

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

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Association Minister Message

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TESTED. “One of them, a legal expert, tested (Jesus).” It must have been quite a scene around Jesus when the Pharisees, again, confronted Jesus. In last week’s lectionary reading, the Pharisees tried to entrap/trap Jesus to discredit Him, either to embarrass Jesus or make Him look foolish and not wise about loyalty matters. So they tried another scheme by *TESTING* His knowledge of religious law.

While in school we have taken many *TESTS* that have two different intentions: 1) knowledge of facts and 2) ability to apply facts in solving problems. I had a college professor who had only “*fact*” questions on tests from the text and even footnotes. Another professor challenged us by posing essay questions to get us to bring together different ideas from readings and lectures to support our conclusions.

Jesus understood the *TESTING* from the Pharisees who tried to trick Him to make themselves wiser about the law than those not as spiritual (or educated) as they were. The Pharisees used the law destructively. Where was the grace—or even love—in their harassing of Jesus?

We encounter so many types of *TESTS* today. There are *TESTS* to join groups (even to be a church member), teams, club, neighborhoods, schools, political parties, or even marrying into a family. Prejudices, bigotry and even financial statements are *TESTS* that exclude certain people. Who is in or out are determined by factors that embrace judgements that are unfair, unjust, or not welcoming. The Pharisees certainly judged Jesus as unworthy to be with them so that when they met together they conspired to make Jesus unacceptable to their standards.

However, Jesus turns things around and challenges their thinking, motives, and intentions of meanness and hatefulness. Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, a *TEST* that would lead to laws being ranked on a scale of greatest to least. Jesus, however, answered that law was about love—love of God with your entire being and loving neighbor as yourself. One cannot separate them, they are interconnected, and love is the way life should be lived. Love tears down walls of hostility and misunderstanding among families, neighbors, and world community. *TESTING*. It is more than just passing or failing as it becomes a way to understand and embrace acts of reconciliation, kindness, and God’s grace in and for each other. With Jesus, we never fail and are given marks of love for all. *BLESSINGS ALWAYS.*