

## PREPARING AT HOME

October 29–November 4, 2018

*Focus reading:* Mark 12:28–34 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=405591277>)

*Other lectionary readings:* Ruth 1:1–18, Psalm 146, Hebrews 9:11–14

*Theme:* The Way of Love

Keeping God’s law was critical to the Jewish people, for those laws were integral to the covenant relationship they had with God. While all laws were seen as important, they often sought ways to summarize them or capture them into a few succinct statements. Rabbis were sometimes asked for their version of such succinct statements, and here we see that Jesus is given the challenge. He responds by quoting the *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, a central creed of Judaism, declaring that God is one and worthy of our undivided love. Jesus then asserts the importance of extending that love to other people by quoting Leviticus 19:18. Interestingly the previous verse, Leviticus 19:17, defines the neighbor as a fellow Israelite; however, Jesus does not include that limitation in his rendering of the commandment. When we read this and other teachings of Jesus, it is clear that Jesus sees all people and all of creation as our neighbors. To love our neighbors as ourselves is to love “in the same way as.” Self-love is not a sin. It is love of self that allows us to care for ourselves and give ourselves in ministry to others. How can we love the God who made us if we hate ourselves? How can we use our gifts to serve others if we see ourselves as worthless? Love of God, others, and self to be held in balance and in tension with one another. One is not more important than the other; rather, they enhance one another and together bring us closer to the reign of God.

### WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT?

The scribe asked Jesus what rules were most important. How would you answer that question? For younger children, narrow the question by asking, “What is the most important rule at home? At school? With your friends? At church?”

### LOVE TIMES THREE

How can we show our love for God? How can we show our love for others? How can we show our love for self? Invite children to draw pictures that answer those three questions. If they like, children may draw two pictures for each question. Using a clothes hanger and string or yarn, make a mobile with the pictures. Talk about the importance of balancing our time in ways that allow us to express our love for God, others, and self.

### PRAYER

Loving God,  
You loved us before we were born  
and will always love us with the greatest love we can imagine.  
Help us to be more loving,  
showing our love for you and others  
even as we care for and love ourselves.  
Amen.

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