

# Mark 12

Lesson for Sunday, August 20, 2023

**SUMMARY:** Jesus tells a parable and answers questions about paying taxes and about the resurrection. He identifies the two most important commandments, talks about the Messiah's divine identity, and commends a poor widow for her offering.

1. Illustration (vs. 1-12)
  - a. The workman (vs. 1)
  - b. The wickedness (vs. 2-12)
2. Confrontation (vs. 13-37)
  - a. Concerning the paying of tribute (vs. 13-17)
  - b. Concerning marriage in the resurrection (vs. 18-27)
  - c. Concerning the greatest commandment (vs. 28-34)
  - d. Concerning the Son of David (vs. 35-37)
3. Condemnation (vs. 38-40)
  - a. Haughtiness (vs. 38-39)
  - b. Cheating (vs. 40)
4. Donation (vs. 41-44)
  - a. The ones who give much, amounting to little (vs. 41)
  - b. The one who gives little, amounting to much (vs. 42-44)

## INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Ask: What are the great questions and debates of life?
  - Who was the greatest American leader?
  - What was the greatest human empire in history?
  - Who was the best basketball player – Jordan or LeBron?
- ⇒ Discussions like these even existed in Jesus's time and today's text centers on one of these types of questions. Jesus is asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?"
- ⇒ Jesus didn't just give one, He gave two! Both commands are grounded in our responsibility to love. We are to love God supremely and love our fellow humans genuinely.
- ⇒ The way we respond to these two commands, reveals the condition of our hearts and what matters most to us.

## BIBLE STUDY:

1. We are commanded to love God supremely (vs. 28-30)
  - a. A religious man asked Jesus a question that was often batted around in religious circles (28). The question is not as easy as it sounds.
    - i. The rabbinic tradition had identified 613 commands in the first five books of the Bible. 365 were negative and 248 were positive.
    - ii. Some were "light," making less demand, while other were viewed as "heavy," with severe consequences for disobedience.
  - b. Jesus gladly answered his question, and His answer takes us to the core of what really matters in life.
  - c. First, we are to love God for who He is (29).
    - i. Jesus quoted the *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. This confession was recited by every devout Jew morning and evening.
    - ii. LORD = *Yahweh*. It is God's covenant name declared to His people. *Yahweh* is our God and our only God. *Yahweh* is One. He is unified and unique in essence and existence. He alone is God; there is no other.
    - iii. This is a powerful statement of uniqueness and exclusivity. Our God is God alone, and our worship, love, devotion, and allegiance must be exclusively to Him.

- iv. Jesus is bringing them back to the fundamentals, the nonnegotiables of the faith. We should love God because of Who He is.
- v. Don't forget the context of the Shema! It is instructive. To love God is to obey His commandments and statutes "all the days of your life" (Deut. 6:2).
- vi. Discuss: Who is He? What is He like? Reference Exodus 34:6-7.
- d. Secondly, we are to love God with all that we are (30).
  - i. Four times Mark uses the word "all." Our love for God is to be comprehensive.
  - ii. The heart speaks to our emotions, the real you.
  - iii. The soul speaks to the spirit, the self-conscious life.
  - iv. The mind speaks to our intelligence and thought life.
  - v. Strength speaks to our physical bodies, and even our will.
- e. How do we know if we love God as we should? Consider some of these questions:
  - i. Is the Lord the all-consuming passion of my life?
  - ii. Am I loyal to God with an exclusive love? Or are there things that compete for what should be His?
  - iii. Do I enjoy spending time with the Lord and with His people?
  - iv. Do I tell others about my love for my Savior and Lord?
- f. These are things that we do because we are loved by Him and because we love Him in return (1 John 4:10).
- 2. We are commanded to love others genuinely (vs. 31-34)
  - a. As often is the case, Jesus gives us more than we ask for! The religious lawyer asked which command is most important and Jesus gives him two!
  - b. His point is that these two commands work together. How you respond to the first (loving God) will determine how you respond to the second (loving your neighbor). When we obey the second, it shows that we have embraced the first.
  - c. First, this kind of love is not selfish (31).
    - i. Notice that Jesus does not command us to love ourselves. We are commanded to love our neighbors.
    - ii. "Neighbor" is not used in a restrictive sense. All of humanity is my neighbor.
    - iii. Jesus's command does not focus on feelings, but on action. Biblical love begins in our hearts and moves outward toward others.
    - iv. This kind of love is super-natural and closely tied to command #1. We cannot love others properly if we are not loving God rightly.
  - d. Second, this kind of love is sacrificial (32-33).
    - i. The scribe responds with delight.
    - ii. The scribe seems to grasp that true religion is ultimately a matter of the heart, and not outward observance of religious rituals (see also 1 Samuel 15:22).
  - e. Third, this kind of love is crucial to salvation (34).
    - i. Jesus was pleased with the response of the scribe. "You are not far..."
    - ii. What did Jesus mean by this statement? It is not an encouragement to try harder! Rather, the man has come to see that entering the kingdom of God is a matter of heart devotion not hard duty.
    - iii. Obeying rules and regulations will never get someone into Heaven. We need a new heart. We need the grace and mercy of God who can make us a new creation in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

#### CONCLUSION:

- ⇒ The cross teaches us that Jesus loves God supremely, and it tells us that He loves us genuinely.
- ⇒ To love God is to love others. To love others is to love God.