I want you to think back to the morning after you were saved.

You got up and looked in the mirror.

Same face staring back at you.

You look back to your bedroom. If you are married – it is the same person lying next to you.

You ate the same breakfast and drove the same car to the same job.

You have the same friends.

You like the same food.

So what had changed?

In one sense – nothing changed … but, in another sense – true salvation changes everything.

Our passage this morning teaches us that:

When we come to Jesus – our relationships are fundamentally changed – now and eternally.
We are changed within and that effect how we relate to everyone.

This is a crucial truth. This is how we know God is real and at work in us.

The things that we once held dear fade and a passion for God and His son Jesus grows in us.

And as a result, every relationship, every attraction, every bond in our lives is fundamentally altered – in this life and the life to come.

When you become a Christian in one sense nothing changes but in another sense everything changes.

2 Corinthians 5:17 describes this change:

> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

We are new creations – we are not the same men and women we used to be.

In our passage this morning, Jesus is asked a series of tricky questions. In His answers to these questions – Jesus shows us how three of the relationships in our lives changed at salvation.

Before we look at this morning’s passage – let me remind you where we are in the Gospel of Mark.

The Gospel of Mark centres on:

**Jesus: The God Who Came To Save**

We are in the third major section of this Gospel:

**The climax of the gospel 11:1-16:8**

This is the section that focusses on the events surrounding the saving work of Jesus in His death and resurrection.

As the cross looms large – the ministry of Jesus becomes very direct.
You either recognise He is the Son of God – the only way of salvation – the most important relationship in your life – or you will have no hope on the day of judgment.

Here is how this final section breaks up:

**The Rejection of Jesus the Messiah** 11-12

**The Wrath of Jesus the Messiah** 13

**The Triumph of Jesus the Messiah** 14-16

We are in this first section and it develops around two conflicts between Jesus and the leaders of Israel:

**The Conflict Over Fruit** 11:1-25

**The Conflict Over Authority** 11:27-12:44

When Jesus enters Jerusalem as the long awaited Messiah – it triggers a seismic struggle with the leaders of the nation

They refuse to welcome Him – they refuse to accept Him. He is not their Messiah.

We are in this second conflict:

**The Conflict Over Authority** 11:27-12:44

The question is: who is the true authority in your life? Self, the Law, religious leaders, secular leaders, money – or God Himself?

This section outlines like this:

**The Authority of Jesus Confronted** 11:27-12:12

**The Authority of Jesus Challenged** 12:13-12:34

**The Authority of Jesus Confirmed** 12:35-44

This morning, we are looking at:

**The authority of Jesus Challenged.**

His authority to interpret the Law is challenged *three* times by various leaders of Israel.
What is fascinating is that in this section, political and religious enemies have united to attack Jesus.

I am sure you realize that every society has a spectrum of religious and political leaders.

Here is how one commentator outlined the voting biases of the various Australian political parties.

Some are more right wing and authoritarian, some more left wing and libertarian.

What is fascinating is that at times political and ideological enemies unite to defeat a common enemy.

Right here in Australia we have seen PUP and the Greens – groups with very little in common – uniting together to defeat bills proposed by Labor or Liberal.

As well, on the religious scene in Australia – you have some churches that are more conservative and some more liberal.

The more conservative churches often line up more with the LNP.

The more liberal churches often line up more with the Labor Party.
Every society has its political and religious groupings.

It was no different in first century Judaism.

After the period of the Maccabees – the time between the Testaments – three main religious parties developed in Judaism.

The Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes.

You may not have heard of The Essenes. They lived communally in tight groups – and by the time of Jesus, they had withdrawn from mixing with the general population and are not mentioned in the New Testament.

The other two groups were:

The Pharisees and the Sadducees.

The Pharisees drew their authority from interpreting the Law – the Sadducees from their rule over the Temple.

The Pharisees used the entire Old Testament for their teaching – the Sadducees only held to the primacy of the Pentateuch, the first five books of Moses.

The Pharisees were usually middle class – the Sadducees came from the upper classes.

The Pharisees believed in the resurrection and an afterlife – the Sadducees did not.

The Pharisees rejected the rule of Rome – the Sadducees accepted it.
As well there were political parties in first century Israel:

The main ones were the Herodians and the Zealots.

The Herodians supported Herod and Rome and as such were given a degree of authority to rule over Israel. Most Herodians – but not all – were Sadducees.

The Zealots were the opposite. They hated the Herodians. They were the revolutionaries of the day sworn to overthrow Herod and Rome and free Israel.

There is one other group mentioned in the New Testament.

The Scribes.

These were the teachers of the Law. Most Scribes – but again – not all – were Pharisees. The Sadducees and Essenes also had some scholars who were viewed as Scribes.
Here is how I want to put these groups on a grid.

All this to say – like us – Jesus lived in a very complex world. Different parties, theologies, teachings.

Jesus gives us a guide as to how we should navigate our way through a complex landscape.

I also want you to note that while there were some alliances – in general these groups were **way** apart. Differences over theology and Rome were stark.

In fact – as far as we know – only **one** thing ever united them all.

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**The enemy of my enemy is my friend.**

A hatred of Jesus brought these enemies together to try and bring Him down.

Jesus threatened the religious or secular power of all of these groups – so He became a common target.

In today’s passage these leaders and teachers tried to trap Jesus by means of difficult theological questions.

These are the theologically loaded equivalent of – have you stopped beating your wife yet? Or probably more the more common question for most of us:

**Do these jeans make me look fat?**
As this cartoon points out – It’s a trap!!!

As we well know men – there is no answer that leaves us unscathed.

Yes … no … I’m not sure … can you ask someone else … what answer would you like dear? – there is no answer that gets us out of trouble.

But – as we will see – Jesus is up to the task. What He does in each instance is answer their question in such a way that not only does it sidestep the trap – it teaches us something about how salvation changes us.

First:

**How Salvation Changes Our Understanding Of Authority**

Look at Mark 12:13:

> And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk.

Who is it who sent these two groups? Luke 20:20 tells us it was the Scribes and chief priests – the Sanhedrin – the ruling body of Israel – who sent these men.

Luke also describes them as spies and says they came pretending to be sincere in order to catch Him out with some statement that might allow them to deliver Him over to the Roman authorities.

The Sanhedrin sent the Pharisees and Herodians – together. These groups are natural enemies – about as opposed as you can get – they hated each other.

But as we will see it was important for them both to be there in order to trap Jesus.

Verse 14:

> And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone’s opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God.”

They said this to butter Jesus up. They didn’t actually believe a word of it – but every word is actually true.

Jesus speaks the truth regardless of the opinions of others.

> “Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?”

We need to understand that Rome had taken over Palestine and had implemented a system of taxation.
The word used here for taxes refers to the poll tax – a yearly tax of one denarius payable by every adult male.

The Jews hated every tax – but this was the most hated of all the taxes.

One reason was that the Romans insisted that the poll tax be paid with a denarius.

On one side of a denarius there was an image of Caesar with the title – Tiberius Caesar Augustus Son of the Divine Augustus.

On the other side it read – Pontifex Maximus – High Priest.

Tiberius is pictured as Pax – the one who brings peace – seated with an olive branch.

Most Jews viewed this coin as idolatrous.

But that didn’t stop those who supported Rome saying you should pay the tax.

The result was a heated debate among the Jews over this tax.

The Herodians supported the tax. Rome was the source of their power and Rome paid for roads and armies and essential services – the taxes provided these public benefits.

The Pharisees opposed it. The Romans were invaders and imposing an idolatrous tax on the nation.

It will come as no surprise that most Jews agreed with the Pharisees and opposed the tax.

In fact, there had already been an uprising over this tax. Judas of Galilee declared that:

    Taxation is no better than downright slavery.

His rebellion was crushed, but a deep seated resentment towards this particular tax remained.

Truth is that no tax has never been popular.

Taxation was at the root of the American Revolutionary War. They rallied the people with the cry of – no taxation without representation.

Even today – I don’t hear many people saying – I love paying my taxes – please take more.

If the government merely hints at raising taxes – their poll numbers plummet.

Taxes can’t even be called taxes – they have to be surcharges or costs or supplements.
What we want to hear is – read my lips – no new taxes.

We think governments take too much, waste too much and give too much to bludgers.

However, if hospitals and schools closed, policemen and firemen vanished, if our garbage wasn’t collected, if essential services stopped then we would care.

But the reality is that taxation wasn’t popular then or now.

And so they came to Jesus – Teacher – do we pay the tax or not?

Here was their thinking.

A man who cleansed the Temple would not encourage idolatry. He would probably say – don’t pay the tax.

And if He said this, the Herodians were there waiting to pounce. Waiting to tell Rome – this man is an insurrectionist who opposes Roman law. He is dangerous and you need to act.

However, if on the off chance He said – pay the tax – the Pharisees were waiting to pounce. They would condemn Him – this man is a Roman sympathizer who opposes God’s law – and He would lose the support of the people.

In their minds it was win, win – Jesus would be done as a powerful figure either way.

The trap was set. But Jesus knew it was a trap.

Verse 15:

But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why put me to the test?”

They were hypocrites. They didn’t come for His advice. They didn’t care about His advice.

It was a trap. But Jesus knew it and answered – verses 15-17:

“Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” And they brought one. And he said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said to him, “Caesar’s.” Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marveled at him.

Note that Jesus asked the leaders to supply the denarius. They carried them. They used them. They understood you had to have them.

His point is that when we become Christians we aren’t immediately transported to heaven – we still have to live out the rest of our lives in this world.

We still have to eat, sleep, work, drive and pay taxes.
We remain under the authorities of this world and we owe an obligation to them.

That is why Paul can say in Romans 13:1–4:

> Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ... For rulers are ... God’s servant for your good.

This does not mean we always obey every order from governments. In Acts 5:29 Peter says we must obey God rather than men.

If governments ask us to do something that opposes the law of God – we do not obey.

However, paying taxes is not such a situation.

Yes, the denarius might have Caesar’s image on it – but truth is you can’t get away from idolatry in this world. Money itself is idolatrous.

So God is our first and highest authority. We render to Him the things that are His. Love, worship, giving, obedience, evangelism, holiness.

But while we are in this world we need to be good citizens. We obey the Law, we pay our taxes, we submit to governments, we pray for our leaders.

There are times when different Christians will argue whether a particular law crosses the line and we should not obey it – but the vast majority of times it is clear whether we should obey it or not.

So here is how salvation changes our understanding of authority.

The non-Christian looks for every way to skirt the law.

Skimming from taxes is considered acceptable – it is downright Australian.

If speed cameras don’t ping you till you are 8 kilometers over the limit – be a man and drive 7 k’s over the limit.

But Christians want to obey the law, respect our leaders and pray for them.

There are laws we won’t like. Then we can write to our leaders, encourage them to lead with righteous laws – but ultimately we obey. In obeying the governments we obey God.

Why? Because the One who appointed leaders and is sovereign over them – and that One is God.

We serve God first, but obey the leaders He appointed.

Quite clearly, the Pharisees and Herodians flamed out with this test.
So the Sadducees stepped up with their supposedly impossible to answer question.

And Jesus’ answer teaches us something about:

**How Salvation Changes Our Understanding Of Eternity**

Look at verse 18:

> And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection.

The Sadducees were liberals – they denied much of the miraculous – in particular angels and the resurrection and a heavenly afterlife.

They believed this life was it. When you died – that is the end. Worm food – no afterlife.

They based this on two things. First, they believed that the books they held to as authoritative did not teach the resurrection.

They believed that only the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Bible – were truly authoritative. The rest of the Old Testament just commented on the teachings of Moses. So if you can’t find a teaching in the first five books – it isn’t true.

What does this mean for the resurrection? If you were going to prove the doctrine of the resurrection from the Old Testament – where would you go?

Probably you would go to these verses.

**Daniel 12:2:**

> And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

**Isaiah 26:19:**

> Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!

**Ezekiel 37:5:**

> Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.

**Psalm 73:23:**

> Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.

Notice that *none* of these are from the first five books of Moses.

Secondly, they believed that the resurrection made no sense. Verses 18-23:
And they asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.”

The Sadducees believed that those who held to a heaven taught it would just be a perfected version of life on earth.

So they had a number of conundrums to show that this was foolishness. The woman with seven husbands was one of them.

Have you ever noticed that what those who want to discredit a teaching or doctrine they find unpalatable often do is to create a scenario that stretches things beyond credulity to ridicule the teaching?

For example, pro-abortionists seem to throw up stories like this:

A twelve-year-old mentally retarded girl is raped by a convicted killer with several genetic defects. The girl falls pregnant and then develops breast cancer and will die unless the child is aborted. But wait, there is more, the stress sends her insane and tests show the baby will be deformed and retarded. Doesn’t this poor girl merit a termination? If not, you are cruel and unloving and ungodly.

The Sadducees’ scenario was just such a fiction and to make it work, it used the teaching of Levirate marriage.

In the Old Testament if a married man died childless – it was the duty of his brother to marry his widow and father a child – to give the dead brother a name and a heritage.

It had to do with tribal authority and inheritance.

In their scenario there is a very unfortunate woman. Every brother she marries dies.

To steal and adapt a quote from Oscar Wilde:

To lose one husband may be regarded as a misfortune; two looks like carelessness and to lose more smells really fishy.

If you are brother four, five, six – you have to wonder – hey what is going on?

But this isn’t a true story – it is a ‘what if’ story. What if it happened?

What happens when the woman sets up house in heaven – who is to be her husband? Does she have seven husbands – some sort of reverse Mormon marriage – or do six miss out?

Does she get to choose the lucky guy or does she rotate through them?
In the minds of the Sadducees – this little story showed the absurdity of the doctrine of the resurrection.

No one would support this nonsense.

Verse 24:

Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?”

You are wrong for two reasons.

First, you misunderstand the power of God. Verse 25:

“For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”

Over the years I have had many, many people – usually wives – come and ask – please tell me I will still be married in heaven?

This is the verse they have in mind and they want me to tell them that somehow it doesn’t mean what it seems to clearly say.

It is great that they want their marriage to last for all eternity. That is a good thing.

They suspect their marriage won’t go on into heaven. So they are usually shocked when I tell them – sure you’ll be married in heaven.

But then their relief becomes confusion when I tell them – just not to your husband.

Some newly weds want to cry at this point!

What is going on?

Our problem is that many of us have a view of heaven that fails to understand the power of God.

Many view life beyond the grave as a continuation of life here in every respect – only without sin or disease or death.

The picture of heaven in their minds is:

You die and wake in this beautiful house in the wilderness – your spouse is there, your kids are there, grandkids there. Close friends are nearby. Everyone you love most.

You are young and vibrant again. Hallelujah!

Maybe you were an accountant on earth – but now you are a farmer, you grow crops in the sun – you whistle while you walk to your fields past lions lying down with lambs.
All your family and friends sit around you at night.

You eat, drink, have relations with your wife. All the good stuff made perfect – just it lasts forever.

How good is that?

Of course a few minutes thought makes you realise this won’t be the case.

Have a look at these pictures of heaven – we immediately see ourselves as the youthful parents and it is our kids that stay children and our parents are the older ones. But you are somebodies’ child – so why are you the young parent?

What about your grandparents and great grand parents and great great grandchildren? Where do they fit in? Where do they live? How big is your house in heaven?

And what about those whose spouse died and they remarried? The Sadducees had a point if heaven is like this. Who lives together as husband and wife in remarriage situations?

What if you divorced and didn’t remarry?

What if you married a non-Christian?

And if part of the glory of heaven is family – what about those who didn’t marry or couldn’t have children – do they miss out on the good bits of heaven?

What if some of your family are not believers and aren’t there?

Marriage and family relations simply can’t just roll on from this world to the next unchanged.

We know a lot about heaven – but some things remain a bit of a mystery.

Here is my partial and imperfect understanding.

In many ways heaven is like Eden – without the possibility of sin. But in other ways it is different.

One of those ways is marriage and family.

God instituted marriage between a man and a woman as a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church.

In heaven I will be married … but not to Dena. I will have the ultimate marriage. Scripture tells us that the bride – the church – you and I – will be married – joined forever … to Jesus.
There is marriage in heaven .. marriage to the Lamb.

Even as I say this – part of me feels sad – until I realise heaven is greater than this life. Marriage to the Lamb is what my earthly marriage pointed to.

Does that mean we will not have a special relationship to those we are closest to in this life?

Not at all.

Dena is my closest friend and companion in this world – I firmly believe that will continue. It is just our relationship will become what it is ultimately meant to be.

I believe I will have a special relationship eternally with my family and friends – it is just that it will be perfect.

My understanding is that all of our relationships with believers continue and are made complete.

If you are married and have believing children – those will be your closest relationships – along with friends in the church you ministered with and Christian friends outside the church.

If you don’t marry or don’t have children – it will be the friends in the church you ministered with and Christian friends outside the church.

Also, we may well develop other relationships in glory.

No one will miss out on the fullness of heaven.

The Sadducees were wrong on a few counts. They denied the existence of angels. They also failed to understand what the angels in heaven are like.

Angels in heaven do not marry. Angels in heaven do not reproduce. Angels in heaven do not engage in sexual relationships. These are things of this world. Our final perfect stage moves us beyond this world to something better – something angelic.

Their question showed their ignorance of the power of God to transform us. To give us something even better than the best of this world.

But, it also showed that they didn’t really know the Scriptures.

Verses 26-27:

And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.”
Jesus quoted Exodus 3:6 – I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob – not I was their God.

They are raised to life and still under the power and love of God.

Death did not end their life – they have finally become who they were meant to be.

The Sadducees were greatly mistaken. They had misread the Scriptures and undervalued the power of God.

Salvation must change our understanding of eternity.

It is not merely a continuation of this world – it is a completion of this world – it goes beyond this world.

Our perfect union with God far eclipses even the best relationships of this world.

That is why we have to live for eternity and not just for this world.

The Pharisees and Herodians and Sadducees flamed out in trying to trap Jesus.

But one of the Scribes thought he would step up and ask a question of Jesus.

And Jesus’ answer teaches us something about:

How Salvation Changes Our Understanding Of Authority
How Salvation Changes Our Understanding Of Eternity
How Salvation Changes Our Understanding Of Love

How Salvation Changes Our Understanding Of Love

Verse 28:

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”

The attitude and motivation of this man may well be a little different.

However, given the setting of this encounter and verse 34 – it is likely that this was supposed to be a trap question as well.
But the response of this man also seems to indicate he began to respect Jesus and was genuinely impressed by Jesus’ answer.

The basis of his question comes from the fact that over the years, the rabbis – in their wisdom – had decided that, just as there were 613 separate letters in the Hebrew text of the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, so there should be 613 separate laws in the Pentateuch or the first five books of Moses.

They then divided those 613 laws into positive and negative laws.

As there are 365 days in a year, so they decided this means that God gave us 365 negative laws or commands to refrain from for each day of the year.

That leaves 248. They decided somehow that there were 248 parts to the human body. So there were 248 positive commands or instructions for things we should do.

It made sense to them.

Then these 613 laws were then further divided into heavy and light laws.

A heavy law was one, which was of the highest importance. A light law while still binding was not seen as quite so crucial and significant as a heavy law.

Some rabbis went further and even ventured to suggest that one of the laws had to be the great commandment—supreme in its importance. The problem was that there was no universal agreement as to which commandment that might be.

Jesus was not asked what commandments were heavy or great. He was asked to narrow down the 613 to one.

Why this question might be a trap is that the rabbis had argued over this for years without consensus. They were confident that no matter which of the 613 commands Jesus picked, they had good reasons why it was not the greatest.

The idea was to bring Jesus down a notch so the people would lose confidence in Him.

Verses 29-30:

Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’”

Every Jew knew these words by heart. These are the opening words of the Shema.

Twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening the Jews of Jesus’ day recited the Shema. The Shema came from Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Deuteronomy 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41.
Interestingly – reciting the Shema twice daily was number 76 on the list of the rabbi’s 613 commandments – but the idea of loving God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength – was not one of their commandments.

In other words – saying the words was important – keeping them didn’t seem to be as high a priority.

The Pharisees had never considered this commandment as the preeminent one because it is so different. It is not a concrete black and white law.

It is easy to comprehend what it means to not murder or not commit adultery. But, to love God seemed so nebulous.

Instead of a grocery list of what to do and what to avoid doing, Jesus sums up the Law of Moses by giving the goal of the Law—a deep and abiding relationship with God.

Our love for the Lord should be peerless. Every fibre of our being – heart, soul, mind and strength – should be devoted to Him.

But Jesus doesn’t stop at just one. Verse 31:

The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

These commands are intimately related. If you love God – you will love your neighbor.

John puts it this way in 1 John 4:20–21:

If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

If you love God – you are so transformed that you will love your neighbor, your brother – even your enemies.

There is no commandment greater than these.

I looked through all the commandments in the Old Testament.

I thought of all the commandments in the New Testament.

If you love God and love your neighbor – you will keep every one of those commandments.

If you love God, you will not blaspheme or fall into idolatry.

If you love your neighbor, you won’t steal or commit adultery.
Verses 32-34:

And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Unlike the other questioners – this Scribe was man enough to say – wow – that was an awesome answer.

To love God and your neighbor is above every burnt offering and sacrifice we can make.

This man was so close to the kingdom.

But … the ultimate way you love God is by loving Jesus.

This man needed to take that next step from recognizing the need to love God – to understanding the way we can truly love God is to love the Son He sent.

This is what brings you into the kingdom. This is what saves you.

We don’t know if this man ever made that step and came into the kingdom.

I know many have drawn near – very near – the rich young ruler comes to mind. But without faith in the Son – without love for the Son – you are lost.

If you are here today and not a Christian – perhaps you are close to the kingdom. You need to take that final step – love Jesus – and enter in.

So how does salvation change our understanding of love?

Because of sin, everyone of us is born with two great innate commandments:

> The most important is, ‘Hear, O Self: The Lord our God, the Lord is us. And you shall love the Lord yourself with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love those friends and neighbors who love you but only as long as they continue to love you.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

We love ourselves. Everything we do is for self. Even most of our love of others – is ultimately selfish. We love so they will love us and meet our needs. And when they fail to meet our needs or expectations – our love stops.

But, Jesus changes everything.
Notice that in a sense – every relationship is changed because God becomes our priority.

We render unto God the things that are His.

We are married to God in eternity and He becomes our ultimate relationship.

We love God first and foremost with every fiber of our being.

This is what salvation does to us.

You look the same. The basics of your life are the same. But as soon as you are saved – love for God becomes supreme. Above money and sex and pleasure and food.

And we love others with the kind of love that was reserved for us – and not just those we like – but enemies too.

But here is the amazing part. In loving God and others, we find the joy, the satisfaction, the wonder that loving self fails to provide.

We were created to be complete only when our love is transformed into a biblical love.

Jesus changes everything – authority, eternity, love – but the result is greater than anything this world affords today.
Jesus Changes Everything  
(Mark 12:13-34  January 10, 2016)

Main Point: When we come to Jesus – our relationships are fundamentally changed – now and eternally.

Read: Mark 12:13-34

- In regard to salvation – what about us changes and what doesn’t? In what ways are we a new creation?
- How do you understand the various political and religious groups of the first century?
- Why was there such a clash over authority between Jesus and the leaders of Israel?
- How do non-Christians view governments and taxes?
- How does that change when we come to Christ?
- When should we not obey governments?
- What can we do if we disagree with them?
- What is our obligation towards them?
- How do you understand life in heaven?
- What of this world continues and what doesn’t?
- Why is marriage only of this world?
- What do you think our relationship with close family and friends will be in heaven?
- How does eternity change the way we live in this world?
- How do the two commands Jesus gave fulfil all the Law?
- Why does loving God lead to loving your neighbour?
- How does salvation change our understanding of love?
- What does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength?