

Series: **Gospel of Mark**

Today's Title: **"Religious Appearances"**

February 21, 2021 – *Mark 12:35-44* (Also: Matthew 22:41-46; Luke 20:41-21:4)

Objective: To help people know the identity of Jesus and for their worship to be genuine.

Prayer

Thanks to Jim Oetter for preaching **12:28-34** last Sunday - wonderful job - I can only hope Jim will start liking people again soon!!

Kim and I were able to get away last weekend and we had a wonderful time.

Valentine's day is always a fun day for us. I hope you enjoyed the fabricated, yet important holiday with your loved one.

I was surprised - a few days after Valentine's Day - with another present from Kim - an unexpected present.

Kim had a Dr's appointment on Tuesday - and as we were getting ready for bed on Tuesday night - she said, *"Oops - I almost forgot to take my N-A-G medicine!"*

I said, *"Thank the Lord!!! My prayers have been answered!"*

I told her I would have to use that in my sermon on Sunday - and she said something about me not speaking any longer, etc.

In my video this past Tuesday morning I mentioned while we were in Phoenix this past Monday morning, we were getting ready and had a local morning news show on the TV.

The anchor was a young, very attractive lady - she presented a friendly appearance - was pleasant.

She had a guest on who makes regular visits to the show - and the guest was asking a trivia question in their discussion.

“Who was the first President to travel outside the country while they were in office?”

Host: Bill Clinton???!!!

Answer: Theodore Roosevelt - 1906 - trip to Panama to inspect the canal.

Later on - she was interviewing Dr. Oz about COVID - and she referred to the virus *‘migrating’* - instead of *‘mutating’*.

Her answers certainly made you wonder why she has a job hosting a morning news show in a major media market.

It’s certainly not due to her knowledge or competency with history.

It was pretty obvious - she has this job because of her appearance!

Appearances are important and there is merit to having a positive appearance - a helpful appearance - making a good first impression.

We shouldn’t ignore or despise our appearance.

The problem is when appearances become the priority - when they are fake...when they're meant to deceive...to paint a picture that is not real - intended to give an impression that isn't true or accurate.

Turn to Mark 12:35-44

Appearance is an important topic in Scripture.

It can be an issue of pride...or an issue of identity.

Appearance can be helpful - or misleading.

The appearance of Jesus was vastly different from His enemies - the religious establishment.

Jesus was a normal looking person - He was not ornate or part of the elite. He was from Nazareth - small town Israel. In our modern-day lingo - He was from 'fly-over' country. His appearance was humble - but pleasant and inviting.

Jesus has been in the Temple throughout the day - and He has been 'attacked' by the religious establishment with four questions which were designed to ridicule Him in the eyes of the people - to embarrass Him publicly.

Now it's His turn to ask them a question.

His question is not designed to trick - or to embarrass - but to reveal truth to them.

His question is about His identity.

First...a bit of context.

King David was the 2nd king of Israel - and was considered the greatest of Israel's kings.

God made a covenant with David - it's called the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7).

One of the promises in this covenant which God makes to David is his throne "shall be established forever." (vs. 16b).

Because of this and other O.T. passages and prophecies, it was widely known and believed by the Jews that the Messiah (Christ) would be from David's lineage.

Over time, the title "Son of David" became a synonym for the Messiah.

Matthew 21:9

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Mark 11:10

"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!"

Now...let's look at our passage for today.

Read Mark 12:35-37

The identity of Jesus, the Christ (*Messiah*). vs. 35-37

The Scribes were Pharisees - they were the scholars - experts when it came to the Law of God - the Scriptures.

The question posed by Jesus is: "How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?"

This is what everyone believed - it had been taught for centuries.

And it was a true statement...but the Christ was so much more than a man in the royal line of King David.

The dilemma here for the religious establishment - and also for the people - was the details of the relationship between David and the Messiah/Christ.

Psalm 110 was a very well-known Psalm for the Jews - still is a well-known Psalm.

Psalm 110 was believed / is believed to be a Messianic Psalm - a Psalm written about the Messiah.

This is what Jesus quotes in **vs. 36**:

Psalm 110:1

The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” *(David wrote this Psalm)*

“LORD” (all caps) - this is Yahweh - God the Father.

“Lord” - this is David’s ‘son’ - the Messiah

In Jewish culture, a father would never refer to any of his sons as “Lord” - which is a term for ‘master’ / ‘boss’, etc.

So, Jesus asks His question - a question about the Messiah’s identity.

“David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?”

Remember...they believed the Messiah / Christ would be a man - a great man - but a man - a military and political leader. Their bias’s and pre-conceived beliefs blinded them to what the Scriptures actually taught.

The deity of the Messiah is taught in the **2 Samuel 7** in the eternal nature of his kingdom.

It’s taught in **Psalm 110** - among other places.

This stumped the Scribes - the experts had nothing to say.

Matthew 22:46

“And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask Him any more questions.”

The answer to Jesus’ question is the Messiah would be God - God incarnate / in-flesh.

Jesus made this evident through His authoritative teaching and His miracles.

He displayed the power of God on a daily basis.

Who else but God could heal the blind, the lame, command demons and raise the dead?

Next...

Jesus warns against appearing to be religious. vs. 38-40

Read vs. 38-40

Remember...Jesus is saying these things while the Scribes are likely still there!

Mark gives us 3 verses of what Jesus says here...Matthew gives us 39 verses!

This is the famous ‘woes’ passage in **Matthew 23**.

“long robes” - these would have set them apart from the ‘normal’ people - set them apart as holy and dedicated to God. *This was spiritual grandstanding in fashion.*

Somehow, these robes were a distinction - something that set them apart - and no doubt in their mind above others.

“like greetings in the marketplace” - who doesn't like a greeting?

This was more than neighborly pleasantries. They loved the attention - they loved to be greeted by their titles.

“the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts”

- The church I grew up in had these large - very ornately wood-carved chairs on the platform where the pastor would sit - and others who would be leading the service. I think this was more a relic of tradition and not a pride issue - but for many religious leaders, pride is an issue. Jesus says the religious establishment has a pride problem - they love to be the center of attention - to have the best seats - most prominent positions of honor in view of all the others.

“who devour widows' houses” - Those who needed protection were preyed on by the religious leaders.

We see this today through TV evangelists or other so-called preachers who promise God's blessing if you send them money. You will receive a blessed prayer cloth for a gift of \$50 or more.

The majority of people who send money to these con artist preachers tend to be widows.

They would move into their home - take advantage of their loneliness and get them to contribute money for extra counsel and care in the synagogue.

If the widow lost their mental capacities, they would take advantage for their own benefit.

The O.T. was full of commands to care for widows - but they ignored those commands and used widows to care for themselves.

“for a pretense make long prayers” - Spiritual grandstanding - to impress the people. Their prayers weren't directed to God...they were directed to themselves - so the people who heard them and saw them would be impressed with their deep spirituality.

Principle:

Where there is spiritual depth, there is less symbolism and less ceremonial opulence.

Where this is more symbolism and extravagant ceremonial opulence, there is shallow spirituality.

(all about the 'show' - the appearances)

Jesus declares: “They will receive the greater condemnation.”

vs. 40 - “greater” - same Greek word found in John 10:10

(“abundant”)

Their judgment will be abundant!!!

One preacher said, *“The hottest places in Hell will be for those who were religious but led people away from God and toward themselves.”*

At the end of vs. 37, Mark tells us “And the great throng heard Him gladly.”

It’s difficult to know if this is a positive or a negative statement.

Did the people enjoy Jesus’ teaching because He was so good at it?

Was it more entertaining than transforming?

Or...

Did they enjoy it because He said what everyone thought about the religious establishment - but couldn’t say out loud?

Did they enjoy it because He pointed out what was so wrong with their leaders?

The people were stuck in a system they knew was corrupt - but they had nowhere to turn.

Finally - someone with authority - power - popularity - was saying it publicly - for all to hear!

Then, after what was probably a very long day of teaching and walking around the Temple - Jesus finds a place to sit down.

Jesus warns against giving for public or spiritual gain. vs. 41-44

Read vs. 41-44

How would you like Jesus to sit down and watch you put money into the offering?

Pretty intimidating thought!!!

Too often we give an amount we think is impressive.

We give with wrong motives.

Mark first tells us: “rich people put in large sums.”

I was in a church about 2 or 3 years ago - and when it was time for the offering - there was an offering plate at the front of the church - and as a song was played - a few people got up, walked to the front of the church, and put something in the offering plate.

After this, the ushers came and then passed the plate down each row.

I thought, why was the offering done this way?

I don't know all the details - or the traditions of this church - but I thought there was great danger in what they do because it so easily gives into the pride of those who would walk up to the front - in view of everyone in the church - and give their offering as a public spectacle.

In the Jerusalem Temple, there were 13 of these “offering boxes” or ‘trumpets’ in this area of the Temple and they were lined with metal. There was no paper money at this time, so when someone would drop their offering of coins into the offering

box / ‘trumpet’ it would sound like a slot machine in a casino!

You could tell how much someone was giving by how much noise their coins were making!!

Jesus uses this time of observation as a prime teaching opportunity for His disciples.

Naturally, everyone would have been impressed by the abundant ‘clanking’ of the rich people and the vast number of coins they put into the ‘trumpet’.

But Jesus helps us see past the appearances.

He makes a statement that doesn’t make sense at first.

vs. 43 - “this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.”

By appearances, the rich people had put in “large sums” - certainly more than this poor widow.

Jesus explains: the others gave what they would not miss - they gave out of their abundance while she gave out of her poverty - her lack.

She gave everything she had.

“God measures our giving by proportion, not by addition.

He measures our giving not by the amount but by the sacrifice,”

(<https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/beware-and-be-aware/>)

The widow is not an example for us that we should give our last dollar - our last penny to the Lord.

She is likely one of the widows who have been

“devoured” (vs. 40) by the Scribes. She might be giving

because she believes her salvation and blessing depends on giving her last pennies to God.

But she is an example of sacrificial giving.

King David didn't build the first Temple - but he did buy the land where the Temple would eventually be built.

The owner of the land offered to give it to David - at no cost - for free!

But he refused and insisted on paying for it.

"I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." - 2 Samuel 24:24

Do you give to God?

Why do you give? What is your motive?

Apply it...

Jesus was/is the Messiah - God incarnate

Belief in Jesus for your salvation requires you to know who He was.

He wasn't just a great man - great teacher - moralist.

He was God incarnate - 100% human and 100% deity.

He proved His humanity through His death.

He proved His deity through the power of His teaching and His miracles - culminating in His resurrection.

Beware of spiritual pride

Appearance - public recognition

Giving - motives

1 Samuel 16:7

But the LORD said to Samuel,

“Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

Closing prayer