

Gospel of Mark
April 11, 2010
“Sacrifice for Jesus”
Mark 12:28-44

I. On the Way to Jerusalem

We might ask ourselves what is necessary to receive the kingdom of God. Certainly, we are unable to get there by our own efforts, but Scripture is also clear that we must have a strong commitment to get there.

How strong? In Luke 14:33, Jesus says:

“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciples.” NIV
Often we will read these words and check off that we are willing to give up everything for Jesus...that if the situation requires it in the future, we will give up everything we have. Yet, this verse does not demand willingness; it demands actually giving it up.

What have you given up for Jesus? What are you willing to give up for Jesus?
What does Jesus want you to give up for Him?

II. Greatest Commandment: Mark 12:28-34

Mark 12:28-34

28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." 32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. 33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

NIV

This teacher of the law appears to be more open than the earlier ones. His question and response to Jesus' instruction appear more genuine than those that preceded him. His sincerity does not mean that he believed in Jesus, only that he thought that Jesus gave good answers. He shows a better understanding of what Scriptures teach in the OT than the other folks trying to trick Him.

- Verse 28 We have generally associated “teachers of the law” with the Pharisees, but the Sadducees also had their “teachers of the law.” In this case, assuming that it is the same situation as Matthew, it would appear that this teacher was also a Pharisee (Matt. 22:34-35). (NOTE: In Matthew’s gospel, the teacher asking the question appears only to be asking it to test Jesus, while the question appears sincere in this gospel. Perhaps, the teacher was surprised by Jesus, after starting out to test Him.)
- Verse 29 Common to Judaism of that time and of Judaism today, there were greater and lesser commands. Again, this is an important concept that one must accept if one is trying to argue that they are always obeying the law (because of potential conflicts in the law). If we study Jesus’ answer, we see:
- To the Jews, we see that to obey the law, they must obey all of it.
 - To the Christian, we see that obeying the law is dependent on love.
 - Nothing is stated about the need for burnt offerings!
- Verse 29 This is from the great *Shema* (its expanded version being Deu. 6:4-9). Only Mark quotes the full shorter version (Deu. 6:4).
- Verse 30 In modern-day Christianity, it sometimes feels like we polarize Jesus’ teaching. Liberal Christians sometimes seem to think that it is only love that is important as defined by the individual. Conservative Christians sometimes seem to think that it is only obeying God or that it is only head knowledge. If love is not acted out in obedience to God, then it is dead and is not really love at all. In point of fact, it is all of these; God wants all of you. “Obey” and “love” are fully connected by:

1 John 5:3-4

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

NIV

Verse 31 The quote is from Lev. 19:18.

Verse 34 Jesus response is a bit ambiguous. How far do you have to be so that you are not in the kingdom of God? How close do you have to be so that you are in it? Jesus does not say that he is in the kingdom of God. Perhaps, though, he is one the right trail; maybe one will see this man in heaven.

III. Jesus Asks a Question: Mark 12:35-37

Mark 12:35-37

35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: "'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet." ' 37 David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?" The large crowd listened to him with delight.

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- Verse 35 We have seen the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees ask Jesus questions. Now we see Jesus asking them a question that hints at weaknesses in all their positions:
- Pharisees thought that the Messiah would be a human ruler. How could the Messiah be a human ruler if David spoke to Him?
 - Herodians wanted the line of Herods to be king. How could the kings come from the line of Herod if they had to come from the line of David?
 - Sadducees did not believe in the miraculous (angels, resurrection) How could David speak miraculously to his Lord who was his son?
- Verse 35 Jesus is not questioning that the Christ is descended from David; He is getting His opponents to think about what they know about His lineage. Of course, we know that Jesus is the answer to His own question. As Messiah/Christ, Jesus is bodily descended from David. Yet, He is still David's lord. Therefore, to us, the quote that follows makes sense. As we can see, the Jews had no answer for this one as well.
- Verse 36 The quote is from Psalm 110:1, a psalm of David.
- Verse 37 There is likely a break between the first and second part of this verse. Topically, we can see that Jesus elaborates on the "teachers of the law" probably including all the community of Pharisees and Sadducees. The connection in time and location is difficult to make, but the end of this chapter appears to be a good summary of the nature of these people building on the experiences of Jesus with them in this chapter (and in the whole book).

IV. Flaunting One's Importance: Mark 12:38-40

Mark 12:38-40

38 As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, 39 and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40 They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."

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Note Matthew devotes parts of the Sermon on the Mount and much of Chapter 23 on teachings against the leaders (scribes and Pharisees).

- Verse 38 These people would emphasize their position by wearing long flowing robes that were typically pure white in color to differentiate them from the crowds who typically wore more colorful clothing.
- Verse 39 They are honored for their spiritual "position" wherever they would go.
- Verse 40 However, as in their counterparts in the OT, they use their position to take advantages of those who are weaker than themselves, as exemplified by widows. How do you think that they justified in their own mind what they did?

These men represent strong contrasts to the description of the woman who follows. They cheat women like her.

V. Giving from Sacrifice: Mark 12:41-44

Mark 12:41-44

41 Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42 But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. 43 Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on."

NIV

Verse 41 The scene appears to be taking place in the Court of Women, where 13 trumpet-shaped receptacles were set up to take donations.

Verse 42 The lepton was worth 1/400th of a shekel, about an 1/8th of a cent (per Lane). Mark translates this to Roman terms "two mites, which make a quadran" (per NKJV). This was about 1/64th of a day's wages, where a day's wage was one denarius.

Verse 43 In what ways has the woman given more than all the others?

- Percentage of what she had
- Importance to her of what she gave (Jesus agrees with this one in next verse)
- Importance to God
- As example to us

It is also interesting in that she is apparently giving the money to a system that Jesus detested, but the fact that she gave it to God from her heart is what is important.

Verse 44 The woman demonstrates giving up everything we have. How would you describe what she did? Is there any downside?

VI. Sacrificial Giving

What is sacrificial giving? When does giving reach the enough stage? What is going on in the heart when one gives sacrificially?