

MARK

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Mark chapter 11 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we concluded our study last time, we saw that Jesus healed blind Bartimaeus in Jericho and is now making His way to Jerusalem for the last time. This journey was long and slow even though it was only 20 miles, for Jericho is 1,290 feet below sea level while Jerusalem is 2,550 feet above sea level.

Also, keep in mind that over the last nine months or so Jesus has been going through the areas of Galilee, Samaria, Perea and finally Judea as He is making His way to the cross of Calvary to pay for the sins of mankind!

Now six days before the Passover, John tells us that Jesus came to Bethany and has a meal at the house of Simon the leper or I should say ex-leper for Jesus had healed this man sometime earlier.

Also, Mary, Martha and Lazarus were there. It is at this meal that Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair. (John 12).

Now it is the Sunday before Passover and as we will see, Jesus will complete the work that His Father sent Him to do. With that as our background, let's begin reading in verse 1 of Mark chapter 11 and see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

MARK 11**VERSES 1-6**

Jesus is on the east side of the Mount of Olives and is traveling over to the west side of the Mount of Olives where He will see the city of Jerusalem, a beautiful site. Jesus then sends two of His men to go and pick-up a colt, the foal of a donkey. And it would seem that Jesus had pre-arranged this with the owner.

The reason I say that is Jesus told them if anyone asks what they are doing, they were to say, “**The Lord has need of it**” or really, “*Jesus has need of it!*” And that is exactly what they did and the people let them take this colt.

Keep in mind that this is the fulfillment of what the prophet Zechariah said some 500 years earlier, around 487 B. C.! In Zechariah 9:9 we are told, “**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; he is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.**”

Now of all creatures to ride into town with, a donkey is not one you would think of. Think about it. If you were coming as a leader, as a king into a town would you drive a Mustang or a Pinto? That is kind of the difference!

So why a donkey? It is as simple as this. Jesus came the first time as a man of peace, as is illustrated by His riding in on a donkey. When He comes again it will be in victory as He comes to put down sin and establish His Kingdom here on this earth, and then He will come riding in on a white horse!

And this is what the Jews were waiting for, their Messiah to come and free them from the bondage they were in, not with sin but with Rome! And that was not why Jesus came, too free them from their Roman bondage. He came too free them from their sins. He did not want them to be free in this life and then for eternity be in torment. That is so important for us to understand today, especially when we are going through difficult times.

VERSES 7-11

This is interesting because often Jesus told the crowds not to tell anyone about Him. There were times that the Jews wanted to make Him King but He left them. We see that in John 6:15 where we are told, “**Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.**”

We will get to the reason for this, the reason why this specific day was so important, in a minute. But first, picture what is taking place here. As Jesus sits upon this unbroken colt, the foal of a donkey He begins to ride into Jerusalem and the people are excited. They are placing their garments on the ground, palm branches on the ground before Him.

They are honoring Jesus as their King, the Messiah. And they are applying Scripture to what they are believing, specifically Psalm 118, part of the Hallel Psalms, which are Messianic in nature, Psalms 113-118.

And notice what they are crying out, “**Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!**”

And as great as this sounds, this missed the main point. You see, as I have said, the people wanted Jesus too free them from Roman bondage, they wanted a political King, and thus, when that didn't happen these same people who were crying out "*Hosanna!*" or "*Save now!*" will be crying out "*Crucify Him! Crucify Him!*"

There is a powerful lesson for us to learn here. We need to be careful not to reject the Lord or turn away from the Lord because things are not going the way we have planned them. His ways are perfect, don't fight against them, accept them and grow in the Lord.

Now why was this one day so special? Why was this the only time Jesus allowed the people to honor Him as Messiah the King? Because this day was the fulfillment of what the prophet Daniel wrote of in Daniel chapter 9.

In speaking of Jerusalem, the holy city and its people, the Jews, Daniel was told that 173,880 days from the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem the Messiah would come. This was an exact day that was spoken of.

Now, according to Nehemiah chapter 2 this command was given by King Artaxerxes on March 14, 445 B. C. If you do the math, taking in the leap years, you would come to the date of April 6, 32 A. D, what we call Palm Sunday!

This was the only time that Jesus allowed them to worship Him as King and it was something that Jesus held the Jews accountable for knowing, the day of His visitation!

In Luke 19:39-44, as the Jews were crying out for Jesus to save them now and acknowledging Him as their King, we are told, **“And some of the Pharisees called to Him from the crowd, ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.’ But He answered and said to them, ‘I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.’ Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation.’”**

The religious leaders rejected Jesus as their Messiah and they will eventually get the crowds of people to go along with them. What I find interesting here is that Jesus held them accountable for knowing this day, when the Messiah was to come into Jerusalem as King and since they rejected Him, they did not recognize this day, Jesus held them accountable and judgment came upon them.

How many today are doing a similar thing? They are rejecting the Second Coming of Jesus, that He is coming back to set up His Kingdom on this earth! We need to learn the lesson and look up because our redemption is drawing near! Thus, we see here another prophecy fulfilled to the day!

Also, keep in mind that Passover was drawing near. Thus, the excitement of Passover was in the air as the city swelled into the millions as people came from all around to celebrate this feast.

And as Jesus came to Jerusalem and looks at the things that are going on in the Temple, because it is late, He heads back to Bethany for the night. But He will return to the Temple the next day to deal with those who were perverting the things of God and trying to make a profit off of God.

Imagine all that was going through the mind of Jesus as the cross is just a few days from now, and yet He stayed focused on the work that was before Him. A good example for us to follow, that no matter what obstacles come before us, stay focused on the Lord and the work He has you to do!

VERSES 12-14

It is now the Monday before the crucifixion and Jesus once again heads to Jerusalem. And as they are traveling Jesus is hungry and see's this barren fig tree, the early fruit was absent, so He curses the tree and in Matthew 21:19 we are told, “**. . . Immediately the fig tree withered away.**”

What is interesting to me is that some have a hard time with what Jesus did here. They think He just lost His temper! New Testament scholar T. W. Manson wrote, “It is a tale of miraculous power wasted in service of ill-temper (for the supernatural energy employed to blast the unfortunate tree might have been more usefully expressed in forcing a crop of figs out of season); and as it stands, it is simply incredible.”

And William Barclay adds to this idea of what Jesus did as being wrong by saying, “The story does not seem worthy of Jesus. There seems to be a petulance [moodiness] in it.”

Really, Jesus, Almighty God is acting like a spoiled child because He could not get some figs from this fig tree? If you are thinking that way you need to reconsider. Jesus was without sin and all that He did was perfect, there was no unrighteousness in anything He did!

Then why in the world did Jesus curse this fig tree? Don't lose sight of the picture that Jesus is painting here. The fig tree is representative of Israel and God was bringing judgment upon her because she produced no fruit. They did have the appearance of life, they had leaves, but they had no fruit. Judgment was coming upon them for this.

It is as we are told in Isaiah 29:13, **“Therefore the Lord said: ‘Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men.’”**

I think you can see the hypocrisy of their actions. They said that they loved the Lord and the evidence or appearance for this love was seen as they were still going to the Temple, they were offering their sacrifices, they had all the motion but their hearts were far from God.

And I do believe religious activity makes us feel good about ourselves, but God is looking for a relationship. Instead of fearing God according to His Word, they feared the Lord out of the traditions of man.

And here's the thing and this is important for us to understand. God doesn't move away from His people; they remove their hearts from Him and that is exactly what we see here with the Southern Kingdom of Judah spoken of here in Isaiah and it is what we see here in Mark chapter 11! They moved away from God, and Jesus cursed them and judgment was coming, in less than forty years the Romans would come and destroy Jerusalem!

Now look at this picture because I think we see this not just with Israel, but with nations who turn from God. You see, if you had a fruit tree and it never produced fruit, chances are you would cut it down because it is worthless, it is not doing what it was created for, to produce fruit.

Thus, the Creator of heaven and earth can also do that with nations and people. Israel proclaimed they knew God, but there was no fruit in their lives and God judged them for that. It is as Jesus said in John 15:8, **“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”** God desires fruit in our lives for it brings Glory to the Father!

VERSES 15-19

This is the second time Jesus entered the Temple to cleanse it, the first time being early on in His ministry and you can read of that in John chapter 2. What is the point? Why did Jesus do this? Simply, God will not tolerate hypocrisy. The Temple was to be a place of worship and prayer and not a place to rip people off and make a profit off of God!

Keep in mind that the Temple Mount area is about 30 acres located on Mount Zion. And the Court of the Gentiles, the area where the money changers and the sacrificial animals were sold, was the farthest out from the Temple. And so all this illegal activity was going on in front of the Gentiles!

Also, remember that every Jewish male had to pay a yearly Temple tax. It was equivalent to about two days' pay. But you had to use Temple currency and thus, if you didn't have it, they would be able to exchange it for you, but at outrageous exchange rates.

For the animals, if you traveled a long distance and it would be difficult for you to travel with the animal you were going to sacrifice, so they would sell you one, again at a high rate. And if you did bring an animal they often times would find fault in it, a defect and thus, they sold you one without a spot or blemish at a high cost!

And I think all of us are outraged by what they were doing and yet, look at what goes on in churches across America today! There are those prayer clothes or pieces of paper that they send you and you have to send it back but do so with a donation!

We have pastors living in mansions, buying their own jets and-so-on. And like in Jesus' day, all being done in the Court of the Gentiles, we do these things so the unsaved can see the hypocrisy and ripping off of the people, we do it right in front of their eyes!

And don't you think Jesus would do the same today as He walked into many churches? You bet He would! He would turn over their corrupt practices as He did here in Mark. May the house of God truly be a place where people can be touched and healed by God! A place where they can freely come to worship God!

Now when Jesus finished up in the Temple, as evening approached, He headed out of the city and back to Bethany some 2 miles away. He went to the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, to spend the night.

VERSES 20-24

As they return to the area the fig tree is withered away. Now, in speaking of Israel, this is not saying that God was done with Israel. But, because of unbelief they will be removed for a time.

You see, in 70 A. D. Titus and the Roman army came in and destroyed the city and the nation causing the Jews to flee for their lives. And since that time they have not had a homeland until 1948 when they became a nation again. That is some 1878 years! And the reason for this was their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah!

So as Peter and the boys were focusing on the fig tree we see that Jesus gets them to turn their attention back to God, to trust in Him.

Now, as some read this they are thinking, name it claim it, blab it grab it theology. But that is not at all what Jesus is saying. Some even go to the extreme to tell us that Jesus wants us to have faith in our faith.

No, it really is the exact opposite. Jesus tells us to have faith in God, to trust in Him! Don't forget that.

And then Jesus speaks of mountains being removed. Is Jesus speaking of physical mountains here? Sure, Jesus can move anything, but I also believe He is speaking of those mountains in our lives, those obstacles that are preventing us from doing the things that God wants us to do, God will remove them.

The key here, of course, is all that God wants you to have, not what you want necessarily. This is not "get whatever you want" theology as some teach.

John said in I John 5:14-15, "**Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**"

You see, we are asking the Father as if Jesus were asking, as His representative. Thus, the first thing we need to do is to ***PRAY IN THE WILL OF GOD!***

Ask God to move that mountain in your life and believe it by faith. And wait and see the salvation that God will bring to the situation and understand that the salvation He brings may be different than what you are thinking, it usually is but it is what is truly needed, it is what is best!

I am sorry to day that today, prayer is a lost practice. E. M. Bounds, in his day saw this problem and he wrote, “What the Church needs to-day is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men, men of prayer.”

- E. M. Bounds (August 15, 1835 - August 24, 1913, American Pastor, author, and attorney)

VERSES 25-26

We saw that a lack of faith is an obstacle to prayer and now Jesus tells us that there is another obstacle to prayer, another mountain you might say, and that is an unforgiving heart!

I realize that this is a hard one, but that is exactly what Jesus is saying here. Refusing to forgive or holding on to bitterness can hinder our prayer. Paul put it this way in Romans 12:18, **“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”**

In other words, you make sure your heart is right, that you do all you can to be at peace and then it is up to the other person. And I realize it is hard but look at what Jesus says here. We are to extend that same forgiveness that God has extended to us, and if you can’t forgive, then don’t ask God.

Now some may not like that, but that is what the Scriptures are saying. In fact, if you don’t treat your wife right, Peter tells us don’t pray, God won’t hear you! (I Peter 3:7)

And listen carefully to what Paul says in Ephesians 4:30-32, “**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.**”

You need to pray in the will of God with a heart of forgiveness towards others and God will answer your prayer according to His will.

VERSES 27-28

Keep in mind that the cross was days away and as He was teaching Luke tells us these religious leaders interrupted Jesus. It is amazing how the enemy loves to stop the teaching of God’s Word, the teaching of God as we see here.

For these religious leaders, they of course were the spiritual elite and felt they could do what they wanted. Now why did they do this? Because He challenged their authority and the people were listening to Jesus instead of them. So they are now challenging the authority of Jesus, who gave Him the right to do and say those things?

Big mistake. They wanted Jesus to say something that they could catch Him by, they still haven’t learned you don’t catch God, He catches you!

VERSES 29-33

Please understand that Jesus is not trying to evade their question or avoid it. He is showing them what is really in their heart, what they believe and what they reject.

And this question by Jesus is a very easy question to answer unless your answer got you in trouble. You see, if they said John was a prophet of God then they would have to accept what he taught, that Jesus is the Messiah. If they rejected John as being a prophet of God, then the people would come against them. Thus, the question was easy to answer if they were sincere in finding out the truth, but they were not, their hearts were hard towards God.

It is as one writer put it, "It was not a dodge, but a home thrust that cleared the air and defined their attitude both to John and Jesus. They rejected John as they now reject Jesus."

(Robertson)

So instead of answering the question they kept silent. Remember what I said, you don't catch God, He catches you, as these religious leaders found out.

Think about this for a minute. Here we see these highly educated religious men are asked a simple question and all they could say is, "***I don't know the answer!***"

And because they refused to honestly answer this question, Jesus is not going to answer their question, in fact, He begins to teach the people in parables, which is an earthly story or illustration with a heavenly meaning.

Mark skips the first and third parables that are given to us in Matthew chapters 21 and 22, the parable of the two sons and the parable of the marriage feast. Mark focuses on the parable of the vineyard owner, as Jesus turns His back on these religious leaders, according to Luke 20:9, and speaks to the people, those who were interested in what He was saying.

And let me close this chapter and move on to Mark 12 with this thought, "The whole story is a vivid example of what happens to men who will not face the truth. They have to twist and wriggle and in the end get themselves into a position in which they are so helplessly involved that they have nothing to say." (Barclay)

MARK 12**VERSES 1-8**

Keep in mind that Jesus is speaking to the crowds of people around Him and the religious leaders are listening in. They asked Jesus the question and now Jesus is going to expose their hearts.

The picture in this parable is of a vineyard that was leased by the owner to vinedressers, which was a common practice in those days. And when it was time to reap what was sown, the owner sent servants to receive this profit and instead of giving them what they came for, they beat him up and sent him on his way. They did this several times, even killing some of this owner's servants.

Finally, he sent his son with the idea that they will respect him, but they didn't. They killed the son of the owner! Not a nice story but what it was representing is even worse.

Here is what Jesus was speaking of. God planted this vineyard, the nation of Israel, into the land to produce fruit. They were to tell others about God, to teach others the things of God, but instead they kept the people away from God and believed that the Gentiles were only created to fuel the fires of hell!

They turned from God, worshiped idols, sacrificed their children to the god Molech an-so-on. So at harvest time, when the fruit was to be gathered in, they refused. So they beat up the servants and sent them away, even killing some of them. Who were these servants? The prophets of God, they didn't like what the prophets said so they beat them up, killed some of them, and refused to listen to what God was saying through them.

And the owner of the vineyard, God the Father, sends His only Son, Jesus Christ to gather in the fruit. But the vinedressers feel if they kill the Son this will all be theirs, they would get it all!

And just as Jesus said, they would put Him to death in just a couple of days from now. You see, the point Jesus is making is this. The religious leaders understood who Jesus was, and thus, they were trying to do away with Him so they could keep their power, their position, to have authority over the people!

Make no mistake about it, the Son was the final messenger. There would be no other. The bottom line is this. They will either accept the message of the Son or face the judgment of God!

Spurgeon summed it up like this, “If you do not hear the well-beloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. *He is God’s ultimatum*. Nothing remains when Christ is refused. No one else can be sent; heaven itself contains no further messenger. If Christ be rejected, hope is rejected.”

And I wonder if these religious leaders knew that Jesus was speaking of them? Well, we don’t have to guess. Let’s read on and it is interesting what they understood and what they refused to see and accept.

VERSES 9-12

The religious leaders thought that they would get away with this and their positions would be safe. Jesus speaks contrary to what they thought, they will be judged for what they have done! Judgment was coming.

And Jesus takes them right back to Psalm 118, the Psalm that was sung by the crowds as Jesus rode into Jerusalem as Messiah the King! And He shows them that not only is He the chief cornerstone but that they, as a nation, will reject Him.

Not only that, Jesus tells them that what was given to them will be taken away and given to the Gentiles, they will be the ones who point people to eternal life and that life is found in the chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ. Apart from Him any nation and any person will be unstable!

And as Jesus finished this parable you can see the smoke coming out of the ears of these religious leaders. You see, they knew exactly what Jesus was saying, that what they had was going to be given to the Gentiles.

In fact, in Luke 20:16 we are told that after Jesus said that this would be given to another, they said “... ‘Certainly not!’” You see, they wanted it for themselves but on their own terms and not upon Jesus Christ! They knew Jesus was speaking about them, these religious leaders!

And they are so angry that they want to kill Jesus but they knew that the crowds would not allow it, so they are plotting, they are planning on what to do with Jesus, how to put Him to death and get Him out of the way.

VERSES 13-15a

They are still trying to take Jesus down, always a big mistake. Here we see the Pharisees, who were the ultra-conservatives of their day, and the Herodians who were the ultra-liberals of their day, and they came together to bring Jesus down. They hated each other but in times of conflict, they were willing to work together for this cause.

And with this question about paying taxes, they put Jesus in a no win situation. You see, if Jesus said that they were to pay taxes to Caesar, then the Pharisees would be upset and so would the rest of the Jews for they hated to pay taxes to Caesar.

But if Jesus said that they were not to pay taxes to Caesar then the Herodians would be upset and they would let Rome know and they would come down upon Jesus and His followers. You see, a no win situation.

And please understand from around 6 A. D. the Jews were forced to pay taxes directly into the emperor's treasury, to Caesar. And most Jews did pay these taxes but they did so grudgingly, they hated it!

And it was not just one tax, but there were three taxes they imposed upon the Jews. The ground tax, which was 10% of all grain and 20% of all wine and fruit.

Then there was the income tax, which was 1% of the person's income.

And then there was the poll tax, and this was paid by men from 12 to 65 and women from 14 to 65 and it amounted to one denarius a year or about a day's wage for a laborer. Many feel this is the one that they were talking about.

So how is Jesus going to deal with this controversial subject? We will find out as we read on. But let me say this, the enemy loves to put us in difficult situations and we fret over it. We see no real way out. But God always provides a way out and we just need to be sensitive to His leading!

VERSES 15b-17

Jesus knew exactly what these religious men were doing. They were not looking for an answer to their question, they were looking to put Jesus down, to catch Him in the answer He gave.

But Jesus knew their heart and make no mistake about it, no matter how hard you try, you can't pull the wool over God's eyes. You can play church, you can fool people, but you can't fool God as Paul tells us in Hebrews 4:13, "**And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.**" You can't hide anything from Him!

Jesus asks them to bring Him a denarius. And keep in mind that a denarius was the average day's pay for a worker. And on this coin was a picture of Tiberius Caesar Augustus, and the inscription on the coin read in Latin, "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus."

You see, they saw themselves as a god! On the other side of the coin was Caesar dressed in priestly garments and the phrase "Chief Priest" or as it was written in Latin, "PONTIUS MAXIMUS." Not only did they see themselves as a god, but also as the high priest. Thus, you could see how this irritated the Jews.

So the question is simple and yet it was a no win for Jesus in any answer He gave, or so they thought. You see, if He said "Yes," the Jews would hate Him, and if He said "No," then the Romans would get Him. What would He do?

Jesus gives them a great answer. He gave them the perfect answer and one they could not refute. He tells them to pay Rome what you owe them, give to Caesar that which belongs to him. And give to God that which belongs to Him - ***YOUR LIFE!***

You see, He wants our hearts, something these religious leaders would not give Him. Thus, they left unchanged, defeated but not broken. You can't win against God and even if you could, you would lose!

VERSES 18-23

The Sadducees were the religious aristocrats of Judaism and thus, they looked down upon everyone else. They only accepted the first 5 books of Moses and did not believe in the afterlife, in the resurrection and thus, they were *SADD-U-CEE!* Thus, they quote from the book of Deuteronomy, part of the Pentateuch, and they give Jesus this story or question that comes out of that portion of Scripture they believed in.

Now before we get to their question for Jesus, let me give you just a little background on the Sadducees,

They tended to be wealthy and held powerful positions, including that of chief priests and high priest, and they held the majority of the 70 seats of the ruling council called the Sanhedrin. They worked hard to keep the peace by agreeing with the decisions of Rome (Israel at this time was under Roman control), and they seemed to be more concerned with politics than religion.

Because they were accommodating to Rome and were the wealthy upper class, they did not relate well to the common man, nor did the common man hold them in high opinion. The common man related better to those who belonged to the party of the Pharisees. Though the Sadducees held the majority of seats in the Sanhedrin, history indicates that much of the time they had to go along with the ideas of the Pharisaic minority, because the Pharisees were popular with the masses.

Now the question that they are asking Jesus is about the Levirate marriage from Deuteronomy 25:5-10 where an unmarried brother or nearest relative was to marry their brother's widow or relative's widow to bear a son to carry on the name of the dead brother or relative. But in this story they tell is way out there to make their point. And when you read this story the question is not, "*Whose wife is she in the resurrection?*" but it should be, "*What did she put in the Matzah ball soup for seven of her husbands to die?*"

And keep in mind that they are not only putting down the Pharisees, who believed in resurrection life, but also Jesus who taught this. So how will Jesus answer their question? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 24-27

Here was a group of religious leaders who prided themselves in keeping the first five books of Moses, they believed this was the Word of God. And yet Jesus calls them on this and tells them, that they are mistaken or deceived because they don't know the Scriptures and they don't know the power of God!

There is resurrection life and we can look at the book of Job and see that Job believed in resurrection life. In Job 19:25-27 we are told of this, "**For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!**"

But the Sadducees did not believe that Job was part of the Word of God, only the first five books of Moses as I have said. So what does Jesus do? He takes them to the book of Exodus, chapter 3, and He tells them that they need to read their Scriptures because if they do, they will see that there is resurrection life.

And the point is simple. In this portion of Scripture, it shows how God spoke to Moses and said to him, “**I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob**” not “*I was.*” And to drive that point home He says, “**He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.**”

That had to hurt. Instead of listening, instead of checking these things out, they just kept hardening their hearts to what the Lord was showing them. May we not do that. May we be open, even when our theology and especially when our theology needs to be corrected so that it is according to God’s Word and not man’s traditions!

One more point here. Will we know our spouses in heaven? I believe so but we will not be married to them. You see, we are married to the Lord!

VERSES 28-34

Keep in mind that the Scribes were teachers of the Law and they found 613 individual commands in the Mosaic Law. There were 365 negative ones and 248 positive ones. And they would argue over which one was the greatest. And here comes this Scribe, I believe with an honest question, which is the greatest commandment?

Now for us that may seem kind of strange but it was a hot topic amongst the religious leaders of Jesus' day! You see, out of those 613 commandments they divided these laws into heavy and light ones. The heavy ones being absolutely binding and the light ones less binding but they could never come to any unanimous decision which were heavy and which were truly light and specifically, which is the greatest commandment!

Now how could this catch Jesus? Because these religious leaders debated this for years and couldn't come to any conclusions and now if Jesus comes up and says that one carries more weight than the other they would be able to condemn Him or so they thought!

So Jesus tells him first you must have established your relationship with God, the vertical axis must be in line, and then the horizontal axis will be in line, which is your relationship with man.

People who call themselves Christians and are fighting and unforgiving have a problem with their vertical axis, their walk with God, and until they get that right, their relationship with man will also be off! I didn't say that, God did. We need to pay attention to that.

And this Scribe is impressed by what Jesus said. He didn't have anything to say against it. Putting God first, obeying Him and loving others is more important than all the sacrifices you can make!

And Jesus said to this Scribe, **"You are not far from the kingdom of God."** He is close but we don't know if he ever made it. You see, you can be in the lowest part of the earth and another person can be on the highest mountain top, and neither can touch the stars even though one is closer. Thus, you can go to church, read your Bible, tithe, but unless you give your heart to Christ, repent of your sins, you are not saved!

And with this answer we see that the religious leaders are silent. So Jesus is going to turn the tables on them and ask them a question, exposing their hearts once again and trying to draw out their faith, help them to see that the Messiah is more than just a man!

VERSES 35-37

Please understand that what Jesus is doing here is showing them that He is the Messiah for the Messiah is going to be more than just the Son of David. For the religious leaders, they recognized that the Messiah was the Son of David, for that was their response in Matthew 22:42.

And then, it is out of that answer that Jesus asks them the second question, ***“How can David then call Him Lord if He is His Son?”*** You see, that was not kosher! The reason is simple and they understood it. A father would never call his son “Lord” and yet we see David do that very thing, why? Because the Messiah was to be much more than the Son of David, He was to be the Son of God.

It is as Paul said in Romans 1:3-4, **“concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”**

You see, not only the seed of David but the Son of God! So David rightly called Him Lord! But the religious leaders rejected this and thus, Luke 20:45 tells us Jesus once again turns to the common people to speak to them for they were willing to listen and receive.

And what Jesus says next must have made these religious leaders blood boil. Look at what we are told.

VERSES 38-40

Mark only gives us a small portion of what Jesus said. Matthew gives some eight woes or condemnations against them for their activities. They looked good outwardly, they wanted all the attention, and God wanted their hearts and He alone is worthy to be praised.

And Jesus is warning the people to stay away from these religious phony's! Ouch, that had to hurt. The thing is, Jesus exposed their hearts and they refused to look and repent of their sins. They were more willing to believe their lies than to receive the truth that was before them and the warning is to stay away from people like this, they will bring you down.

What we see in the church today is people being drawn to false teachers and thus, their books sell, their churches grow because the people did not heed the warning to beware of them, stay away from them because they will bring you down!

VERSES 41-42

Keep in mind that this was the end of a long day and as Jesus sits down in the Court of the Women He is watching how the Passover crowds were giving to God. You see, in this court were 13 trumpet shaped containers made of brass to collect the offerings. This could obviously feed into the flesh of people as they let people see the generous heart they had as they gave. That is not what Jesus is looking for. He is looking for a heart that is willing to give even if no one sees it and especially when no one knows what is given!

Think about some of the past aid activities, like "Live Aid!" What if there were no cameras? What if you didn't have Stevie Wonder help sing, "We are the world"? Would people show up? Would they give? Would they even care?

And it goes way beyond that. We want to be recognized for what we gave with plagues, statues, names spoken or on walls so all can read what we gave and-so-on. But God does not want us to give that way. Give out of a loving heart and don't feel compelled to give and don't give to get recognized!

One writer gives to us some more insight into what this was all about. He wrote,

The treasury where they placed their offerings consisted of thirteen brass treasure chests called trumpets because they were shaped like inverted horns, narrow at the top and enlarged at the bottom.

According to the Mishna, each of the chests bore inscriptions designating what the offerings were for: “‘New Shekel dues,’ ‘Old Shekel dues,’ ‘Bird offerings,’ ‘Young birds for the whole offering,’ ‘Wood,’ ‘Frankincense,’ ‘Gold for the Mercy-seat,’ and, on six of them “freewill-offerings”” Because of the Passover, the treasury was a most busy place as both the local inhabitants and pilgrims crowded past the thirteen shopharoth (chests) and inserted their offerings into the narrow brass mouths made shiny by the constant friction of the worshipers’ hands.

- R. Kent Hughes, Mark Volume Two, pp.129-130

So as all this was going on Jesus spent some time watching how people gave. God does the same with us today. Why are you giving to God, for the glory, the praise of men or because of your love for Him? You see, it is a matter of the heart.

And think about this for a minute. Can you imagine all the noise as the rich gave their money, all the clanging as the coins hit the brass container, I'm sure it drew lots of attention?

But here comes this poor widow who gives 2 mites or 1/64th of a denarius. And a denarius was the daily salary for a working man. So she gave practically nothing or so it appeared.

You see, what we think as insignificant the Lord watches and cheers us on, applauds at our sacrificial giving. You see, the rich gave out of their abundance, it didn't affect them at all, and she gave out of her poverty, she gave all she had to the Lord.

And as we conclude this chapter we will see Jesus applaud the sacrificial heart of this woman.

VERSES 43-44

Jesus was so moved by what He saw that He called for His disciples to come over so He could teach them an important lesson. Today there is much confusion in regards to our giving, and I think Jesus clears it up and makes it very simple. The things He was teaching His men about giving, He is also teaching us.

The first point is, "*How do we give?*" The key is motivation, why are you giving? You see, acceptable giving comes from a heart of love. In II Corinthians 9:6-7 Paul tells us, "**But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.**" Give out of a cheerful heart, not because you are forced to give, but because you want to!

The second point is this, *“How much did it cost you to give to the Lord?”* Remember the story of David as he desired to buy the threshing floor of Araunah to build an altar to sacrifice to God and Araunah wanted to give David the land, the sacrifice and even the wood! But David refused and said, **“... ‘No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing.’ ...”** II Samuel 24:24.

You see, if what you give costs you nothing, it is meaningless. This woman gave out of her poverty and she gave it cheerfully to the Lord. What an example for us to follow as we give.

As we close this study this evening let me close with these words for you to think about, pray about. What have you given to the Lord? Why are you giving to the Lord? Has it cost you anything to give to the Lord?

I encourage you to meditate on these things and that you truly give your entire life to the Lord. You see, it is not only money that is being spoken of, but our life! And not because you are forced to but out of a cheerful heart because you love Him and desire to give to Him back what He has given to you, to be used for His glory.

As Paul said in Romans 12:1, **“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, [which is] your spiritual service of worship.”** (NAS)