

Mark 12:28-34 Ruth and Her Made Up Mind
Ruth 1:1-18

The Shema is a traditional daily prayer in Judaism, and by extension also for many Christians. It is very simple:

“The Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength. . . .” And then as a part of it there is the exhortation to think and talk about it all the time, to make reminders.

When Jesus is asked about the greatest commandment he qualifies it by saying, “and your mind,” and by adding a 2nd command, which he says is like it, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

It remind me of the Hokey Pokey, the childhood song and dance in which at the end it says, “put your whole self in.”

These texts state the central moral and ethical demand of our faith; the rule of love. We would indeed do well to think, read, remind ourselves about it daily, and pray that God would help us, everyday.

The repetition helps us make up our minds about it. One might say, it helps us love God with our minds. What can one do with the idea of loving God with the whole being except either make it an obsession or ignore it completely.

There are many descriptions of what is going on in our world, but the characterization, “love God, love thy neighbor,” doesn't fit many of them. Anyway, the world still needs to hear it so we will keep on preaching it.

Made Up Minds

Whenever I hear, “love god with your mind,” what comes to mind is all the people who say that it means to think, God gave you a brain, use it, put your thinking cap on. When I read this story about Ruth another sense of it came, be stubborn about it, make up your mind.

When I hear the phrase, “make up your mind,” which means “to decide,” and then to act on the decision, what ever it is, I think of a couple of things. The first thing that comes to mind is a song that I assume relatively few people know because I have never heard it on the radio (maybe I just listen to the wrong radio stations).

It is by the Tedeschi Trucks Band and I assume the words were written by Susan Tedeschi, who also sings it. The song is about the determination to move on, I assume from a bad relationship, but who knows, to a higher place; she sings:

“I've got a made up mind
I've got a made up mind

If you're thinking I might break down in time
You're gonna find I've got a made up mind

I'm going higher, I'm not afraid
Licking my finger and turning the page
Sure as the moon and stars gonna shine
I've got a made up mind."

Well, she decided and that is that. Sometimes I think many Christians live their lives like they haven't really decided, or maybe they half decided. It is interesting that Jesus added the phrase, "and the mind."

Ruth

Anyway, I also think of this story from the Old Testament Book of Ruth that we have heard here today. What stands out more than anything else is the way that she made her mind all up and that was that. Naomi could do nothing about it.

The story of Ruth takes its place in the biblical narrative because she became, of course, the grandmother of the great Israelite King David. It stands out because she was a Moabite, not an Israelite but a foreigner.

It stands out because of the way she obtained her husband, Obed. Naomi told her to go in at night and lay down at the foot of Obed's bed. She said, "he will tell you what to do." And he did too.

But the whole thing would never have happened if Ruth hadn't been determined to stay with Naomi, who was her mother-in-law. Naomi was an Israelite who had sojourned in Moab with her husband when the economy was bad.

She had two sons that married Moabite women, and then all the men died, leaving these widows to fend for themselves without a living. She tried to convince the two daughters-in-law to return to their birth families, thinking they were young enough that another husband could be found for them. The other, whose name was Orpah, went, but Ruth refused.

We are not told why. Perhaps she had no real family, or it was an abusive one. Perhaps the answer lies in the mystery of Ruth's own heart and there are reasons we are not meant to know. Whatever the case, she made up her mind and that was that. She is remembered because she is a part of the ancestry of Jesus.

Make Up Your Mind

There is also a kind of mystery involved in the discovery of what it means to love God with the whole self; and what is meant to love one's neighbor. Personally, I believe that to love God with my whole self has proved rather difficult; it requires that I become a whole self, undivided in my sentiments and loyalties

and devotion. Most of the time I am divided, a little too selfish for whole-hearted devotion.

It is a life-long process. A good line to add to your daily prayers, if you haven't already, would go something like this; "Lord, I pray that I would come to love you with all my heart and soul and strength and mind," or, "Lord, help me come to love you with all my heart and soul and strength and mind."

It begins with the realization that one does not love God fully. That is a personal epiphany worth thinking about. When we come to church we ordinarily don't make such confessions, but privately we can make them, and pray that whatever it means to love God truly, we would at least approach it, get as near to its possible, given who we are.

As far as the other question is concerned, what does it mean, "love thy neighbor?" I think we know that it means not to hate anyone no matter who they are, where they are from, what they believe, and even what they have done.

In either case, one will find it more congenial with a made up mind than without it. If this were an evangelistic sermon, aimed would-be believers, this would be the time to ask for a decision; accept Christ and devote yourself to a life of loving God with your whole being, and loving others. Make up your mind.

But given that nearly all of us have made that decision already, this is a sermon of exhortation. It is a time to ask for a bit of self-reflection about how things are going along the journey of faith, and to say with a sense of encouragement, make up your mind.

Make up your mind like Ruth did with Naomi. Things had not gone well as they sometimes fail to do, but she cast her lot with Israel and went down in history as one of our fore-mothers in the faith.

Make up your mind like in the song, to get to that higher place. Don't be afraid; lick your finger, turn the page. Find your made up mind and embrace it with your whole self. Ask for help. Pray the Shema every day. And forgive, and love, and serve, put your whole self into it.

To the glory of God.

[Back](#)

[Home](#)