

# The Gospel of Mark

## Walking with the Servant Saviour

### Lesson 16

#### Mark 12:1–44

#### Day One: A Parable of Judgment

This would be the last day Jesus would teach in the Temple, and He did so by taking questions put to Him by various individuals. He was the master storyteller, continuing His use of parables—illustrations drawn from everyday life to make His point. His goal was to require those listening to discover the truth for themselves.

#### Read Mark 12:1–12 and Isaiah 5:1–7.

A great deal of the land around Galilee at this time was devoted to vineyards. Upon hearing Jesus quote from the prophet Isaiah, the religious leaders immediately recognized that Jesus was speaking directly to them. The picture Jesus painted represented the status quo in Palestine: the farmers paid a portion of their crop to the land owners for rent. The servants would come at harvest time to collect, but disputes were common, often creating a dangerous situation.

To help with your understanding of this parable, the main elements and their meaning are as follows:

- ❖ *the man who planted the vineyard*—God
- ❖ *the vineyard*—Israel
- ❖ *the tenant farmers*—the Jewish religious leaders
- ❖ *the landowner's servants*—the prophets and priests who remained faithful to God
- ❖ *the son*—Jesus
- ❖ *the others to whom the vineyard was given*—the Gentiles.

1. Use the text in Mark and Isaiah to answer the questions below . . .
  - a. God planted the nation of Israel. Expecting a crop of righteousness, what provision did He make?
  - b. At the proper time, whom did God send to the tenants—the Jewish religious leaders?
  - c. How were the landowner’s servants repeatedly treated?
  - d. Who was the son, the last one sent to God’s people—for what purpose? What description do you see repeated regarding Him in Mark 1:11 and 9:7?
  - e. What was the reasoning of the religious leaders toward the son? Why did they feel threatened by him?
  - f. What did Jesus say the landowner would do when he returned?

Throughout the centuries, Israel’s kings, religious leaders, and people rejected God’s prophets, treating many shamefully while killing others. John the Baptist was among them, as was Jesus—God’s beloved Son. The result brought God’s judgment, with the transfer of God’s inheritance going to others who would willingly receive it.

2. Who were the *others* according to Romans 11:25?

In verses 10–11, Jesus quotes a familiar passage from the Passover service (see Psalm 118:22–23). Just like the son in the parable who was rejected and murdered, Jesus refers to himself as the *stone the builders rejected*. He became the *chief cornerstone*—the most important stone in the foundation of the building. In applying Psalm 118 to Himself, Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah God’s people had long awaited.

3. When the religious leaders realized Jesus applied this parable to them, what did they want to do? What did they actually do—why? v. 12

Selah . . .

Realizing God’s inheritance has been entrusted to you by faith, if He were to return tomorrow, would you treat Him as a *welcome interruption* or an *unwelcome inconvenience*? Why?

Heartbeat . . .

“*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.’*” Mark 12:30–31

**Day Two:** Questions, Questions

What to look for . . .

The Herodians and Pharisees were a strange pairing to say the least. The Herodians were a politically motivated group that followed Herod, a wicked and sinful man. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were a very religious group, but they considered Jesus a trouble maker. Both groups became united in their efforts to do away with Jesus.

**Read Mark 12:13–27.**

1. Why did the Pharisees and Herodians come to Jesus at this time? vv. 13-15a

- ❖ Were they sincere in the words they chose?
- ❖ What did Jesus understand about them?

Everything these two groups of men said about Jesus was true, but their motive was to trap Him with His own words.

2. Knowing their hearts, what question does Jesus pose to them? v. 15

A *denarius* was the equivalent of one day's wages, not an excessive amount, but if Jesus told them not to pay it, He would be accused of treason; if He told them to pay it, they might be able to incite the people against Him. Jesus knew they were testing Him.

3. Next Jesus asked a question that demanded an answer, what was it? v. 16–17

- ❖ What did Jesus' answer proclaim?
- ❖ What was their reaction to Jesus' answer?

### Looking closer . . .

Jesus avoided the trap laid for Him by offering the fact that believers have a double responsibility—or a dual citizenship—both here on earth where they live as well as in the kingdom of heaven. How does 1 Peter 2:13–17 add to your understanding?

The next group to step forward and question Him were the Sadducees, a smaller sect of Judaism but also rich and powerful. They were not really looking for answers, rather they attempted to point out the absurdity of teaching a resurrection after death.

4. Using your own words, briefly summarize the example they presented to Jesus in verses 19–22.

- ❖ What question did they follow up with? v. 23

Those who did not believe in the resurrection would consider their example ridiculous; those who did believe were shown how utterly impossible the situation seemed.

5. Where does Jesus point them for the answer? vv. 24–27

- ❖ Is there marriage in heaven?
- ❖ What example from scripture does Jesus cite to point out that God is the God of the living? See Exodus 3:6.

The Sadducees made the mistake of limiting the power of God. Since little is known about the nature of heaven and we do not have all the answers, we must be careful not to make the same mistake. We do know that we will have glorified bodies and we will enjoy being in the presence of God forever! Whatever relationships we enjoy here on earth, we will also enjoy in heaven.

*Review this week's memory verse.*

### **Day Three:** More Questions

What to look for . . .

The next person to approach Jesus with a question is a scribe, the only one to receive a word of commendation. He most likely was listening in to the previous discussions and overheard what Jesus said. Unlike the previous inquiries, his question was genuine.

**Read Mark 12:28–37.**

1. What does the scribe ask Jesus? v. 28

2. In His answer, Jesus first quotes from Deuteronomy 6:4–5. What does He say regarding a man’s or woman’s relationship with God?
  
3. Though the scribe did not ask for a second command, Jesus gave it, quoting from Leviticus 19:18b. What did He say?

Jesus teaches that if we love God with all our being, we will also love our neighbor.

4. In Luke 10:25–37, Jesus gave an example to illustrate this teaching—what is it?

- ❖ Who was the neighbor in the story Jesus related? v. 37

- ❖ What instruction is there for you in this passage? v. 37

5. The scribe restated Jesus’ words in verses 32–33. In doing so he indicated he understood the difference between the *letter* and the *spirit* of the law. What did he say?

Jesus commended him saying, “*You are not far from the kingdom of God*” (v. 34). We’re not told whether this man took Jesus’ remarks to heart, but after that no one dared question Jesus further.

6. In an interesting turn of events, Jesus asks the teachers of the law a question. What did He want to know? vv. 35–37

Speaking of David, Jesus quoted from Psalm 110, a messianic psalm. He was referring to the teaching that the Messiah would be David’s son (that is, a descendant of David). In this psalm, David refers to his messianic descendant as “my Lord,” recognizing Him as deity. Matthew’s account of this incident (see Matthew 22:46) says that the scribes were silenced by what Jesus said. Mark tells us that the ordinary people were delighted by His teaching (v. 37).

## Day Four: True Spirituality

### What to look for . . .

Jesus warns His followers to beware of those who put on religious garb and try to impress others with their pretenses because they will be judged more severely. He contrasts their behavior with that of the poor widow who gives sacrificially.

#### Read Mark 12:38–44.

1. What word of warning does Jesus give regarding the scribes—why? vv. 38–40

- ❖ Desiring the best for themselves, how did the scribes often treat the widows? v. 40
- ❖ What does Jesus say will be the end of these individuals? v. 40

Sitting in the Temple, Jesus continued His teaching, watching the people put money in the treasury.

2. Who contributed much? v. 41

- ❖ Who contributed little? v. 42

Jesus was seated in the area known as the Court of the Women. Located throughout the courtyard were receptacles for receiving contributions. Jews were allowed into this area, Gentiles were not. This was also as far into the Temple as the women were allowed to go. Many were coming and going, all open to Jesus' gaze. Those who put in big amounts were not criticized; but one who dropped in only a little was commended. Jesus' eye fell on a woman, putting in her last two cents (the word *mite* is taken from the Latin *quadrans*, meaning its value is the equivalent of one fourth of a cent by today's standards).

- ❖ Although she put in much less than all the others, what does Jesus tell His disciples about her gift? v. 43

- ❖ What reason does He give for His statement? v. 44

Up close and personal . . .

Has God put something on your heart that He would like you to give to His work or to one of His children? Where is your heart in the matter? Please share your thoughts. The real value of a gift is determined by the motive—the spirit in which it is given. This widow’s gift stands as an example of what Jesus terms *true spirituality*: it was the smallest in value but the largest in terms of sacrifice. Hebrews 13:16 says, “Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Review this week’s memory verse.

## Day Five: Praying God’s Purpose

It’s time to do some *prayer walking*—not in the literal, but the *spiritual* sense. The Holy Spirit will lead you today as you consider three points from your lesson, write them in the form of a prayer, and lift them to the Lord. If practicing the presence of God is new to you—be patient—it will come, and you will be blessed!

“ . . . We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”

Romans 8:26-27 NLT

A prayer for loving God’s way . . .

God’s commandments can be reduced to two simple commands: *love God and love others*. When you love Him completely and love others as you do yourself, you have fulfilled the intent of the Ten Commandments. Ask Him to help you love His way.

A prayer for helping your neighbor . . .

Has the Lord shown you someone you can demonstrate mercy toward this week? If so, would you lift that person to Him and ask for His leading and His timing.

A prayer for sacrificial giving . . .

If God has put something on your heart to give to Him sacrificially this week, please lift that to Him in the form of a prayer. And remember: little is much when God is in it!

Write out this week's verse from memory:

**Notes**