

## Reflection on Mark 12:28-34

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What rules do you follow? I don't mean the rules set by your city, state, or national government, but rather the rules you set for yourself. Sometimes we're not even aware of them. We may have rules about how much we want to save, about how much time we want to spend with family or friends, or about when we can surf the internet. But we almost always do have some rules – formal or informal, conscious or unconscious – that we follow. What are some of yours?

I ask this because I think the rules we follow reveal what's important to us. And I think that's what's going on here. Jesus is revealing a lot about himself – and the God whose kingdom he proclaims – by answering this question about commandments.

“Given how many commandments there are – more than 600!” the scribe asks, “which do you think is most important?” And Jesus doesn't give just one, but two. First, love God. And second, love each other. Except that from the way Jesus links them together I think he means that these two laws can't really be separated, that they can't really be understood apart from each other. You can't love God, in other words, apart from loving each other.

Now why would Jesus do that? Or, perhaps more to the point, why would God do that? Insist that the only way to love God is to love each other?

The answer, I think, isn't really that difficult. Any parent knows that the thing you hope most for your children is that they love each other. Jesus introduces us to a God whose love is abundant and wide and everlasting and – perhaps more than anything else – parental.

As a wise friend once said to me, a parent is only as happy as her or his least happy child. So also with God. And so God says that the best way to love God is to love each other. The best way to honor God is to honor each other. And the best way to be in relationship with God is to be in relationship with each other. Why? Because God loves us with the love of a parent, wanting only and always the very best for all of God's children. When we realize this we are, indeed, not far from the kingdom of God.