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Concerning Jesus - Mark 12 ~Aaron McRae

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you **think more deeply** about the sermon and **engage with others** through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and **allow God to work** in your life as you apply what you discover.

➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

When is a time in your life when you have felt truly loved?

What happened that made you feel that way?

➤ EXPLORATION

All through the book of Mark we see Jesus at odds with the religious leaders of the day. They did not like the things Jesus was doing. He was gaining popularity and teaching in such a way that the people began to listen to him and follow him.

This week as we read through chapter 12, we see the religious leaders asking Jesus questions about controversial issues. Jesus answers those questions in surprising ways and there is a lot we can learn from his answers.

Mark 12:13-15 (From your bible, read aloud)

The Romans were taking advantage of Jews by taxing them unfairly and excessively. This was a source of great frustration for the people. There were groups who wanted to violently protest these unfair taxes. There

were other groups who didn't want to make trouble, and just stayed silently resentful toward the Romans.

Paying taxes was a polarizing issue. When the leaders asked this question, they hoped to get Jesus to align with one of the extreme views of the day. They knew that if Jesus were to support paying the tax, they could accuse him of compromise. They might say, "he talks all religious but look at him, he talks about the 'kingdom of God' but he supports the Romans taxes."

On the other hand, if Jesus were to challenge the idea of paying these unfair taxes, he could be accused of treason against the Roman government which would be an offense punishable by death.

So, what should Jesus do?

Mark 12:15b-17 (From your bible, read aloud)

At first, Jesus seems to grant a measure of legitimacy to the government and does not side with those willing to go against Rome. However, Jesus also puts a limit on the authority of the state, putting God above the Roman government. He acknowledges that their human authority has some legitimacy, but that God is the ultimate authority.

How do you imagine the disciples would have reacted to this encounter?

Once again, the teachers of the law ask Jesus a question that they hope he won't be able to answer.

Mark 12:28-31 (From your bible, read aloud)

At that time in history there were 613 individual commandments that were being enforced by the Jewish religious leaders of the day. Every Jew was expected to keep **ALL** those commandments. But for Jesus, the whole Law could be summarized much more simply. He calls us to love God first and then to love our neighbor.

We find the theme of love throughout the New Testament. As you read through the following verses, take note way that love that is being described.

Read through the following verses aloud:

- **Matthew 5:43-44**
- **John 13:34-35**
- **Romans 13:8-10**
- **Colossians 3:12-14**
- **1 Peter 4:7**

What can we learn about the kind of love God is calling us to practice from these verses?

“Love is not an emotion you experience as much as it is an attitude you adopt and choices you commit to!”

Sometimes feelings develop slowly, but decisions and choices still need to be made. Whether we feel like it or not, we are commanded to choose to love.

Mark 12:32-34 (From your bible, read aloud)

This man may have known the truth intellectually (in his mind) but apparently the truth had not yet penetrated his heart and soul.

Mark 12:38-40 (From your bible, read aloud)

Jesus calls out the religious leader on their motives. They love to be honored, but at what cost to the people?

What does this passage tell us about the motivation behind the action of these leaders?

Mark 12:41-44 (From your bible, read aloud)

Here we see an example of what a Godly motivation looks like. The widow gave in order to express her love for God. She trusted God with everything, and she demonstrated her trust even when it meant sacrificing all she had.

“...the call to the gospel is a call for absolute surrender to God and total trust in him.”

William L. Lane “The Gospel of Mark”

What are some of the ways you demonstrate your love for God?

➤ TAKE AWAY

Motives matter to God. They mattered in Jesus’ day, and they matter now.

The religious leaders wanted to have power, status, influence, and respect. They fought hard to keep what influence they had, no matter who it hurt. It sounds a lot like the values we see from many of our leaders today.

Jesus taught that there was another way to live. He made it clear that the most important motivation for life was love.

Read the following verses slowly:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Mark 12:30

“The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:31

Read the verses again, asking God to make you aware of what motivates you to live the way you live. Pay attention to what comes to mind as you read through the passages.

What practical step can you take this week to intentionally make love your motivation?

Pray together, asking God to help you make loving God and loving your neighbor your first and most important priority this week.