

# Swedenborgian Sunday School Notes for the Revised Common Lectionary

## Mark 12:28–34 • The Two Greatest Commandments

Prepared by the Rev. Lee Woofenden

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Mark 12:28–34 . . . The greatest commandments  
Ruth 1:1–18. . . . . Ruth stays with Naomi

### Overview

Today’s lesson cuts to the core of all religion and all spirituality. There are many different religions in the world, with thousands of sometimes detailed and often complicated teachings about what we should believe and how we should live. But everything in every one of these religions boils down to two teachings: we should love God and we should love other people. Our goal for this class is to show the children that these two easily remembered commandments are the most important things in their entire lives.

### Key Points

- Believing in and loving God is the most important thing of all.
- Loving and caring for other people always goes along with any genuine love for God.
- The Ten Commandments are a summary of everything relating to the two Great Commandments.

### Example for Teaching Children

Does anybody remember from our class last month what being truly great means? Does it mean having lots of money and power, and telling everyone else what to do? What *does* it mean? (*Wait for responses.*) Being truly, spiritually great means always living by what the Lord teaches us in the Bible. That means being great in loving and caring for other people.

In our Bible reading today, a religious lawyer asked Jesus what is the greatest commandment of all. This was a hard question. In the days when Jesus was alive, some of the religious lawyers had actually counted up 613 different commandments! They used to argue with each other about which of them was the most important.

We have the same kinds of arguments. For example, if you and your friends play baseball, you might think the most important thing is to be a great hitter. But one of your friends may think it is most important to be able to strike out batters with great pitching, and another one may think it is most important to get batters out by making great running catches.

However, there is something much more important in baseball than *any* of these things. It is much

more important to do your best in the game, respect all the players on both teams, and have a great time!

It is the same with religion, only the “game” is our whole life. Some people argue about whether it is most important to believe in Jesus, or to help poor people, or to learn things from the Bible. Just as in baseball, all of these *are* important. But the most important thing of all is to love God more than anything else, and love other people as much as we love ourselves. If we don’t do these two things, nothing else really matters—just as in sports, where if we don’t do our best, respect the other players, and have a good time, the game is no fun even if we do win!

The Ten Commandments help us follow these two Greatest Commandments. What are we taught in the first table of the Ten Commandments? In the second table? The first table is about loving God, and the second table is about loving other people.

### Basic Correspondences

heart = the life of our love

soul = the life of our faith

mind = what we believe from faith

strength = what we do from love

### Thoughts from Swedenborg

“Heart” means the life of our love, and “soul” the life of our faith. “Strength” means what comes from the life of our love—meaning from our heart, or motivation. “Mind” means what comes from the life of our faith—meaning from our soul, or from an enlightened understanding. *Arcana Coelestia #9050.4*

To “love Jehovah God with all our heart and all our soul” means with all our motivation and all our understanding, and also with all our love and all our faith. “Heart” means love and motivation; and “soul” means faith and understanding.

*Apocalypse Explained #750e.6*

Since love for God and love for our neighbor are the entire Bible, and the first table of the Ten Commandments contains a summary of everything relating to love for God, and the second table a summary of everything relating to love for our neighbor, this means that the Ten Commandments contain everything relating to religious belief and life.

*True Christian Religion #287.2*