

## Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March

*Mark 12:28-37*

In Jesus' ministry, not all Scribes are shown in a negative light, even though they are often criticised alongside the Pharisees. Here is one Scribe who was enlightened, and a searcher for the truth.

The Scribes were the legal experts in Judaism, the people who knew most about the Old Testament laws. They often debated about which of the commandments was the most important. Not just from the Ten Commandments, but from all the instructions in the Old Testament, and they reckoned there were no less than 613 of these. One Rabbi after Jesus' time even said that you should be able to summarise the commandments in the time you can stand on one leg! Jesus' answer points to the twin rules of loving God and our neighbour. The first of these comes from Deuteronomy 6:4, a passage recited regularly by Jewish people and known by its opening word in Hebrew: the 'Shema' ('listen!'). The other part is from Leviticus 19:18. Who would have thought that a book so full of animal sacrifices would contain a gem like this!

Jesus commends the Scribe as being close to God's kingdom. In other words, loving God and others is the key to that. In one sense, to love God doesn't require us to do anything, yet it actually asks us to do everything. And Jesus brackets both commands together, as if they were just one: loving God and neighbour.

In 1527, Europe was devastated by the Great Plague. Martin Luther wrote a letter to a friend who asked his advice about what Christians should do at that time: should they stay, or flee to save themselves? Amongst his advice, Luther wrote

*this: 'We know that helping our neighbours means we're doing deeds that are pleasing to God. In fact, we do God's will and render true and obedient service to Him when we engage in helping our neighbours'.*

In our challenging days of the public health crisis, surely we need no other guidance than that.

### Prayers

Gracious and Loving Father God

We are all Your children and we know that You are with us.

Today we think of children and young people unable to attend school. We ask Your blessing on the wee ones who don't understand and the ones who are frightened by what they are hearing on television. Comfort and draw close to them and their parents....

Today we pray for all those who are vulnerable at this time - the elderly, those with underlying health conditions, the homeless and pregnant women and their unborn babies. Draw close to them and comfort them. Give them courage to not be afraid for with You beside us none of us have anything to fear. We think of those who work with the homeless in shelters some of whom have had to close their facilities. We pray for the Church of Scotland. Help us to find new, creative and radical ways to worship you.

Loving and Healing God draw close to us all in this pandemic crisis and let us feel your healing, loving and gracious presence.

Loving and Healing God, In the midst of this pandemic crisis You are with us. Let us feel your presence.

You are our Provider. Give us each day our daily bread and stop everyone from panic buying.

May we all feel enfolded in Your love, Your grace and Your healing.

In Christ's name, Amen

Please also include your own prayers for our congregation and parish, especially the vulnerable and isolated, as well as people in the front line who are trying to keep life as normal as possible for us-: medical & social services, food suppliers, social and council services. Please also remember the Minister who is preparing for several funerals (none of them due to the virus). Remember especially young families, with the added stress of the restrictions we have to observe.

### **For Children, on Mother's Day**

*(adapted from SPCK)*

People used to visit their Mothers on this day. On the journey through the country, children would pick wild flowers to give to their mothers, which is why the daffodil is a symbol for Mothering Sunday.

It's now a time for celebrating our mothers, and people who are like a Mother to us.

This Mother's Day, think of something you could do that would make your mum or the person who cares for you smile. You can never overestimate the influence of a good mother. Our mums mean a lot to us. Everyone has a mother, some of us have a 'mother figure' in our lives. We should try to appreciate everything our mums do for us.

Think of all that she's done since then, and still does for you because she loves you.

*If you don't believe that Mum's are very busy people, watch the attached videoclip 'Mum's Song'!*

When was the last time you were encouraged by something your mum said or did for you? When was the last time you said thank you to your mother for all her love and care? The Bible tells us to respect our parents. We need to appreciate what mums do. Never forget to say to mums everywhere, and mother figures, three words: *'Thank you'*. PS there's also a sheet attached with some activities and colouring for Mother's Day.