

In this New Testament lesson we are taught that Christ, our high priest, has fulfilled and surpassed the purposes of the earthly temple that served as an archetype of the heavenly reality. Through his faithful sacrifice, Jesus has entered the eternal holy of holies and obtained the everlasting redemption prefigured by the old rites of animal sacrifice. Believers may now worship the living god with a purified conscience, knowing themselves to be sanctified through Christ. Hear now these words from the Letter to the Hebrews.

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Mark 12:28-34

In the gospel Jesus answers a question concerning the chief command of the law by reciting the double commandment to love God and one's neighbor. Jesus was not unique in bringing together these two great teachings from Israel's heritage, but the New Testament gives them special emphasis. They are closely linked, for in responding to God's love, we learn that we are lovable, and so begin to be able to love others as ourselves. In loving our neighbors we discover the mystery that we are also loving in them their Creator. The man who asked Jesus the question repeats the commandments in his own words. He is not far from the kingdom. Hear now these words from the gospel of Mark.

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

This is the word of the Lord. **May the reading and the hearing of your word inform our minds, comfort our souls and guide our feet.**