

Two for the Price of One

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A scribe came up to Jesus and asked him for the greatest commandment but Jesus gave him two:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."

*"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
(Mark 12:28-34)*

Jesus is telling us that the greatest of blessings enters our lives when we live by these two precepts. Although two seemingly distinct commands they are considered important enough by Jesus to be looked upon as inseparable unity.



Visualize it this way: The cross is a single symbol and yet it is composed of a vertical direction as well as a horizontal one. The vertical part signifies our relationship with God, the horizontal our relationship with our neighbors. If one of the two parts is missing, the cross is broken and incomplete, just as our lives are deficient if one of the two commandments is lacking!

The cross is most often related to pain and suffering but when I attach myself to it in the form of living the Great Commandment, I abide in goodness that always was, is now and ever shall be. This cross is a cure that brings out our true selves by deepening our communion with God, man, and ourselves.

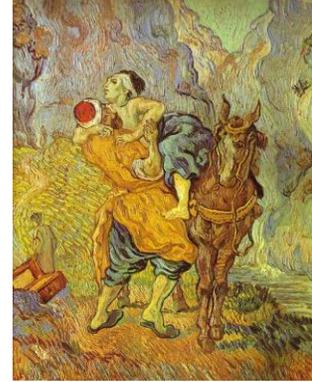
When you encounter the sign of the cross let it be a reminder to live the Great Commandment.

"One poor widow came" to the temple and "put in two small copper coins" (Mark 12:41-44). Jesus said she gave more than any of the others because in her generosity she gave from her need. God's way of measuring differs from the worldly standard when what appears to be less is actually more. If she gave more did not someone receive more?

No one "can serve two masters" and "you cannot give yourself to God and money" (Luke 16:13-15). The widow gave herself to God and neighbor.

"Are not two sparrows sold for next to nothing? Yet not a single sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent." (Matt 10:29).

While the injured one lay alongside the road two people passed him by. Finally the Good Samaritan helped him to the inn and "took out two silver pieces" (Luke 10:25-37) and gave it to the innkeeper for continued help. The Samaritan understood the meaning of neighbor.



A priest and the Levite didn't stop to help the injured man. Were they on their way to the temple to fast and pray?

The elder monk taught the younger: "There were two brothers and the first fasted six days at a time and did a great deal of penance. The second took care of the sick. The work of the second cannot be equaled by the first."

Jesus said: "Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him two miles" (Matt 5:41). Even though the Samaritan wasn't being pressed he went the two miles!

"Two men went up to the temple to pray" (Luke 18:9-14) but only the humble one went home justified. The prayer of the humble and repentant man was welcomed while the self-righteous words of the hypocrite rejected.

"One of the two who had followed" Jesus (John 1:40-42) sought out his brother and told him the Messiah was found. He was spreading the good news of God to a neighbor.

Jesus, the Messiah, was the innocent one but "he was led along with two others who were criminals" (Luke 23:32). Those that led him pinned him to the cross and he died living the Great Commandment.