

## Answer the World Wisely



As a student seeking (vv.28-33)



As a preacher proclaiming (v.29)

In the name of Jesus Christ, dear loyal subjects of the King,

If you were returning from a road trip to Chicago or Milwaukee and had just enough gas to get to Hudson, Wisconsin, what would you do? Since we live in Minnesota, we can compare this side to heaven and think of the other side as something less. Let's imagine the whole world lined up along the banks of the St. Croix River discussing how to get across. Some are scientific: "The river will freeze over to walk across!" Others want back before the next Vikings-Packer game. "Let's paddle over." "Maybe a boat!" shout the rest. There must be many ways to get across the river to "God's Country" – Minnesota!

But crossing from earth to heaven? Who has been this way before? Who knows what's over there or how to reach the distant shore? Are the skeptics right? "When you're dead, you're dead." Sooner or later we all come to the river. God's advice? Like CHRIST THE KING: **Answer the World Wisely...**



As a student seeking (vv.28-33)

That's what Jesus has here in Mark 12, **a student seeking**. He seems different than the scribes and Pharisees and political Herodians earlier on Tuesday of Holy Week. They're interrogating Jesus to make Him look bad to Passover pilgrims in Jerusalem. This rabbi from Nazareth may rouse crowds with sermons and miracles, but these Jewish religious leaders are envious of His popularity and fearful of what their Roman occupiers will do. They want to bring Jesus down before it's too late.

Jesus is standing firm, but they're all failing. How do you do in front of a crowd? Could you hold your train of thought to strangers ready to pick up rocks? I'm amazed by Jesus' poise. My heart would be pounding and my breath short with such mind numbing opposition. These sworn enemies questioned Christ about His authority – and failed. They rejected His *Parable of the Tenants* and tried to arrest Him, (12:1-12) – but failed. They tried to shame Jesus in a tax and marriage trap (12:13-27) – but failed totally.

But here the question in our text seems more discerning. The teacher of the law noticed Jesus' good answer and asked about something troubling his mind and heart. Our Lord's answer is amazing. According to one source Jewish rabbis counted up 613 laws and debated which was the most important. Is Jesus fooled into picking the wrong one? Not at all. He is the Word of God Incarnate, God's Word in human flesh and blood, conceived by God the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He was there 1500 years earlier when the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write: "***The most important one...: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'***" For this **student seeking** Jesus answers: "***The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.***"

Where do you go for answers? Where do you find comfort? Are you impressed by articles in *Woman's World* magazine about someone's dead mother appearing like a glowing blob that brought her peace? Does Oprah have the answers for you? Can the writings of philosophers or actions of actors who orbit their ashes in outer space help you find your way across to heaven? Or would it be wise to investigate the claims of Jesus Christ that He came from heaven and can show you the way across?

Pastor Mittelstadt said in last Sunday's sermon at Christ Lutheran in Hugo: "If you don't like what Jesus says, watch what He does." I also like the way He speaks, the way He cares even in extreme criticism and danger. This scribe agrees with Jesus. He sounds excited, "***Well said, teacher....You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 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.”*

Do you agree? Then you love your neighbor enough to pray for him and tell him about Jesus, right? **“Faith comes by hearing”** (Romans 10:17), but how will he hear if you don’t tell him? Loving God **“with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength”** means you trust God to give you the words and you fear God more than your neighbor, right? After all, God commands all Christians, **“While going disciple all ethnic groups baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to guard and treasure everything I have commanded.”** (Matthew 28:19f TPA) Loving God above all things you would rather read your Bible and pray than watch a movie or ball game, right? You gladly give more to Christ for His kingdom than for tickets, right? All your understanding bows to God to trust His Word above your education or experience, right? All your strength builds God’s kingdom. Your budget and schedule always give God top priority, the first and best, right? You see, under God’s law we’re standing in sin with the scribe on the banks of the river. We need to **Answer the World** and our own worldly hearts **Wisely**. We need Christ for us...



### **As a preacher proclaiming (v.29)**

**“When Jesus saw how sensibly he answered, he told him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.”**

If I go **“not far”** from a doorway, I crash into the wall. If our ushers put the numbers **“not far”** from the hymn board, the numbers land on the floor. If I sit **“not far”** from a chair, I end up in the aisle. **“Not far”** in sports means no score. In electrical engineering it means a short circuit that sparks fires and destroys things. **“Not far from the kingdom of God,”** still means, **“You lose.”**

That’s why Jesus came. He volunteered from eternity to help the mass of sinners on the far side of the river to cross over to God one soul at a time in absolute safety. Most never made it to the river because they followed their own hearts. But this Jewish scribe was blessed with God’s clear and concise Law that **“was put in charge to lead us until Christ that we might be justified by faith.”** (Galatians 3:24 TPA) God’s Law will lead you to the river where you can see heaven. But the Law says, **“This do and you will live!”** And then because of our sinful nature, the Law stirs up all our evil desires as we’ve learned in Romans Bible Class. Then the Law condemns us all. It says, **“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....”** (Romans 3:23) This was true of Mother Theresa and the Pope, true of Martin Luther, true of John Calvin. Pick the most religious person you can, yet the Law of God says we all fall short. The greatest religious athlete, the most spiritual person alive can run hard and fast for that river and still fall short of God’s glory on the far side. Heaven is out of reach because of our sin.

So God came the entire distance to save us. This is the focus of our Ministerial Education system in the WELS. God came all the way to help us who could not help ourselves. **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”** (Romans 3:23f NIV) As Jesus says in John’s Gospel: **“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”** (John 5:24 NIV) Jesus brings us to the far shore of heaven, God’s country above.

To **Answer the World Wisely** means **As a student seeking**. That alone would be reason to study at our WELS schools. The blessings of being a pastor or teacher come first in your own personal study. Then they come even more **As a preacher proclaiming**. As **“a kingdom of priests and a holy nation”** (Exodus 19:6) we all have this responsibility from God. **“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”** (1 Peter 2:9 NIV) But we cannot all go to the whole world or serve in the public ministry. And that’s the blessing of our WELS Ministerial Education system to train the next generation of servants for the Lord to go in our place. Jesus forgives all our sins. He gives us God’s love to love Him and our neighbor. **Answer the World Wisely**. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.