**Lenten Midweek 3**

**Significant Questions—Tuesday of Holy Week**

Mark 12:28–37

**Sermon Outline**

We Are Confronted with Two Very Significant Questions.

I. We come up short in trying to answer the significant question asked by the scribe.

II. The Good News is that Christ lives the answer.

III. And Christ himself is the answer to the significant question he himself asks.

**Sermon**

You and I ask questions every day. Some of them are not all that important or critical, such as, “What’s for dinner?” or, “Did you get to the store today in the snowstorm?” or, “Did you watch the end of the hockey game yesterday?”

While many questions we ask every day are rather routine and not critically important, there are other much more significant questions that we ask at times, such as, “Will you marry me?” or, “Did you get the job?” or, “Is the biopsy cancerous?” These are not everyday questions. These are significant, life-changing questions.

Today, we continue our Lenten series by considering what took place on Tuesday of Holy Week. Jesus entered Jerusalem amid enthusiastic crowds on Palm Sunday. On Monday, he took significant action in clearing the temple grounds of the merchants and money-changers. On Tuesday,

We Are Confronted with Two Very Significant Questions,

one that a scribe asks Jesus and another that Jesus asks the crowds in the temple area.

I.

Jesus has just been in a discussion with the Sadducees, the Jewish religious clergy, who did not believe in a resurrection from the dead. A lone scribe heard Jesus answering the Sadducees, and he was impressed. The scribes and the Pharisees would have enjoyed Jesus winning a debate over the Sadducees.

And so, this scribe, who probably had painstakingly written down hundreds and hundreds of commandments, things that one should do and things that one should not do, is now genuinely interested in this great teacher. He does not appear to be trying to trick Jesus. He actually wants to hear from Jesus: “Which commandment is the most important of all?” (v 28).

Jesus responds with a two-part answer that is a summary for all of God’s Law. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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” (vv 29–30). Jesus is quoting the Old Testament here, specifically Deuteronomy 6, verses 4 and 5.

Notice that the answer to this question begins not with what we should or should not do. The answer begins with God, with his being and his essence. “The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” He is one divine being, and he is the only one. As opposed to all of the false gods of the Canaanites throughout the Old Testament, the only true God is one. And it is this one true God whom we should love with everything that we have!

But Jesus is not finished answering the scribe’s question. He adds, “The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (v 31). Here again, Jesus is quoting the Old Testament, Leviticus 19, verse 18, this time. In these two responses, Jesus has correctly summarized all of God’s Law.

If you and I could love the Lord our God with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength seven days a week and twenty-four hours each day, we would never be in violation of the first three commandments. We would never fail to fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We would never misuse his name. And we would always remember the Sabbath day, keeping it holy.

But you and I know how feeble and faint our love of God can be at times. You and I know how many times we put ourselves first and God a distant second.

And if we could truly, love our neighbor as ourselves—always and perfectly—we would never be in violation of the fourth through the tenth commandments. We would always honor our father and mother. We would never kill, let alone be angry with someone. We would never commit adultery, even in our thoughts. We would never take what belongs to our neighbor. We would never do or say anything that would hurt our neighbor’s reputation and good name. And we would never have a passionate desire to have what belongs to our neighbor.

Here again, we come up short. It’s not just the outward acts, but the internal sins against our neighbor associated with these commandments that do us in. All of life toward God and toward other people is summarized in these two statements: loving God with all we have and loving neighbor as self.

II.

The good news is that the one talking with the scribe IS the one God. He IS the one God who came to do what we could never do. He came to fulfill the Law of God perfectly and completely. He alone loved God with all of his heart and soul and mind and strength. He alone loved his neighbor as himself.

In fact, he would lay down his life for his neighbors—and they include you and me. And now, you and I appear before God in the merits of Christ and his cross. In the righteousness of Christ. As if we had perfectly fulfilled all of God’s Law. By God’s grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, you and I are now clothed in the perfect obedience of Christ. And “there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1).

III.

But now Jesus has a significant question of his own. This question would point to the miracle of God becoming man in Jesus Christ. Christ asks, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?” (Mk 12:35). The scribes were the experts and the interpreters of the Old Testament for the people. The scribes were correct in teaching that the Christ, the Messiah, would come from the line of King David in the Old Testament.

But then Jesus quotes Psalm 110, verse 1, a psalm that David wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, concerning God the Father and the Messiah: “The Lord [God the Father] said to my Lord [the Messiah], ‘Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet’ ” (v 36). Jesus points out that David himself called the coming Messiah “Lord.” David referred to both the Father and the coming Messiah as “Lord.” So how could this Messiah be both the son AND the Lord of David?

There is only one answer to that significant question, and the answer was standing right in front of the great throng in the temple that Tuesday. He is the God-man, Jesus Christ. He is 100 percent God and 100 percent man. He is the one who was there at the creation of the world with God and was in every way God himself. He is the one who commanded wind and waves to cease, and they obeyed. He is the one who healed all types of physical infirmities and problems, removing them as if they never existed. He is the one who demonstrated his mastery over life and death by raising three people that we know of from death to life once again. And as we will gather in this space to rejoice and celebrate in a few weeks, he is the one whom death and the grave could not hold! He is the one who rose triumphant from the grave!

He was, is, and remains David’s Lord and our Lord. For “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9–11). God the Father has said to David’s Lord, Jesus Christ, “Sit at my right hand,” and from that place of all power and authority, Christ reigns over all creation. From that place, he cares and provides for us. From that place, he has answered all of our significant questions. Amen.