

## Mark 12, Part 2

We come to a passage today that sounds so familiar – and when I read it, it reminded me of an experience I had speaking in a little town in Arkansas. Mitzi and I spent the weekend there, and the only lodging was a couple of rooms in the middle of the little town – and we got to sleep, when all of the sudden, in the middle of the night, it sounded like a car was coming through the building - the building began to shake, and I jumped up, and soon after it was apparent that it was a train coming through – about 10 feet from the wall.

And the next day I asked one of the members who lived close by, “How in the world do you live with that?” And they said, “Live with what?”

They were just so accustomed to the train.

And the same way – this is so familiar – and yet this week I have been so amazed at how radical the teaching of Jesus is here.

This is radical teaching –

Verses 28-34

**Now – what’s this about? It’s like a train going by your house, and you don’t even hear it.**

And so a teacher of the law comes and listens. (And this man is unlike the Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees who only wanted to challenge and dispute with Jesus. This man approaches Jesus with sincerity and good will.

Then he has his own question:

Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” (Here’s what he’s saying - “There are 613 laws that are given by Moses – who could possibly keep them all? We feel so defeated. So can you boil it down to the basics?)

And here was the expectation – pick one! Tell us which ones of the law are really important.

But Jesus – he doesn’t do that at all. So here’s what’s interesting:

If he had chosen a commandment or two, it would have made him a liberal or a conservative (which is how most people deal with the law). We pick and choose which commands are important.

So, for example – if Jesus had chosen the parent command – “honor your parents” and the sex command – “don’t commit adultery” – he would have been a conservative.

But if he had chosen instead “don’t steal” and “don’t bear false witness” which actually is about distorting the justice system (“you know, justice is the important thing, it’s not your personal life and obeying your parents”), he would have been a liberal.

So what does he do? Instead, he chooses two places in Scripture (neither one, one of the 10 Commandments)

Deuteronomy 6:4 – love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength

Leviticus 19:18 – love your neighbor as yourself

And says, “That’s what the law is about.”

And here's his point – unless you understand that everything in the law is about love – that love gives definition to the law – you'll never know what law means.

And so LOVE is what the law is after.  
Every law is ultimately about love.

A couple of examples:

**“Thou shalt not steal.”** What's the point? You can only fulfill that if you love your neighbor by being protective and generous to the people around you.

**“Thou shalt not lie.”** What does that mean? You should not be manipulating your neighbor and spinning things. Why? Because you love your neighbor.

You see – you cannot fulfill the law simply by saying, “I did this, and I didn't do that.”

Here's one: **Why obey the speed limit?** So you can say when you keep it, “Look what a good law keeper I am, look how righteous I am.” No – you keep the speed limit why? Because you care about the wellbeing of the people in the car with you, and the people you pass on the road.

So how do you know what's most beneficial? What takes others into account.

And so God gave the law, not just for busy work – but to show his love for you.

The law defines what it means to act lovingly.

And so – the only motivation for law keeping is – a heart that is in love with Jesus – heart, soul, mind and strength – and

secondly – a heart filled with that same kind of love for those around us.

And if you don't understand that – the law will always be oppressive/it will be a terror to you – unless you understand that it is given from the heart of God because he loves us.

So here it is practically: **Guys, why do the dishes?**

Because it makes you look good? So she won't harp on me so much? To get something in return? Why wash the dishes?

And ladies – **why do the ironing?** To show him how hard I work around here? Because this is one of those crummy jobs a wife has to do – “Well, somebody's got to do it, I guess it's going to be me!”

You'll never find fulfillment in anything you do – for God or anybody else, unless you do it out of love!

Mother Teresa said that the key to fulfillment in life is “to do small things with great love.”

And the guy gets it! He gets it!

Look at verse 33 – he says, “Now I get it! Loving God, loving your neighbor as yourself – it's more important than ALL the burn offerings and sacrifices one could offer.”

And Jesus says, “You are not far from the kingdom.” (Jesus recognizes his humility!)

Now – why is he not far?

Because all his life he had been taught (like a lot of you) – if he could just keep the rules, he'd be good with God. And if he messed up the rules, he could offer a sacrifice, and then he'd still be good with God.

So he'd been taught - keep the rules/go to church (go to synagogue)/ say your prayers/read your Bible – do these things, and if you mess up, GO FORWARD, put some cash in the collection plate – and then you'll be cool!

So the Pharisees said, “Be obedient – and if you get 80/90% right, you can cover the other 10% over with an offering, and WALAA – you're 100% in with God.” That's what religions says – be good, and then for the part where you blow it –

But here's a guy who gets it – who says, “Oh, now I get it! I'm so far from keeping it all – I'm so selfish, I'm so self-centered, I'm often so unloving – all of the offerings in the world would never cover it up.”

He understands, “No amount of keeping religious rules – could ever manage a sinful heart!”

And Jesus says, “Now you're on your way! You're not far.”

And what does that mean? It means, “Now, you're on to it – you're headed in the right direction.”

And so – the first step to moving from being simply a religious person, to a transformed person – is to admit you're lost – that you can't possibly satisfy the law.”

And so a REAL CHRISTIAN – is someone who obeys God out of a grateful heart – who loves God because of his love for us – and then passes that love on actively to those around her.

In **verses 35-37**, Jesus goes on the offensive. The entire chapter, he's been dealing with doubters, people who don't believe in him. Finally, Jesus says “Here's something you don't have to doubt!” And he makes his own argument for being the Messiah that would have been perfectly tailored to the culture.

His point – the Messiah is more than a prophesied earthly king – he is God in the flesh coming *as a man* to save us from our sins! (He confirms that from Scripture). And the crowds listen with delight.

Verse 38-39

The teachers of the law were the spiritual peacocks of the day – with their long flowing robes, who sat in clearly marked front row seats and expected common folks to rise when they passed them in the marketplace.

But here was the greater problem:

It is bad enough that the scribes are spiritual peacocks that flaunt their devotion for the sake of self-promotion.

These guys, however, are more than peacocks – they are PREDATORS who prey upon the vulnerable.

**Verse 40 -**

What does Jesus say?

These men sponge off the hospitality of widows and use their position and persuasion to fleece the most vulnerable members of society – the ones with the most limited resources who at the same time are the most needy for aid.

And so Jesus calls them out! And while he's doing it, he noticed a particular "worshipping widow" by comparison:

Verses 41-44

**Verse 41** - (Interestingly – the temple treasury probably refers to the 13 trumpet-shaped METAL donation chests that stood in the temple precincts. And since all the money of the day was metal coinage, the large sums thrown in by the wealthy class could be heard as the coins clanked loudly).

**42-44**

She put in "everything" – which means literally, "She gave even her whole life."

So – when the rich give - - - (when WE give) - - - we give out of our margin. Because when the gift is done, are we eating any less than before the gift?

Are we dressing any worse after we make the gift? No!

Are we traveling any less? You see – we can give, and it never cuts at all into our lives. We just give money!

But SHE DIDN'T!

Jesus says, "When the widow put in her last discretionary cash – she was not only taking food out of her mouth, SHE WAS GIVING UP WHAT LITTLE CONTROL she had over her own life!

You see what's happening? When we give, we give what we can afford. We give, and then we do everything we did before we gave.

And here's this widow – and when she gave, she gave her life, because she gave God control. Because she trusted HIM!

So here's the question: Is your love, costing you anything?

Jesus wants your undivided love, and your unrelenting compassion for those in your path.

Let me ask: have you noticed how the gravitational pull of your heart is always toward yourself?

No one has ever had to teach me how to love me. No one is better at that than I am.

I say, "What do I want to do this weekend?" I never go, "What does my family want me to do this weekend?" I think about what I want to do.

But when you begin to give God your undivided love, the gravitational pull of your heart is not primarily toward your own needs and desires, but the needs and desires of those around you.

This is God's visions for life!