

What's the Point?

Mark 12:28-34

For just a moment, let's pretend we are back in elementary school. Let's further pretend it's music time, and our song for the day is "*The Hokey Pokey*." With the help of Windell and our choir, let's all sing the first stanza. You don't have to do the motions but please sing the words. "You put your right foot in, you put your right foot out, you put your right foot in, and you shake it all about. You do the Hokey Pokey and you turn yourself about, and that's what it's all about! Yeah!"

You sang that real well, but one verse is enough! I bet we are the only church in Wilson County today that sang the Hokey Pokey. In fact, we are probably the only church on the planet today that sang the Hokey Pokey. You might wonder why. I'll tell you. Not long ago, I saw a bumper sticker that said, **[slide: bumper sticker looking image (on a car bumper if possible) with the words: "What if the Hokey Pokey Really Is What it's All About?"]**

I can tell you with great authority today—the Hokey Pokey is not what it's all about. But that does raise the question, What IS it all about? That question was raised in a movie **[slide: cover of movie DVD]** called "*Up In the Air*" starring George Clooney. In one scene a young man is just about to get married. In fact, it's just a few minutes before the wedding ceremony begins. But he has cold feet. He's not sure he can go through with the wedding. So a member of the family, played by George Clooney goes to talk to him. I'd like to show you that scene.

[video clip with subtitles: Chapter 13 (81:36 to 82:36)] (If you don't have projection capability, verbally explain the following scene). The young man says, "I don't think I'll be able to do this." George Clooney's character asks, "Why would you say that today?" The frightened young man says, "Well, last night I was kinda like laying in bed, and I couldn't get to sleep, so I started thinking about the wedding and the ceremony and about our buying a house, and moving in together, and having a kid, and then having another kid, and then Christmas and Thanksgiving and spring break, and going to football games, and then all of a sudden they are graduated and getting jobs and getting married and, you know, I'm a grandparent, and then I'm retired, and I'm losing my hair, and I'm getting fat, and the next

thing I know I'm dead. And it's like, I can't stop from thinking, what's the point? I mean, what is the point?"

Well, what is the point? That's the question behind today's scripture reading from Mark 12. A religious leader comes up to Jesus and asks, **[slide: image of man asking Jesus a question with the caption: "What is the greatest commandment?"]**

In short, he is asking, "What is the point? What matters most? Of all the things that clamor for our time and attention and energy, what's the most important thing? The bottom line of this text is that he is asking Jesus, "What is the point?" **[end slide]**

And without hesitation, Jesus answers him. But Jesus doesn't mention any of the things that Americans hold most dear. He doesn't say anything about career success, or accumulation of wealth, or owning a big house, or physical beauty, or fame, or power, or patriotism, or anything like that. Instead, Jesus said, **[slide: same image as above with caption: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12)]**

So what's the point? According to Jesus, the point is love. According to Jesus, the point is relationships—with God and with others. **[end slide]** I know this is not new to you. It's Christianity 101. It's the ABCs of Christian faith. In fact, over the past ten years, I've probably preached on this text at least ten times. But we need to be reminded—often—that the point of life is not money, or a lovely house, or things, or success, or beauty, or fame, or power. The point of life is loving God and loving others. That's what matters most. Which means we need to make loving God and loving others the first priority of our life.

About two years ago, a major magazine published an important article on happiness. The article told about the longest running study in history of human happiness and well being. The study spanned 70 years, seven full decades. It began in the 1930s at Harvard University and only recently was completed. Researchers followed Harvard graduates through college, war, work, marriage, divorce, parenthood, grandparenthood, old age, and death. The director of the study was asked what had been learned from this 70 year long study on human happiness and well being. His response was, **[slide: "The only thing that really matters in life are your relationships with other people."]**

70 years of study at Harvard University came to the bottom line conclusion that the only thing that really matters in life are our relationships with other people. This Harvard study is pretty remarkable. A seven decade study came to one conclusion about human well being: the only thing that really matters in life are your relationships with other people.

As we see in today's text, Jesus would agree with that finding, with one important addition. Jesus would say, *[slide: "The only thing that really matters in life is your relationship with God and with other people."]* And that my friends—that is what it's all about. That is what matters most. That is the point. Let us never forget it.

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