

Mark 12

Probably occurring Tuesday of Passion Week in the area of the Temple.

V.1-12 The parable of the wicked vinedressers, and the vineyard owner's son.

Jesus teaches about Israel and the prophets of old.

This is a picture of God with mankind. God created the earth and has lent it into our hands to care for.

However, that relationship has been fractured over the ages.

When God has sent His messengers to the tenants of the land they have been spitefully treated rather than listened to.

[Heb 11:35-37 NKJV] ...Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented...

[Act 7:51-52 NKJV] 51 "[You] stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers [did], so [do] you. 52 "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,

So God sent His son -- [Jhn 1:14 NKJV] ...the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

But as the scriptures tell us, and Jesus teaches in this parable, the tenants did not respect the Son either. They brutalized Him and killed Him. They made themselves enemies of God rather than listening to Him, respecting Him.

Interestingly enough we find in this parable the statement, "Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours."

On a superficial level this doesn't make any sense! What landowner would roll-over and give his inheritance to a group of hooligans who killed his son? Why wouldn't he raise an Army and squash them?

That's what Jesus says the owner will do - cast them out, give the vineyard to others. In this we find support for the grafting of the Gentiles into God's family. (Rom 11:17)

But the statement - "the inheritance will be ours," is true. It is by Christ's death at the hands of sinners that we receive our eternal inheritance. (Matt 26:45)

This is where we wrestle with the sovereignty of God and the freewill of men. Wicked tenants seeking to abuse Christ are found to set themselves as enemies against Him and yet nothing surprises Jesus - He lays his life down of His own accord, and He takes it back up. (John 10:18)

Furthermore, the death of the son, which in the minds of those committed to violence against Christ seems so final, that is the thing that delivers to us our inheritance. But death has no mastery over Christ.

About this parable Augustine wrote: "The outcome of the resurrection shifts the whole premise of the parable, for amid the fury of the oppressors, Jesus looked steadfastly toward the resurrection"
Oden, T. C., & Hall, C. A. (Eds.). (1998). [*Mark \(Revised\)*](#) (p. 157). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

And it is the resurrection that changes this narrative completely. The son doesn't stay dead, and those who have set themselves against Him will answer for it.

[Heb 10:12-13 NKJV] 12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, 13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.

Jesus wraps up this parable with a direct challenge from Psalm 118:22-23

Jesus was the chief cornerstone that was rejected.

He is the cornerstone on which our faith and the church is built. There is no other foundation. And yet people reject this foundation still.

Jesus' teaching infuriates them but they are too afraid of the people to do anything about it. Much is discussed today about "seeker-friendly/attractational model churches." These religious leaders fit right in.

Their motivation, the relationships they built, their behaviors, the people they associated with, were purely for their own relative advantage rather than edifying or building up.

V.13-17 The Pharisees try to trap Jesus politically by asking about taxes

Pharisees AND Herodians joined together in a religious-political alliance to entrap Jesus.

[Mat 22:15 NKJV] 15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in [His] talk.

People do this still - in our world of hype media, 24 hour news cycle, and cancel culture -- if we can get somebody to say something contrary then we've got them!

This particular question needs no parallel to communicate the cultural nuance. The question is: should we pay our taxes to the government?

The underlying sentiment is this: a hyper-religious person might say that they are only a citizen of God's kingdom and earthly laws don't apply to them so they shouldn't be required to pay taxes.

Specifically in Jesus' day the Jewish people were under the heavy hand of the Roman government, they were not free to govern themselves. So, in an act of defiance one might be tempted to "stick it to the man" by not paying taxes to the Roman government because they were a "true patriot," for Israel.

Oh, how these attitudes continue.

Jesus will not be trapped because He is not overly-concerned with striving against the Roman political machine. He is the Lord of all creation. All things are under His hand. And perhaps God had raised up the Romans for His own purposes which may remain unclear to us this side of paradise.

This is applicable to us as well.

Jesus instructs them to render unto Caesar what is his, and to God those things that are His.

We must acknowledge this as well. What is a Christian to do when tried politically? Render unto Caesar those things that are his, and render unto God those things that belong to Him - namely our entire being.

V.18-27 The Sadducees try to trap Jesus using trick questions.

For example: can God create an object so heavy that He can't lift it?

Keep in mind that the Sadducees professed that there was no basis for resurrection, nor angels, nor demons, or anything like that.

*Recap on an easy way to remember the difference between Pharisees and Sadducees.

[Deu 25:5-6 NKJV] 5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be [married] to a stranger outside [the family]; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6 "And it shall be [that] the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

So they ask Jesus to speak doctrinally, and definitively on an improbable and ridiculous scenario. He demonstrates so much patience and actually uses the time to teach them about the nature of heaven and the resurrection.

He says some pretty cutting things that I would hope spurred them into more diligent study - "You do not know the scriptures nor the power of God"(v.24)

Essentially - "you don't know what you're talking about"

To know the answers to these questions - life, death, resurrection, marriage, angels, etc we have to know God's word, and we have to frame God's word in God's power or else we risk contorting it to our own foolishness and ignorance.

Jesus teaches them about the resurrection. By this we know that the resurrection is true, that God is the God of the living - not a vast pile of corpses but living beings, and life comes through Christ.

We also learn from this portion that there is no marriage in the resurrection. The whole company of saints, joined together in the Body and Bride of Christ are wed to Jesus Christ.

[Rev 19:7-9 NKJV] 7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then

he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed [are] those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'..."

Bear in mind that marriage is intended to teach us and those observing about Christ and the church. When we remember that, we can better understand the nature and purpose of marriage.

V.28-34 The greatest commandment, a scribe is close.

Very often while teaching the Bible we are introduced to these antagonists - Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, Lawyers, Chief Priests, etc. Very often they are opposed to Jesus and His ministry.

But there are a few exceptions, this appears to be one of them, an interaction with a Scribe (**γραμματεὺς**) - *a man learned in the Mosaic law and in the sacred writings, an interpreter, teacher*: - (Thayer's)

Jesus is asked which is the greatest commandment. We might be tempted to say all of them. Jesus actually nails it down, and in doing so summarizes the entirety of the the Law and Prophets while quoting from both Deuteronomy and Leviticus in His reply.

[Mat 22:40 NKJV] 40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

1. Love God completely, with all you have - your everything, every fiber of your being.
2. Love people with care

It's not too far of a stretch to suggest that we are only really ready for loving people rightly when we love God fully.

This interaction seems less contentious than others. Jesus recognizes that this man is getting close. And how? By God's word. He was in God's word and he recognized the truth of Jesus' words and the unity of God all in this one interaction with Jesus.

If he only knew how close he actually was to God! And perhaps Jesus' words served as a gentle push - you are not far from the kingdom of God.

V.35-37 Jesus teaches on the nature of the Messiah, His Lordship over all, even beloved figures like David.

Jesus is greater!

[Jhn 8:53, 58 NKJV] 53 "Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself

out to be?" ... 58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

(Augustine)...He was both the son and the Lord of David, the son of David according to the flesh, the Lord of David according to [his] divinity...

Oden, T. C., & Hall, C. A. (Eds.). (1998). [*Mark \(Revised\)*](#) (p. 167). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Fully God, fully man. Born into His creation, yet Lord over all creation. Nearly unfathomable, and yet true and glorious and stirring.

V.38-40 Jesus teaches on religious ugliness while sitting in the Temple

Very interesting to sit and teach against such religious ugliness in the Temple where scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, all in their different attire, with books, and accoutrements, and decorations busily going back and forth.

They were robbers! Wolves in sheeps clothing, taking advantage of God's people to make a living, to validate their self-esteem, to gain societal advantage, respect, honor, etc.

This still happens today. Men love to be called Pastor, or Reverend, or whatever - BUT as Jesus taught, so we believe...you tell a tree by the fruit that it bears. (Matt 7:20)

These men's lives were spent on parade in order to elicit undue reverence from ordinary people that they were supposed to be serving and caring for. They fell out of love with God and His word and in love with greetings, and special seating preference, being invited to parties.

Really what this behavior communicates is their practical atheism - they must not believe in a Living and Just God if they carry on this way with His people.

They shall pay for it one day.

Lord keep us from this, help us to serve one another and to remain in love with You.

V.41-44 Giving - remark on segway from v. 40, this is not a coincidence.

This widow may have been exactly who Jesus was teaching about.

Notice that Jesus is observing how people give - but it's not primarily about giving as an imperative but rather an observation on our hearts.

It is this woman who gave out of her poverty that was striking to Him. And as a representative of the fallen human race I am glad that woman was there for Jesus to see. Her heart was towards God.

This heart characterizes God's people not because it is required, but because it is exactly God's heart towards us - who spared no expense, who lavished His grace upon us, who became poor for our sakes (2 Cor 8:9)

We see a similar heart in some of the Macedonian churches:

[2Co 8:1-3 NLT] 1 Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. 2 They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. 3 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will.

(Guzik) The wonderful thing about this widow's giving was that she had **two mites** and gave them *both*. She might have kept one coin for

herself, and no one would blame her if she did. Instead, she gave with staggering generosity.

May we have soft hearts towards God and towards people. Teach us Lord. Draw us.