus of what God expects from his creation. And I pray, Lord, that you would give each of us the grace to love you with every facet of who you are and to love our neighbors with that same love. Keep us in this love by your grace throughout this week. In your holy name, I pray. Amen.