



A just weight
and balance

are the
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

- Mark 12:28

Then one of the scribes came near and heard the Sadducees arguing with one another.

- *He saw how well Jesus answered them, so he asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of them all?"*

(ISV)

- Mark 12:29 Jesus answered,
"The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord,
- 12:30 and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'
- 12:31 The second is this:
'You must love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."(ISV)

- Mark 12:32 Then the scribe told him, "Well said, Teacher! You have told the truth that 'God is one, and there is no other besides him.'
- 12:33 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 the burnt offerings and sacrifices." (ISV)

- Mark 12:34

When Jesus saw how wisely the man answered, he told him,

- "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

(ISV)

The office of Scribe.—

The scribes were responsible for disseminating their knowledge of Hebrew laws, and of Hebrew scriptures to the common people.

They held the
key of knowledge,
they were charged
with the duty of unlocking
the mystery and bringing out
the meaning of
the written word.

The office of a scribe was
useful and honorable.

Our Savior has taught us
the value of a good scribe:

*“Every scribe who hath been made a
disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like
unto a man that is a house-holder,
who bringeth forth out of his treasure
things new and old.”*

(Matthew

These scribes, in course of time,
thought more of human authorities
than of the light of heaven;

***“making void the word of God
by their tradition.”***

(Mark 7:13)

“blind leaders of the blind.”

(Matthew 15:14)

They no longer helped men
into the Kingdom,
but hindered those who would enter.

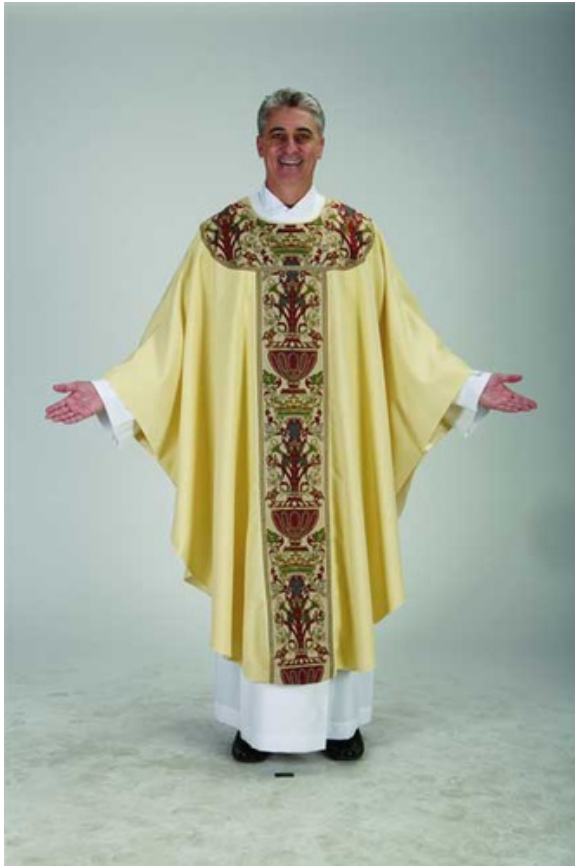
Matthew 23:15

Woe unto you, scribes and
Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye
compass sea and land to make one
proselyte, and when he is made,
**ye make him twofold more the
child of hell than yourselves.**

Mark 12:38

*As he taught, he said,
"Beware of the scribes!*

*They like to walk around in long robes,
to be greeted in the marketplaces,*



Mark 12:39

and to have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.

12:40 They devour widows' houses and say long prayers to cover it up.

They will receive greater condemnation!"

(ISV)

However, our Lord saw
something different in this scribe.

This is one of the many instances in
which Jesus took a very kind view;
and was not afraid to say that
He saw the good that is in every one.

True praise never does any harm.

On the contrary,
it **softens** and **humbles.**

It would be well if we
imitated our Lord
in our conversations
with the unconverted.

If we sought out the good
and did not immediately
go to the negative.

Let us learn from our Savior
how kind He is
even to His adversaries.

He is no fault finder
without cause.

He is One to see
the good in every one of us.

- This scribe had witnessed a clash between Jesus and the Sadducees and had decided that Jesus was a wise teacher

- He wanted, sincerely, to know what commandments were the greatest.
- When he asks what was the “first” commandment, he doesn't mean the first in “order”,
 - but the first in rank of importance.

- He wanted Jesus to resolve a disputed issue.
- Some Pharisees held that the law of sacrifices was the most important.
 - Jesus answered:
To love God with all the heart and soul was first, and second to love thy neighbor.

- On these two basic truths hang all the laws of God (Matt. 22:40).
 - Its Author is one;
 - Its design is unique,
 - It teaches one path,
- Leading to one great end.

- This scribe, who is unnamed, represents many in our day.
 - He was one who agreed completely.
 - Views Jesus as an excellent Teacher.
 - Verse 32.
“Well said Teacher,
you have spoken the truth.”

- And Jesus said of him,
“*Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*”
- One not in the Kingdom had just as well be miles away from it.
 - Does it matter
a mile
or
an inch?

There is a need for self-examination to determine if one is may be “**not far from the kingdom**,” and yet **not** in it.

So many deceive themselves with a vain persuasion and opinion of faith, thinking they have true faith in Christ, **when it is not so.**

We are to try our salvation by those marks of it, which are **taught in** the Word of God. ²²

What may be the character of those who are “*not far from the kingdom*”.

1. They may possess considerable knowledge of Scripture.

2. They may make an open confession of their belief.

3. They may have strong convictions of sin.

4. They may have a desire to amend their lives.

When one thinks they
may be in danger,
one goes to the physician;

Others, feeling secure,
neglects himself,
and dies as a result.

Thus it is with men
also in religion

The scribe was a religious man
who knew the Word.

A devout observer of religious rituals,
such as the giving of burnt offerings
and sacrifices,
the keeping of the Sabbath, etc.

Having devoted his life
to the study of the Law.

He was a man of
moral integrity.

This is a likely deduction
from our knowledge of the
fastidious lifestyles of these
scribes and religious
leaders.

He was a man of
intellectual sincerity.

And what better question
can be imagined than,
“what does God
want from us?”

He was capable of thinking for himself.

Jesus had a respect for him

as a man who went
beyond merely parroting
the “party line”.

His peers interest in questioning Jesus
was to trip Him up, a desire to see Him
fall into the traps they attempted to lay for
Him so as to discredit Him

We live in a shallow world
filled with shallow thinking.

This man was a thinker!

Many people go through life
without thinking of eternal realities,
or at least thinking that
such issues are beyond them.

More interested in watching Jerry
Springer than reading the word of God!

He was a man
who respected Jesus.

He may not have begun by admiring Jesus, but it seems clear that his question and his response to Jesus' answer indicate a respect for Jesus as a good Teacher.

He “got it”;

he knew that loving God
was more important
than obeying religious rules.

Jesus affirmed him
for his understanding,
paying him the compliment
that he was “not far”
from the Kingdom.

At the same time,
Jesus’ words serve as a warning,
because “not far” is “not in!”

Let's recap what we've said thus far:

this man was highly religious,

a man of fastidious moral integrity,

a deep thinker and intellectual honesty,

a man willing to go beyond party lines.

a man who agreed with Jesus' answer.

This sounds like a man
who has got it all together!

But wait a minute:

Jesus doesn't say,
“Buddy, I can't wait ‘
til you get to Heaven;
you're just the kind of man
we need up there!”

Jesus said,
“You aren’t far away!”

there is no Scriptural evidence
one way or the other
as to whether the man
made it into the Kingdom of Heaven

Or whether he died
within sight of the gate,
but never making it in.

And here is the sobering truth: the man who drowns
within sight of the shoreline is just as dead as the man
who drowns 1000 miles out to sea.

Jesus commended the man!

He understood much,

But did he understand??

The reality and depth of his own sin?

We are all sinners guilty before a holy God.

Isaiah 64:6

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a filthy rag; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind, our iniquities sweep us away.

What we d we do know is
there is a problem endemic
to humanity is the problem of
overestimating our own goodness
and underestimating
the reality of our own sin.

One reason is because
we use the wrong yardstick.

Isaiah 64:6

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

We tend to think that, maybe I've done some things wrong, but I'm a lot closer to God than that fellow.

As though our relative goodness compared to another person merited us any consideration in the eyes of a holy God.

We measure ourselves
against ourselves.

We look at other people
and we say,

‘oh, I may have my faults,
but I’m not like old so-and-so.’

There is the belief of
self-deliverance?

This is where religion
gets it wrong;
we think that we can
do something to
“even the score”
with God.

Did this man think that
by virtue of his virtue,
he could reach God?

Did he imagine that he could keep the
commandments that Jesus issued?

Did he consider himself to be a man who
loved God with all his heart, soul, mind, and
strength?

Did he justify himself as one who loved his
neighbor as he loved himself? And do you?

- As we look at this statement of Jesus, we see both some good things, and some tragic things.
- It is more blessed to be near the kingdom than a far piece off, because with one's nearness, there is the greater likelihood he will take the steps to enter
- There is **HOPE** for those who understand and believe this great truth.

- The tragic element is the revelation that the man was not in the kingdom, but only near it.
- Thus it is a sad story.

- One of the great sorrows of life, is knowing some good people who are living their life not far from the kingdom of God.
 - Near to it, not far away perhaps, but never committed to being a part of it.

- **I would like briefly to note**
- some characteristics about the man in Mark 12 that made him **so near the kingdom.**
- The same thing that makes many today near the kingdom.
- And if you are near, you may think that I am talking about you . . . and I am.
- First – This man was brought near by his intellectual sincerity. Vs. 34.
(John 6:45 ff.

- Being a “scribe” of the law, he was a man more acquainted with the Word of God, than most men, and he appears as one who was an anxious inquirer for more knowledge.
- There are many today like him., and in this respect are like Apollos in Acts 18:24-26.

- The question he raised of Jesus was **not to arouse a controversy.**
- He wasn't doing it for the purpose of arguing or starting a religious quarrel.
- He wanted to know just what Jesus himself would say about this matter.
- He regarded Jesus as a Wise Teacher and he wanted to know what He would say.
- We regard him as one who is deeply sincere, a man of integrity.

- **But to be sincere, we know, is not enough.**
- Paul was sincere while he was putting Christians to death.
 - Acts 7:58 Stephen;
 - Acts 23:1 All good conscience;
 - Act 26:9 ***I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.***
 - 1 Timothy 1:13 ***Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.***

- Just being conscientious doesn't guarantee one is right with the Lord –
- Mat 7:21 ***"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the person who does what my Father in heaven wants.***
- 7:22 ***Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we force out demons and do many miracles by the power and authority of your name?'***
 - 7:23 ***Then I will tell them publicly, 'I've never known you. Get away from me, you evil people.'***

- This man was brought near by his ceremonial faithfulness.
- It appears that this scribe was faithful in loving God and his neighbor, in observing the burnt offerings and sacrifices, and keeping the Sabbath.
- And his sincere faithfulness to these things brought him near the door of the kingdom.
 - **But, it did not put him in the kingdom of God.**

- But looking again at Jesus' statement to the man, prompts us to ask the question,
“Well, what was it that separated him from entering into the kingdom of God?”
- It is better to be near the kingdom than a long way from it . . .

- And yet at the judgment, in as far as salvation is concerned, a man missing it by a foot, has missed it!
- A man that drowns a few feet from the shore is just as dead as the man who drowns in the middle of the ocean.

- You remember what occurred when Paul stood before Agrippa in Acts 26:28.
- When Paul had finished his powerful message, the ruler and those sitting with him were greatly affected by what Paul had said, and it is recorded that Agrippa said,
“Almost *thou persuadest me to be a Christian.*”
- At that moment, Agrippa was “not far from the kingdom.”

- Earlier in Acts, Felix, the Roman governor heard Paul's persuasive appeal for Felix to save his soul.

- He trembled, he quivered,
but he replied,

“When I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee.”

Acts 24:25.

- These two men reveal to us the sad truth that one may come near the kingdom, but then remain out of it.

- But what was it that separated this scribe in Mark 12 from the kingdom?
 - It was obvious that he admired Jesus –
 - Verse 32, “***Of a truth, Teacher, you have answered well.***”
 - But admiration for Jesus is not enough.
 - His admiration came short of a loyal and obedient faith.

- He was **unwilling** at this time to make a complete surrender of himself to Jesus as the Savior Jesus came to be.
- He was **not willing** to profess himself openly to become a disciple of Christ.

- There are various hindrances today that keep some outside the kingdom, many who are not far away.

- Such things as:

- **Pride** – because it takes true humility to admit that one **is a sinner** standing in need of the grace of God.

- Pride – has always stood as a hindrance to the kingdom.
- John 12:42 *Many rulers believed in Jesus. However, they wouldn't admit it publicly because the Pharisees would have thrown them out of the synagogue.*
- 12:43 *They were more concerned about what people thought of them than about what God thought of them. (GWV)*

- Self-righteousness

hinders one from coming into the kingdom.

- Instead of coming to the Great Physician to receive forgiveness of sins, some try to find their own remedies

- Spiritual home remedies include denying that one has sinned,
 - Rationalizing sin and excusing it away.
 - Believing that I am good enough, and God would not hold sin against a good person like me.

- II Timothy 3, speaks of people who are
“*always learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”
- We don't know if the lawyer ever arrived; Scripture is silent on this point.
- Perhaps he was one of the many religious teachers whom the Bible says came to faith in Christ right after the Day of Pentecost! But we aren't sure.

- Maybe the scribe failed to recognize that salvation was found in the One to Whom he spoke?
- Right in front of his face was the One who said,
“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man comes to the Father but by me.”

- The Way isn't religion, or goodness, or church membership, or anything else you can do.

The Way is Jesus!

- It's not enough to be religious,
 - or moral,
 - or to have intellectual curiosity,
 - or sincerity.

God has no religion.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

To me, he was one of the greatest teachers humanity has ever had. To his believers, he was God's only begotten Son.

— Mahatma Gandhi

Great as Gandhi was
he was not near
the kingdom of God.

Many men have may traveled
a long distance in the right
direction, and yet may leave
untraveled the last and most
important stage of the journey.

So is it with many hearers
of the gospel.

- It's not enough just to respect Jesus,
 - Or even to understand and appreciate Jesus' teachings.

- This man did all of that!
- And Jesus said, "*You're close!*"
But he wasn't in!

- **Conclusion:**

- Are you near the kingdom this morning?

- Or are you content just being near?

- You should come without delay, and enter the gates before it is too late.

- 2 Cor. 6:2 “***Behold now is the acceptable time, behold, today is the day of salvation.***”

- Conclusion:

- You may remember the words of that old gospel favorite:

***“Almost cannot avail,
almost... is but to fail.”***

- Confess your belief in Christ

- Be baptized
into the Lord’s kingdom.

**Doors of the church
are open.**

**Spirit & Bride Say
“Come”.**

Revelation 22:17

