

Introduction:

How close can you get to salvation without being saved? This week we learn that almost means not yet when Jesus answers a scribes question about the Law. You can find this week's sermon notes [here](#)¹ and listen to the sermon by clicking [here](#).²

Scripture:

Please turn to Mark 12:28-34 in your Bible [or click here](#).

So What?

In Mark 12:28-34 a scribe asks Jesus the penetrating question, "Teacher, of all the commandments, which is the most important?" It's difficult to know if this is an honest question or simply a diversionary tactic. In Matthew's account (Matthew 22:34-40), it appears to be one more trap, while in Mark's account (12:28-34), it appears to be a sincere question. Borrowing a phrase from today's business lexicon, Jesus tells the lawyer or scribe that the main thing...is to love God with every ounce of your being—heart, soul, mind, and strength (29-30). In so doing, Jesus refers back to the great shema of the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Jesus goes on to say that there is a second main thing: we are to love people (31). These two commands—loving God and loving people—sum up the entire law (Exodus 20:3-17) in a succinct phrase. It demonstrates that Christianity is a relationship, not a ritual, which the scribe wisely observes (32-33). As Christ later teaches (Matthew 25:31-40), we love God BY loving people.

However, knowing the answer to the question, "What commandment is the most important?" is not enough. The answer alone won't get you into heaven. The scribe rightly understands that Jesus spoke wisely, and yet Jesus tells him he is only on the doorstep. "You are not far from the kingdom of God." In R. Kent Hughes' commentary on Mark, he points out: It is possible to have grown up in church, to have consistent, godly parents, and never come to a saving knowledge of Christ. "It is possible to be within an inch of Heaven, yet go to Hell!" Don't settle for "Almost There." Receive Christ as Savior & Lord Today!³

"It is possible to be within an inch of Heaven, yet go to Hell. Don't settle for almost there."

What Now?

1. Knowing what to do and doing it are two different things. Many people hear the word of God and come to an understanding of it, but never actually commit to it. Are you one who is "not far from the kingdom of God," or have you received Jesus as your Lord and become his child? Ask yourself, "If God were not in Heaven, would I still want to go?" Salvation is about being reconciled to God; it's about loving God, not just escaping hell. Do you know him, or do you only know about him? If you don't know him, accept Jesus as you Lord today, asking him to forgive your sins. If you do know him, commit to follow his commands and to seeking him in joyful worship.
2. Sometimes we feel as though we can separate things that God himself has brought together as inseparable. Jesus says that loving other people is second only to loving God himself. Do you love God but have a cold disinterest in people? We were created for worship and community. We can't say that we love God, whom we have not seen, if we fail to love people.⁴

¹ <https://wheelsms.wordpress.com/2015/11/22/almost-there/>

² firstcentralbaptist.com/sermons/gospelofmark.html

³ This is an excerpt from Pastor Mark's sermon notes.

⁴ "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother." (1 John 4:20–21 ESV)