

<b>Series:</b> Heart of Worship	<b>Reference:</b> Mark 12:28–34	<b>Title:</b> All-Encompassing Gratitude	<b>Date:</b> 09.12.2021
<b>Website Writeup:</b>			
This series focuses on the heart of worship, addressing the need to love God & others while living worshipfully in every day life. The way we live reveals what we value most. God calls for worship of our entire being, what we do in life reflects our worship of Christ, or otherwise. Today we learn, worship is all-encompassing gratitude, overflowing to others.			

### **COLOR CHANGES IN TEXT INDICATE SLIDE CHANGES**

This series focuses on the heart of worship, addressing the need to love God & others while living worshipfully in every day life. The way we live reveals what we value most. God calls for worship of our entire being, what we do in life reflects our worship of Christ, or otherwise. My hope today is to give us something for which to be grateful & spark the heart of worship within you.

Let's begin today with our text, Mark 12:28–34 found on p692 of your pew Bibles...*One of the teachers of the law came & heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"* <sup>29</sup>"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup>Love the Lord your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your mind & with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup>The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." <sup>32</sup>"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one & there is no other but him. <sup>33</sup>To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding & with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings & sacrifices." <sup>34</sup>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.

**Worship is all-encompassing gratitude, overflowing to others.** Does my worship of God encompass all of my heart, soul, mind & strength & overflow to others? The heart being the seat of affection, that to which we are drawn. The soul, that immortal part of us which gives identity. The mind, intellect or thought life. And strength, internal & physical, that to which we give our bodies. If we're to worship God, we must endeavor to know & honor Him in every way He offers, which requires commitment & devotion.

In order to understand our verses we need to know, Jesus is speaking to religious leaders. Just before this in vv1-27 He tells them the parable of the landowner who'd rented land to farmers & went away. When he sent representatives to gather rent they beat them. He sent more. They killed them. Finally he sends his son & they kill him. The story ends in v12 saying...*Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law & the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them.* He's pointing out Israel's sin in worship. God had given them so much - the proper response would've been a lifestyle of gratitude in worship. They hadn't. So God

sent prophets to call them back, Jeremiah being one we just studied for 4 weeks, and we know what they did to him. They beat & sought to kill those prophets. Jesus then ends with the prophetic word of God's own Son being sent, but also killed.

They then challenge Jesus with a question designed to trap Him as to whether they should pay the Imperial Tax, a tax on all non-Roman citizens. Jesus says look at the coinage, which displayed Caesars face, and says, "Give to Caesar what is Caesars." And they're amazed, since they can't seem to trap Him. The juxtaposition of these two stories when followed by vv28-34 tells us we live in the world, but are not of the world. As people of God living in grateful worship, there are things imposed on us which we have to do to live in a godless world, but we always represent Jesus. Which brings up the question, what governs our lives?

The question of the greatest commandment is based on the Mosaic law defining what's expected of these Jewish leaders to live a worshipful life to God. It's that which God gave to the Israelites through Moses. There are 3 types of law: Civic, Ceremonial & Moral. Civic law governed when Israel was a political entity unto itself. The Ceremonial Law had to do with rituals & sacrifices. The Moral Law is how people are expected to live reflective of God's heart. The law begins with the Ten Commandments & includes the many rules of religious observance given in the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy - known as the Torah in Jewish circles, which means to show or direct). Among other things, it forbade murder, fornication, adultery, bearing false witness, etc., and is the basis of our Criminal Code.

James Edwards explains, "*The rabbinic tradition counted 613 commandments in the Torah, [including] 365 prohibitions & 248 positive commands. Among the commandments, rabbis differentiated between... 'heavy' & 'light' commandments... When Jesus spoke of breaking 'one of the least of these commandments' in Matthew 5:19, He observed this distinction...*"<sup>1</sup>

"The Ceremonial Law includes rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices, festivals, things concerning the tabernacle, laws of cleanliness, etc. Civil laws were regulations to be enforced by the theocratic, national state of Israel in order to maintain civil society. These include laws prescribing penalties [for the breaking of moral law] like theft, murder, kidnapping, or adultery in a society. They ordinarily go on to include the penalties associated with violation of the law. Hence, "Do not commit murder' (Ex 20:13), is moral law, but making premeditated murder punishable by death while making...manslaughter punishable by confinement to a city of refuge until the death of the high priest, represents civil law (Exodus 21:12-14; Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 19:1-10)."<sup>2</sup> Civil law ceases to govern when Israel's no longer a theocratic national entity, whereas ceremonial & moral law applied at all times.

---

<sup>1</sup> James Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 370, Logos

<sup>2</sup> [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=lu\\_law\\_review](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=lu_law_review)

**So, what should worship include?** Civic, ceremonial & moral law? If the Law has something to do with worship, how are we to live? Which, or do all apply? Firstly, Christianity isn't meant to be a theocracy. Rather, it's the Kingdom of God established in the hearts of people. Jesus didn't come to overthrow Rome, but to overcome humanity. Therefore, Civic Law is inapplicable. We are citizens of Heaven subject to earthly kingdoms, but ultimate loyalty is to God. But...why doesn't our worship still include the Ceremonial Law with all the festivals, rituals, sacrifices, prescriptions of cleanliness, etc.? Good question...and the answer is, Jesus accomplished 2 things...(1) He fulfilled the Moral Law in life. And (2) He fulfilled the Ceremonial Law in death.

Scripture teaches, Jesus was the only person who ever lived perfectly according to the Moral law of God. **1 Peter 2:22...***“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”* He came not to destroy the old religious system as if it were imperfect & bad, but to fulfill & build upon it. To finish the Old Covenant & establish the New.

In reference to the requirements of the Ceremonial Law, Hebrews 10:1 says...*“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. <sup>2</sup>Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered?”* Worship is our central purpose, God's mission to the nations, as important as that is now, will cease, but worship's forever, we're created for it. Participating in God's mission is partly how we worship now! But sin gets in the way of worship! It must be dealt with, since God is holy, the two don't mix! The good news is, in Christ our sin's have been paid! You remember that in the Temple when the High Priest made sacrifice for Israel he put the blood on the Mercy Seat of the Ark with the two angels at either end. And when we see Jesus risen from the grave, they find his burial slab in the tomb with two angels sitting at either end, mirroring the Mercy Seat of the Temple saying that He was the final sacrifice. When God the Father looks on you, He sees the perfect record of His Son - that is, we've been made righteous in Christ.

Galatians 3:23-25 states...*“Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. <sup>24</sup>So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.”* The Law acted as teacher, leading us by the hand into understanding our need for Jesus. The law convicts & shows us our need for Jesus. Without the conviction of the Law, there'd be no need for salvation. It must be this way given God is real & His promises & plans will be fulfilled.

In Acts 7, Stephen, in sharing the Gospel before he gets stoned to death, goes all the way back to the beginning of Scripture to the father of the Jewish faith, Abraham, then shares all the history up until that point in time. Because the Biblical account's real. The gospel's revealed in the Old Testament & points to the coming Christ. If God's real & created all things for His pleasure, then He dictates how life's to be lived. Which is what Stephen did in revealing how they'd not worshipped God in a holistic lifestyle of gratitude throughout history, instead they'd beaten & sought to kill everyone who'd come to remind them of these things, including Jesus.

In Mark 12 they were hung up on the details of the Law seen through their questions. They weren't seeing the Law pointed to their need for Christ. The Law was never meant to save, as Galatians 2:16 explains...*"...know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ & not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."*

In reference to the Temple, which also pointed to Jesus, it says in Hebrews 9:24...*"For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence."* They'd not realized the Ceremonial Law had an expiration date as seen in Hebrews 9:10...*"They are only a matter of food & drink & various ceremonial washings - external regulations applying until the time of the new order."* The New Order referring to the person & work of Jesus.

And in Hebrews 10:8-14 it addresses all the sacrifices & offering of the Ceremonial Law...*"First he said, 'Sacrifices & offerings, burnt offerings & sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them' - though they were offered in accordance with the law. <sup>9</sup>Then he said, 'Here I am, I have come to do your will.' He sets aside the first to establish the second. <sup>10</sup>And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. <sup>11</sup>Day after day every priest stands & performs his religious duties; again & again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But when **this priest** had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. <sup>14</sup>For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."* And in v18 he says...*"sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary."*

We've been made perfect in Christ, righteous (rightly related to God once more), but yet still are being made holy as we strive to live lives holy & pleasing to God - in other words, we reflect lives of godly morality as we grow more like Him! Romans 12:1-2 say it this way...*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers & sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God - this is your true & proper worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test & approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing & perfect will."*

Colossians 2 says it this way...*"When you were dead in your sins & in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup>having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us & condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross."*

We're free from guilt & to make mistakes, but freedom doesn't give us license to sin against God's moral law, since it's His moral law which reveals His character & to which we're called to emulate. Paul teaches in Romans 6 (1-2/6-7)...*"What shall we say, then?"*

*Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup>By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?...<sup>6</sup>For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - <sup>7</sup>because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.”*

*Jesus Himself addressed this issue in Matthew 5:17-20...“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup>For truly I tell you, until heaven & earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. <sup>19</sup>Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands & teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices & teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup>For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees & the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

In a cursory reading, it may seem He's saying we should all be following all the minute laws of the Old Testament! But, like all Scripture, we read with the end in mind. He says, He's come to fulfill them, meaning the totality of the Law. He's canceled the penalty of death as He's only person who can be called 'greatest in the Kingdom of heaven' since he lived a perfect sinless life. Then He points to the Religious Leaders, the Crème de la Crème of religiosity, and says, they don't even live up to it! In other words, if you think you can live up to all this, you're fooling yourself, all of it points to the need for Jesus!

*As Romans 10 (vv4 & 9) point out...“Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes...If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” That simple - not following any rituals & ceremonies. So, we conclude from all this, the Civic & Ceremonial Law no longer apply, they're fulfilled in Christ. The Moral Law has been fulfilled in Christ as well, we couldn't live up to it, but He did in our place. However, the Moral Law's still the standard of governance because it's that which reflects God's heart & governs all bodies & relationships. The Ceremonial Law just pointed to Christ who was to come...holiness born of gratitude.*

*As 1 Peter 2:21-22 reveal...“Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup>“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” Jesus fulfilled the Moral Law yes, but left the example of a life lived reflective of God's heart to which we always strive. Again, as it says in Romans 12:1...“...in view of God's mercy...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy & pleasing to God - this is your true & proper worship.” Holiness, a direct reference to God's moral character.*

*If we're to worship God, it begins with understanding who He is & who we are in connection to Him. However, just understanding that connection isn't enough. Remember, God's not against effort, just earning. There's a calling upward of gratitude in holiness & purity requiring both the love of God & our response to His love; grateful worship. N. T. Wright explains, “The Jewish law begins with worship, with the love of*

God, because if it's true, we're made in God's image we'll find our fullest meaning, our true selves, the more we learn to love & worship the one we're designed to reflect. No half measures: heart, soul, mind & strength - that is, every aspect of human life - is to be poured out gladly in worship of the one true God. Whatever we do, we're to do for Him. If we truly lived like that for a single day, God's kingdom would have come on earth as it is in heaven. And - this is the point - Jesus seems to think that through His kingdom-work this commandment is now within our reach."<sup>3</sup>

When we worship, we seek to celebrate God's worth & can only be fully realized when our complete being is involved (Mark 12:30). Jesus told the law expert that greatest commandment involved love for God & love for neighbors. If we're unwilling to examine our lives as they've been lived out, then we'll be unable to assess whether or not our love for God is real. Since we'll only worship something or someone we love more than anything else, worship in its base form is an act of attributing worth as highest priority. For us to enter into worship, God must be gratefully loved more than the love of self.

Worship, means we learn to pray. Words often describe what our heart feels. What do your prayers reveal? Are they words honoring of the divine-human conversation, full of gratitude, or complaining? People struggle to be consistent in worship for many reasons. Perhaps one of the most effective ways of being worshipful is to practice gratitude. If you struggle with consistency in worship, focus on gratitude & worship becomes natural. Begin your prayers with a lengthy 'thank you' for all you have; family, good food, a roof over your head, your car, your spouse, a chance to study & better yourself, whatever it may be, and you'll find gratitude leads to joy in worship.

This passage ends with Jesus telling the Law expert he wasn't far from the Kingdom of God. In a chapter bent on correcting false teaching & piety, Jesus commends this guy. One more step was needed, a full grateful submission of life to Jesus, the great & final sacrifice for our sin, the culmination of all the Law! Are we grateful for who God is, and who we are in Him? I hope I've given reason today. When we worship in gratitude with our entire being, we make ourselves available to God's leading. When we choose to follow after God's leading, we're more available to love our neighbors as ourselves, which is the overflow of true & proper worship of God.

Worship in Christ doesn't require anything of the Civic or Ceremonial Law, they're fulfilled in Christ. The Moral Law is also fulfilled, but remains the standard of life given it reflects the character of God in His people. We strive towards it in gratitude.

In true worship the affections of my heart incline towards Jesus. My soul finds identity in Him. My mind renewed by His Word. And my strength is exerted in offering my body as a living sacrifice. Worshipping God means endeavoring to know & honor Him in every way possible. It requires intentionality, commitment & devotion. Worship's all-encompassing gratitude, shown in a life of holiness & purity, overflowing to others.

---

<sup>3</sup> N. T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004], 170, Logos