

## My Heart is Heavy

31<sup>st</sup> Week of Ordinary Time- Mark 12:28-34

My heart is heavy this week as, yet again, another gunman opens fire in a hate-filled attack on innocent life at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA. In the same breath, I anguish over the estimated seven thousand migrants coming toward our southern border seeking asylum and safety. I don't have an answer to fix any of these horrific situations.

What I do have is a reflection on this week's gospel which clarifies for me what God is calling us to do in these times of prejudice, hatred, bigotry, racism, fear and massacre.

Out of Jesus' mouth come the words, **"Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."**

These very words open the 4<sup>th</sup> verse from 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Deuteronomy from the Old Testament. These words are central to the Jewish faith, something taught to Jewish children from birth. It is known as the *Shema*. It is the prayer that the guards (at the gas chambers in Nazi Germany during WWII) heard the Jewish people pray as they were led to slaughter.

The scribe from this week's gospel asked Jesus, **"Which is the first of all the commandments?"** Jesus recites for him the *Shema*, words of true fidelity to God. And then, Jesus sets the bar higher as he says, **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** Interestingly, the young man agrees.

Jesus recognizes that the scribe understands the very truth that is embodied in these commandments. Jesus' response to him is simple. **"You are not far from the kingdom of God."**

As we face violence and the reality of the immigrants headed to us, we must first rely on God to help us. We must then teach, preach and proclaim tolerance and respect for differences. In this time where so many believe they have a right to solve their differences and their anger with violence, we must say a resounding **"NO!"**. We must take care of those less fortunate than us. We need to remember that the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, were immigrants fleeing persecution from Herod, fleeing to Egypt where they relocated into safety. This is the challenge of this week's gospel. We must hear Jesus' words to love God and others, taking them to heart if we dare to seek eternal life.

We must place God above all things and the rest of the human race in equal status to ourselves no matter their life circumstances or their beliefs. This includes those I don't agree with. That is the hardest part of this lesson.

Blessings!

  
Sue Schettler