

Mark 12:18-44

As we continue on this evening I want to just remind you that we are in the last week of the life of Jesus...It's the Passover time in Jerusalem and that means the streets are busy, the hotels are full, the lambs are bleating and the marketplace is busy.

Last week we began to see what I would call an examination of Jesus or the questioning of Jesus as the priests, scribes and elders came to Jesus demanding to know who gave Him the authority to do the things that He was doing.

In response Jesus asked them a question asking them where the baptism of John came from...was it from heaven or was it from men. The leaders conferred amongst themselves and because they knew either way they answered they would have a problem they responded by simply saying they did not know...In response Jesus simply said to them neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

After this the Lord gave a parable to the leaders and spoke of an owner who decided to plant a vineyard and he spent a lot of time and money on it preparing it for those that would then lease it from him. When the time came the owner sent several servants to collect the fruit of the vineyard and sadly those who had leased the land chose to beat, mistreat and even kill the servants that came. Finally, the owner sent his son thinking surely they would respect him but as those who were leasing the land saw him they chose to kill him as well.

Jesus then said that the owner would come and make things right destroying the vinedressers and giving it to others...When Jesus

finished this saying the leaders knew that He was speaking against them and we are told that they sought to lay hands on Him.

Finally last week the Pharisees and Herodians two groups of powerful individuals in the community who would never dream of working together came and asked Jesus a question. They asked what was to be done about paying taxes to Caesar.

Jesus simply responded by taking one of their coins and asking whose inscription was on it and then said that because Caesar's image was on it they should give it to him. At the same time Jesus said they should give to God the things that belonged to God...You and I ought to be giving our lives, hearts, souls, minds and strength unto the Lord for we as believers in Jesus certainly bear His image.

Well let's continue on here today and we'll see some more questions for Jesus if you look at verse 18 which says the following

18 Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: As we begin here I wanted to talk to you for just a minute here about the Sadducees just so you can understand a little about who they were. This was a small group who had a lot of political sway, they were often smug thinking themselves better than others, they were the elitists which we might today think of as the Harvard grads of the world.

They had some funny beliefs as well and we see here in the text that they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees were truly "SAD U CEE" for they had no hope of an afterlife. They also only held to the first 5 books of the Bible which are known as the Torah.

So these men came to Jesus and we are told that they gave Him a question and really I believe they asked this with sarcasm in their hearts.

Listen to what they asked in verses 19-23 which say

¹⁹ “Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man’s brother dies, and leaves *his* wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰ Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. ²¹ And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. ²² So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. ²³ Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.”

So the question was a hypothetical question about the resurrection. It was as if they were saying “IF THE RESURRECTION ACTUALLY TAKES PLACE THEN EXPLAIN HOW THIS SITUATION WILL WORK”

The situation they bring to Jesus is that a man was married to a woman and the man suddenly died and they said that the man’s brother according to what Moses wrote was to take the widow and raise up offspring on behalf of the brother and that son was to then gain the inheritance of the one that had died...This is what was called a levirate marriage and we actually find this over in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 if you want to look at that for homework.

They continued by saying there were seven brothers total and the second one took her and he died as well and then the third and this went all the way to the 7th brother with each one dying.

Now I want to tell you that after the second brother died or the third brother died I might have some questions and perhaps question this woman's cooking skills...or watch where she goes when she heads out shopping to see if she visits the local pharmacy and buys some poison or I might even go ahead and hire a private investigator.

At the end of their question the Sadducees simply ask whose wife will she be when the resurrection takes place for they all had her as wife. Now this was of course again a hypothetical question but it certainly was something the Sadducees had reasoned amongst themselves as they thought about the afterlife...To them it didn't make sense and the first 5 books of the law the way they saw it simply did not provide reason to believe in life after death.

So they have asked their question and let's see how Jesus responded in verse 24 which says ²⁴**Jesus answered and said to them, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?"**

Well, it's never fun to get rebuked by Jesus...I think we have all been through times in our lives where we just missed something we should have caught and for the Sadducees the Lord tells them they are mistaken and by the end of the response down in verse 27 He tells them again they are greatly mistaken.

He points out two mistakes they made in verse 24 when Jesus says they did not know the Scriptures (and this was a big challenge from Jesus for the Sadducees knew the scriptures through and through) and that they did not know the power of God and really what Jesus is saying is you don't know that God absolutely can raise the dead.

In verse 25 if you just look at that it says ²⁵**For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.** Now this is a pretty amazing statement to think about...I'm sure if you have read this before then you have some questions just like I do. Jesus in making this statement is telling us as we read this thousands of years later that when we rise from the dead our relationship with the most important person to many of us is going to be different. When I think about that it's a little bit of a hard pill to swallow...I mean I love my wife fiercely, in addition to Jesus she is my rock in times of trouble, she cares amazingly for our kids, she does so much at home and I just genuinely love being with her.

I want to ask you a question though as we think about this...Do you really think that we are going to be disappointed in heaven? Do you really think you aren't going to spend a significant amount of time with your husband or wife? I believe heaven is so much different than you or I could ever imagine. Paul said this of a man he knew who was caught up to heaven in 2 Corinthians 12:3-4 which says ³**And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—** ⁴**how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.**

Many believe that Paul was actually speaking of himself and that it may have taken place when he was stoned for preaching the gospel in a city called Lystra...The simple fact is that our eternity is going to blow our little 3 pound brains.

Look with me as Jesus continues to speak to the Sadducees in verses 26-27 which say ²⁶**But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning bush passage*, how**

God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.’

Now the Lord Jesus speaks right to where the Sadducees were in life...Remember they only accepted the books of Moses as the truly inspired word of God.

I just love it that our incredible heavenly Father works so hard to meet us where we are in life. I can see His great hand in my own life and how He pursued me and used the situations I found myself in to reveal Himself to me.

So the Lord speaks to them from Exodus 3 and I’m going to read to you verses 5 and 6 of that chapter and this is actually when Moses met the Lord in the burning bush. It says the following ⁵**Then He said, “Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.”** ⁶**Moreover He said, “I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.**

You might look at this and say what’s the point that Jesus is making? If you think about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob they were 3 generations of people from the same family. When God spoke to Moses it was several hundred years after the death of all 3 of these men, they were all dead and gone from this world at this point...all three of these men were long gone when Moses came on the scene.

What I want you to just notice here is the verb tense that God used when He spoke to Moses...God said “I AM THE GOD” of these

men...that's in the present tense meaning God is currently the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

It should have been obvious to the Sadducees that of course there is life after death for God Himself spoke of it plainly to Moses when He spoke to him.

Then the Lord concludes by simply saying they were greatly mistaken.

Let's continue on here if you look at what happened next in verse 28 which says ²⁸**Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, "Which is the first commandment of all?"** So there was a scribe who was probably listening in the background of the previous conversation and a scribe just to refresh us would have had the great privilege of not only copying the scriptures but also preserving them and caring for them.

And so this scribe after hearing what the Lord had answered came and asked which of the commandments was first of all?

Just so we can understand when he said this and asked which was the greatest commandment it was a hard and often debated question in the culture. You see the law of Moses was filled with rules and regulations from what you could eat, to how to worship God, to how to know if you had leprosy and a lot more. In fact there were 613 laws that the people had identified that they needed to adhere to and keep.

So to choose just one was quite a task indeed...There are two opinions about the motive behind this question the scribe asked...Some say he had a genuine heart to truly understand truth and I guess I would fall into that group because of what Jesus will say in verse 34 to him...and

then there are some that say this scribe was only asking Jesus this question to attempt to trap Him.

Let's see how Jesus responds if you look at verses 29-31 which say ²⁹ Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. ³¹ And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Jesus takes the 613 commands in the law and boils it down to two commands...To love the Lord your God is the first one and to love your neighbor as yourself the second.

I am reminded that LOVE is essential in the kingdom of God...and really we can't love others if we don't first love God...Entering into and expressing our love for God and living for Him sets us up to love others.

I think loving others is a natural byproduct of being with Jesus...Love is the first fruit of the Spirit of those listed in Galatians 5:22. When Jesus comes in and washes you of your sins and you walk in His love then you'll find yourself ministering to others...You'll begin to lay down your life for those around you.

I have to ask you today do you truly LOVE those around you? The love of God is interesting indeed for it goes beyond the love a person has who lives in this world. The love of God causes us to forgive others, to

be long suffering with others, to be patient and kind and full of generosity towards others.

I suppose on the flip side of the coin that LOVING others certainly includes standing for truth and disciplining your kids. To love with the love of God surpasses any love the world could ever offer us...The love of the world will ditch us when we have difficulties, it will ditch us when we have nothing to offer.

I want to talk to you for just a minute about the first thing Jesus said if you look again at verse 30 which says ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. God certainly knows our hearts better than we do as we go through life...But the question I have tonight is do we love God as He says we should here in this verse?

You might if you underline in your Bible just go through this verse and underline the word ALL which is here 4 times in our text.

We are to love God with ALL our heart and that means we aren't divided in what we adore, worship and live for. When you have a heart that is set apart for God nothing else in all the world really matters.

We also see here we are to love the Lord with all our soul and that word soul is the word psyche in the Greek and is defined as the vital life force which animates the body...It's essentially the deep consciousness of man...You and I are to love God in the depths of our minds in the remotest portions of our hearts, with the very breath of our lives.

The Lord also said we are to love the Lord with ALL our mind. The mind is a rough place to live sometimes isn't it? I know that my mind can be all over the place sometimes but as you go through life do you find yourself settling on God Almighty with ALL your mind?

I want to ask you tonight where is your mind at most of the day? Have you trained your mind to love God? Or do you find your mind dwelling on the things of this world. Paul said this over in Philippians 4:8 when he said **Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.**

And finally Jesus said we should Love God with ALL our strength...and that means the efforts we put in as we go through life should find their fulfillment and their release in serving Jesus. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:31 the following when it says **Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do ALL to the glory of God.**

You and I should live life and always exert our energy towards the kingdom of God. We can do that wherever we might find ourselves in life. We can do that at our jobs, at the supermarket or even in our cars when we are greatly grieved at the driving practices of others.

I wonder today do we love God the way that we should? Do we love him with ALL of our being? Do we love Him more than the things of this world? Do we look to honor Him at every corner in our lives? If so, you are fulfilling the greatest commandment.

Look at verse 31 again as Jesus continues when He said ³¹ **And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.** I want to ask you an easy question today “**do you love yourself?**” I want to just ask you today what is the first thing you do when you get up in the morning? Well, you start the morning routine and what is it that is found in everyone of your morning routines? It's you...your whole morning routine is almost fully and completely about you. In fact most of our day and why we do things and go through life is somehow or another about you.

Well Jesus says you should love others the way you love you...In other words put them first, think about them first, look to bless them first.

Look with me at verses 32-34 which say the following ³² **So the scribe said to Him, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. ³³ And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”**

³⁴ **Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”**

But after that no one dared question Him.

Well the scribe was shocked and full of respect at the response of Jesus and a little bit in awe I believe as He simply says to Jesus that He had spoken well.

Notice just a few things here and we'll move forward in our study.

Notice this man declared there was one God and no other but He...I think that's important for this man knew that all the gods the world spoke of and worshipped were nothing compared to honoring the God of the universe...the gods of this world are simple pieces of rock and stone while the God of the universe lives and breathes.

And then notice this man said to Jesus that to keep the two commands that Jesus spoke of was of more value than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices a man could ever give...You see man in the days of Jesus was focused on keeping the laws and offering sacrifices and making outward religious professions...God though appreciates us loving Him and loving others over all these observances.

I have to ask you today do you love God the right way or the wrong way? The right way is to do so with all your heart, soul, mind and strength...The wrong way to love God is do so with outward religious observances...that may include attending church, doing good works or doing religious things.

God wants our hearts and I hope you know that today. His desire is that He would occupy the innermost places in our lives.

As the scribe responded Jesus then said to him that he wasn't far from the kingdom...It was like Jesus was encouraging him along here hoping that He would leave the ways of the religious behind to embrace the love of God and walk in it...It's one thing to know about God, it's another thing to submit to His love and goodness in your life and give your entire being unto Him.

And then we are told that no one dared ask Jesus anything else....Has this ever happened to you? Where you just have nothing left to say as the Lord works in you and around you?

Jesus has here silenced the most powerful men of the land as He responded to their questions and then as we move forward here we will see the icing on the cake as Jesus has a question for them that they cannot answer if you look at verses 35-37 which say ³⁵**Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? ³⁶ For David himself said by the Holy Spirit:**

**‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’**

³⁷ Therefore David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; how is He then his Son?”

And the common people heard Him gladly.

So the religious leaders have played “Stump the Messiah” to no avail and now Jesus poses a question to them...The question Jesus poses here is essentially how is it that the scribes say that the Christ which is a title for Jesus that means anointed one or Messiah is called the son of David?

He then quotes from Psalm 110:1 where David said that this son that would come is his Lord...and really the question Jesus is asking is how is it that the Messiah, the one that was promised to come from David would not only be the son of David but also the Lord of David?

You see the culture of the Jewish society was a patriarchal society and as such there was much respect and honor given to those who were the fathers of their families...A child would never refer to any of their previous ancestors who had gone before them as sons, you would always call them fathers...and yet Jesus who is the son of David is called Lord by David Himself.

Essentially Jesus is pointing out two things about Himself in that first He is the son of David by blood line...and we see that in the genealogies of Jesus in the Gospels...and then second that David calls the Messiah his Lord meaning He has authority...This is really pointing to both the deity of Jesus Christ and the humanity of the Lord Jesus at the same time.

I want to just make a comment here that I love it that Jesus as He is speaking to all those that are challenging Him uses what we have in Psalm 110:1 to challenge them...Again that says **‘The Lord said to my Lord,**

“Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’

Think about the totality of the situation Jesus was passing through as He said these things...Here Jesus is being rejected and challenged and the religious leaders are looking for a way to arrest Him and kill him and Jesus then simply says of the Messiah that one day He is going to sit at the right hand of God and make all His enemies into a footstool.

I love it that Jesus is really rebuking these men, flexing His spiritual muscles and authority and putting them in their place as He speaks to them.

I do appreciate the authority of Jesus that rings true in every situation.

Well we have been talking about humanity today and how we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and we have seen the scribe come to Jesus and declare that this was absolutely correct and we have seen the Lord answer questions and now as we close this evening we are going to see two wonderful examples of Jesus about what to do and what not to do when it comes to our response to God in our lives.

Look with me at the first one found in verses 38-40 which says

³⁸Then He said to them in His teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, ³⁹the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, ⁴⁰who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”

Here Jesus warns any who were listening to be aware of the scribes and the attitudes they have and the outward appearances that they cherish so much.

The scribes loved to be seen in public, they loved the accolades of religious appearance that came with who they were, they loved it when the public greeted them in the marketplace and they even took advantage in some way of the widows in the area and made long prayers.

On the outside these were men that looked great but on the inside they had serious issues to the point that the Lord said they would receive a greater condemnation. You see these were men that had

great access to the Word of God and as such they should have known God is looking at the heart of a person and not the outside of them.

This passage here in Mark really goes hand in hand with what is seen over in Matthew 23 as the Lord rebuked the Pharisees 7 different times saying they were hypocrites...the Lord told them they cleaned the outside of the cup and dish but on the inside they were dirty...He said they were like white washed tombs that were beautiful on the outside but on the inside they were full of dead men's bones.

These men, these scribes were for all intents and purposes dead spiritually. They lived wrong, they had the wrong heart, they set a bad example and condemnation was coming for them.

I wonder at times do I find myself playing the part of the hypocrite? I think we should all ask ourselves that question...Do I say the right thing when I am around others but deep down inside I know that I'm far from God? Do I know all the Bible verses and know all the Christian lingo and yet live in sin when I'm in the world? Do I make great prayers and yet have major issues in my life? If that is us we ought to have a heart that is willing to repent and get right with the Lord.

May the Lord help us to live the way we should in His sight...May He correct us when we need it and guide us into all truth. Rather than walking through life putting on the mask of hypocrisy may we have a heart like David in Psalm 139:23-24 which has been a prayer of mine recently. It says **Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; ²⁴ And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.**

I think you and I who live here in a country that the Gospel can be freely proclaimed and have access to wonderful teachings of the Word of God and we have the resources to own 25 Bibles if we want should be very careful indeed that we take advantage of the blessings that God has given us...to those that have great knowledge and access to it there will be a greater accountability...Just the fact that we are here in a Bible teaching church today means we have access to His Word in ways the rest of the world does not.

So Jesus says don't do what these guys do! It's wrong, it's superficial, its artificial and then look at verses 41-44 as the Lord speaks of that which He does approve of. It says this ⁴¹ **Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.** ⁴² **Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.** ⁴³ **So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;** ⁴⁴ **for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."**

Do you think of yourself as a people watcher? I know that I am like that I love to just watch people and see how they interact with the world around them and this is how I picture Jesus as He is just watching people come in and out of the temple area and remember it's the time of the Passover and people are excited to give what they can as they looked to honor the Lord.

Here in our narrative if you remember a few weeks ago when I was talking about the temple I mentioned there were several different courts that made up the temple area...The court of the Gentiles, the

court of the men and women of Israel, the court of the men of Israel and then the areas that only the priests could enter.

Inside the temple court of the Jewish women were some special offering boxes and there were actually thought to be 13 in total.

And you can imagine some of the religious people who were quite rich coming into the temple with their long robes and they probably made a scene as they came up and dropped in their many coins and offerings...Perhaps the people were amazed by their offerings.

Jesus wasn't all that impressed though until a widow came in and all she had was two coins that were the smallest kind of money they had and He watches as she put in both of them...and then the Lord knowing the heart made an incredible comment to the disciples that she had put in all she had and that she had given more than all the others who were around her.

Can you imagine taking your last two pennies and giving them to God in an act of worship? Can you imagine giving ALL that you have that you might honor the God you love so much?

If you want an example of loving God with ALL you are this woman is probably a good one to meditate on and learn from.

The economy of God works so differently than the economy of man...God is always looking at the heart and the faithfulness of an individual rather than the outward appearance.

I suppose the question of the night might be "Are you all in for Jesus" You know I am reminded that we all make sacrifices for those things that we love...do we sacrifice for the kingdom of God? Do we look to

see Him and Him alone lifted up in our lives? Or do we find ourselves just like the Pharisees and the religious leaders just putting on a show.

Let's pray as we close this evening.