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Proper 26B - Ordinary 31B - Pentecost +22
Sunday, November 1, 2009
Mark 12:28-34

The Most Important Rules

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" ²⁹Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰you 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.' ³¹The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³²Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; ³³and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,' —this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Today I thought we might talk a little bit about rules. We have rules in so many different parts of our lives – there are rules for driving our cars and rules at our jobs. I bet there are rules in your classrooms at school, aren't there? Tell me a few of them. (Solicit children's responses.)

Those sound like awfully good rules. Why do you think your teachers made those rules? Is there a reason that rules are important? (Solicit children's responses.)

That's right, rules are a way of making sure that everyone is treated in the right way. We have rules that are designed to protect our safety, and rules to protect our things, and sometimes even rules to protect our feelings.

I asked about rules today, because our Gospel reading is about them. In the bible we read about many different rules, but the ones that are most important have a special name: commandments. Commandments are the rules that God has set for us. In the Old Testament, Moses receives a whole list of commandments. Do you remember how many? (Ten.)

In reading for today, someone asks Jesus which of the commandments is most important – and Jesus teaches him a special trick. He tells him that there are two rules that if you follow carefully, will help you to be following all the rest. The first is to love God. The second is to love your neighbor in just the same way that you love yourself.

What a great way to remember all our commandments. If we treat other people the way we would like to be treated would we steal from them? Would we kill them? Would we lie to them?

This rule is so important we have a special name for it. The Golden Rule. Love and treat others in the same way that you would like them to love and treat you.

It's an easy one to remember! Let's pray.

Dear God,

As we look to the week ahead help us to demonstrate our love for you and others, just as Jesus has reminded us.

Amen

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