

**Sermon Discussion Guide- Week of October 31, 2021**  
**Let's Get Serious: Becoming a World Christian-**  
**Not Far From the Kingdom, Mark 12:28-34**  
**Pastor Hall- 8:30 & 10:30 Contemporary, Pastor Temple- 10:30 Traditional**

**Getting Started- Life Updates, Prayer Requests & Opening Question (15 min)**

- Anything to share about personal events or faith experiences since you last met?
- Are there joys or concerns that you would like to share with the group for the closing prayer time or for group members to hold in prayer during the week? (please note them below for later)
  
- **Opening Discussion Question-** Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Lion were all seeking something they were missing in the Wizard of Oz. How do you recall this story addressing the journey toward wholeness and fulfillment?

**Review the Sermon (15 min)**

Please read aloud the scriptures from this week's sermon message and then discuss the questions which follow as time allows. There are more questions than you will have time for, so it is ok to be selective.

**Mark 12:28-34**

<sup>28</sup> One of the teachers of the law came and 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 and with all your soul and with all your mind and 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 and there is no other but him. <sup>33</sup> 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 burnt offerings and 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.**

1. If you had to give a one-minute summary of the sermon message this week, what would you say?
2. According to Pastor Temple there were 613 commands in the Old Testament, 365 negative and 248 positive. Why would these two commandments stand above and apart from these others?
3. The first command (vs 29-30) comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-6, a.k.a. the Shema which means to hear. As a devout Jewish person, Jesus would have recited the Shema each morning and evening. In this fourfold command of heart, soul, mind and strength, Jesus chose to add mind to the other three listed in the Shema. Why do you believe Jesus added mind?

4. The second command given (vs 31) comes from Leviticus 19:18. Why would it be important to love yourself in order to love your neighbor as yourself?
5. How is loving ourselves in the right ways guiding us toward the persons God wants us to become, not necessarily the person we want ourselves to become?
6. How does knowing and following the commands to Love God, Love Ourselves and to Love our Neighbors grant us a great proximity and perspective on the Kingdom of Heaven (vs 34)?
7. How do you respond to Pastor Michelle's quote of Dr. Martin Luther King? "...only goodness can drive out evil and only love can conquer hate."

### **Other Related Readings (10 min)**

1. Would a volunteer please read aloud 1 John 4:7-12.
2. How do these verses describe how love works in the Kingdom of God and where it begins?
3. What reasons are given as to why we are to love one another?
4. The kingdom of God is also known as the reign of God. Pastor Michelle referenced Scott Jones' book Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor when read "The reign of God is best understood as that state where all of God's creatures are fully loved." How is the command to love people not just a command to follow but a path to draw nearer to the kingdom of God?

### **Personalizing and Applying The Message (10 min)**

1. As you reflect upon the sermon and the scripture readings above, what are points of encouragement or challenge for you personally?
2. Would you be willing to recite the Shema each morning and evening this week as Jesus likely did? How do you think this practice might affect your attitude or focus each day?
3. What is God leading us to lay aside that hinders us from loving others well?
4. Of these three commands, Love God, Love Ourselves and Love People, which of them do you find the most difficult? How can the group be in prayer for you about this?

### **Witness and Closing (10 minutes)**

- There is a Korean expression "love must come before it can go." In what ways can we tend our souls this week so that the love and peace of God may be more fully present in us and the presence of God in us be a comfort and blessing to those around us?
- Are there persons you know who are in need that the group can lift up in prayer?
- A volunteer may conclude by leading the group in prayer about the joys and concerns shared earlier in the meeting