

Mark 12:13–44

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[0:00] Mark 12, 13 through 44. This is what God's word says.

And they sent some to him, some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion.

For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay them or should we not?

But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it. And they brought one. And he said to them, Whose likeness and inscription is this? They said to him, Caesar's. Jesus said to them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. And to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at him.

[1:02] And the Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

There were seven brothers. The first took a wife, and when he died, left no offspring. And the second took her and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring.

Last of all, the woman also died in the resurrection. When they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as a wife. Jesus said to them, Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God?

For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given a marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong. And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, Which commandment is the most important of all?

[2:23] Jesus answered, The most important is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no other commandment greater than these. And the scribes said to him, You are right, teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other beside him.

And to love him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, You are not far from the kingdom of God.

And after that, no one dared ask him any more questions. And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?

David himself and the Holy Spirit declared, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet. David himself calls him Lord.

[3:26] So how is he his son? And the great throng heard him gladly. And in his teaching, he said, Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at feasts who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers they will receive the greater condemnation.

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums and a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins which make a penny.

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, Truly I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all these who are contributing to the offering box for they all contributed out of their abundance.

But she, out of her poverty, has put in everything she had, all she had to live on. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning.

My name is Paul Kim. And in the summer of 2024, my wife Hannah and my two daughters, Eden and Olive, we arrived in Chicago and we arrived here in Woodlawn and to begin my work here this year as the assistant pastor of university ministry.

[4:58] So I want to thank you for your prayers and for your support, especially this past week as we kicked off the dinner and Bible about 40 students on Wednesday night down in the commons looking at the gospel of John as well as the coffee and Bible with the grad students on Friday morning.

So it is a joy and privilege to serve in this way among you. This week I was freshly reminded of something that I see, something that you see everywhere.

I mean, you may have seen it this morning. It's a matter of authority. Parents exercising authority over their kids.

Landlords exercising rules and authority over tenants, business owners, directing employees. Or even maybe faith communities, rabbis, priests, and pastors speaking with authority in their communities.

Wherever people live and work together, someone's in charge. You've seen it. I've seen it.

Authority. But authority raises some questions.

[6:18] Does it not? Is it good? Is authority always wielded with wickedness? You know, when voices compete, whose authority gets the final say?

And maybe the most personal questions for you and I. Who tells me what to do or not to do? Who can tell me what I can or cannot do?

And that brings us to our passage this morning where we will consider the authority of Jesus. You know, we're in the middle of our sermon series through the gospel of Mark.

And last week's passage in Mark chapter 11, just turn there with me, verse 27 to 28. It sparks the first of five confrontations.

This is what verse 27 says. And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him.

[7:20] And they said to him, by what authority are you doing these things? Or who gave you this authority to do them?

Our passage this morning will look at four of the confrontations that begins with that verse right there. Five confrontations that actually mirrors what we've seen in Mark chapter 2 and 3.

Five other confrontations in chapters 2 and 3 where the religious leaders see Jesus as a threat. Back in Mark chapter 2 and 3, we saw Jesus exercising his authority over sin, over the Sabbath, and over sickness.

Now in our passage in the temple, Mark is showing us five confrontations to demonstrate the authority of Jesus in the place of worship.

So, well, let's take a look at each confrontation. Verses 13 to 37, we're going to see Jesus' authority demonstrated. It's kind of like a Q&A; session of stump the expert.

[8:39] You know, microphones at the aisles, groups coming to the front, and we see these first two groups coming together down the aisle, the Herodians and the Pharisees.

In verses 13 to 17, we see these first group of guys coming through. And if you were in this scene back then and back there, you might be doing a double take.

Why are they together? It's because culturally the Pharisees, they were about pursuing personal piety, and they resented the Roman rule.

The Herodians on the other side, they represented the political leaders. They were pursuing political power. They were actually for the Roman rule for personal gain.

So you begin to see, wait, why are these two groups joining forces? That's weird. Well, as the old saying goes, the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

[9:47] And so they had a united purpose against Jesus. For what reason? Well, look with me at verse 13.

They sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians to trap him in his talk. That is, Jesus. They joined forces to trap Jesus.

Jesus is public enemy number one for these Herodians and these Pharisees. So how are they going to trap him? Well, they raised a very clever question.

Well, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar? See, it's quite clever because if Jesus says, yes, pay taxes, they're going to, the people are going to see Jesus as like, wait a minute.

We're going to discredit you, Jesus, because we're under Roman rule. We don't want to be under Roman rule. But if Jesus answers, no, don't pay taxes, now he could be labeled as an insurrectionist.

[10 : 51] So either way, it's a trap. But Jesus, demonstrating his authority, masterfully answers. He knows their hypocrisy.

Why? Because the Herodians and Pharisees, they say right there, oh, oh, Jesus, you truly teach the way of God. Well, if they did, they would actually listen to Jesus, not question him.

And so Jesus says, somebody give me a coin. Shows him a coin, a denarius. And he gives him, you know, a question.

Well, whose likeness and inscription is this? And the answer, well, Caesar's. And now Jesus delivers his punchline.

Render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, but God the things that are God's. Bottom line, whose authority is greater? Is it the governing authorities like Caesar?

[11 : 53] Or is it God? Jesus doesn't diminish the authorities of the governing authorities like Caesar. He just elevates God's authority.

authority. And if we're honest with ourselves, the Pharisees and the Herodians, I mean, it doesn't feel that far away or ancient from us. I mean, doesn't it sound familiar that people trusting in political power?

Or maybe like the Pharisees, religious authorities. What about you? What authority are you going to trust in? What authority will you submit yourself under?

What authority will you rely on? Jesus is saying the highest authority is God. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

This is a demonstration of Jesus' authority against the Pharisees and the Herodians. So Jesus, round one, win.

[12 : 59] The Pharisees, Herodians, zero. But this is a stump the experts. So there's another group that comes right down to the mic. Now this group is a wealthy elites called the Sadducees.

And Mark helps us identify an important characteristic of the Sadducees. Right there in verse 18.

The Sadducees came to him who say there is no resurrection.

See this group, they don't believe that there's an afterlife. Whatever's happening here, this life is it.

And so they come to the microphone and they are trying to stump the expert.

Jesus. And so they raise a fictional case study. They raise a question. And it's coming from Deuteronomy 25 on a particular law about preserving the family line.

And it goes something like this. You get a married couple, the first husband, and as each brother dies, another brother takes the wife and they have no kids.

[14 : 11] And so the question that's raised to Jesus in the resurrection, which they don't believe in, they all, well, whose wife will she be?

And again, Jesus answers masterfully right there in verse 24. He tells them wrong. Well, why?

Well, look with me right there in verse 24. Because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. In other words, this is the reason why the Sadducees should be sad, you see.

Because they don't know the Bible. They don't know the power of God. So Jesus takes them to Bible study and he quotes Exodus 3, 6. Says, well, according to this passage, which the Sadducees, that's the prized authority for them is the first five books of the Bible.

And he says, God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, God is not dead, but he's living.

[15 : 20] This living God has authority. And so Jesus rebukes the Sadducees for their wrong.

Jesus demonstrates his authority by recognizing the authority of the scriptures and the power of God by quoting Exodus 3.

He just goes to highlight the authority of the Bible, of the scriptures. I mean, what authority will you take and rely upon?

Is the Bible merely just an ancient text to be studied? Or is it actually God's very word and power to submit and rely under?

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I don't want you to look at the Bible as like your spiritual vitamin or a spiritual pick-me-up, but actually to come under it where God will decide and guide you in all of life. In this passage, even what comes after death, death, in the resurrection. So God has something to say about all of life, even after death.

[16:41] But notice here, even with the Pharisees and the Herodians, they lost. The Sadducees here, they lost. Now, we see another ramping up, an escalation where the opponents get tougher and tougher.

the questions get harder and harder and we see this third group step up to the mic to stump the expert Jesus. In comes verse 28, one of the scribes.

Oh, these guys, they're the cream of the crop when it comes to the law. Expert authority, these scribes, reading, writing, meditating on the scriptures.

Let's see if they're going to stump the expert here. So they bring up, raise the question to Jesus, well, which commandment is the most important of all?

And right there, verse 29, Jesus responds with Deuteronomy 6. Well, it's love God, love your neighbors. That's the most important, that's the summary of the 613 laws and commandments, to love God, love your neighbor.

[17:53] And notice, describe verse 32. You're right, teacher, you have truly said he is one. The scribe cosigns Jesus and commends Jesus for his answer.

And consider that they're in the temple here, the place where they offer burnt sacrifices and offerings. And right there, verse 33, to love him with all your heart, understanding, strength, love your neighbors, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

The scribes agree, in the place of worship, the most important thing is obedience to God. More important than the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

What's most important? Obeying, submitting, trusting, relying on the authority of God. This is a great verbal answer.

So Jesus says, yep, you're not far from the kingdom of God. And after that, silence, mic drop. No one can stump the expert Jesus.

[19:10] But it raises a big question. Why does Jesus have this great authority? He just demolished all of these groups in their argumentations.

But what gives Jesus his authority? Why should you listen to him? Now Jesus, he takes the mic. And he raises a question.

And he asks them, well, according to the scribes right there in 35, how can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? Question mark.

Case in point, Psalm 110. That's what he quotes right there. The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.

And Jesus raises a question. David himself calls him Lord. How is he his son? That Psalm 110 reference right there, that first Lord, the Lord said, that's the covenant-keeping Lord God, says to David's king, David's Lord, the anointed one, he's going to have this great authority.

[20:23] And the question that Jesus raises is, wait, how is David's son going to worship David's Lord? In other words, who is this Lord that will rule over his enemies that David himself will recognize his authority?

authority? And Jesus just raises the question, mic drops, and the crowd goes wild. Put that on the Instagram reel, hashtag authority demonstrated.

But Jesus doesn't answer his own question. But thankfully, Mark, the author of this gospel, he's actually telling us, and he wants to know us the answer to that question.

He's weaving these stories from Mark chapter 1, where Mark is writing this good news about Jesus Christ, the son of God.

And in chapter 1, Mark is demonstrating that Jesus has authority, not like the scribes, but teaches with all authority. And the chapter right before this, in chapter 11, when Jesus enters Jerusalem, the crowd articulates that Jesus is the blessed one who comes in the name of the Lord.

[21:43] Blessed is the coming kingdom of who? The father David. So Mark is putting these pieces of the puzzle to see the fulfillment in this passage of Psalm 110.

This Lord is Jesus Christ, the son of David, who has all authority, who will wreck the enemies. Almost like a picture of Jesus' authority against the Sadducees and the scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus is wrecking the enemies under his feet right here. What a picture. And is Jesus a good king or a bad king? Is he using his authority for himself?

Well, Mark 10, 45 says that Jesus, he came not to be served, but to serve, to offer up his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus demonstrates his authority and he lays his life down on the cross and defeats sin and death by rising up from the dead.

[22 : 48] And he will crush his enemies under their feet. And in Revelation 5, we see the right hand of God in the throne. all creatures are worshiping him, giving glory.

That he's the one who deserves all glory. He's the one who deserves all honor. He's the one who deserves all praise. Therefore, how should you respond to this Jesus who has all authority? How should you worship him? That's what we're going to look at for the remainder of our passage in verses 38 to 44.

What does true worship look like? Well, we have two sides of the same coin of true worship. And Jesus is going to articulate first what it's not.

And then show us a widow of what true worship looks like. Well, it's not like the scribes in verses 38 to 40. And Jesus warns the crowd here.

[24 : 02] Beware of the scribes. Watch out for them. Well, that raises a major question. Well, you just said earlier in 34, you're not far from the kingdom of God.

And here you're saying, beware of the scribes? What's going on here? Well, notice the reasons why. It's because the scribes, they like to walk around in long robes, like greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, the places of honor.

They devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They are saying the right answers according to the Bible. But their life is contrary to what they're saying.

The scribes cosign that the most important laws is that they are to love God and love their neighbor. But they are doing the exact opposite of that. Rather than loving God with all mind, soul, and strength, what do they do? They want the best seats in the synagogues.

[25 : 08] They want the places of honor. Not giving that glory and honor to God. What do they do? in loving their neighbor? They don't love their neighbors. They actually devour the vulnerable, the widows.

So the scribes are describing this false worship. A dependence on themselves. Centering their lives actually not on God, but on themselves.

But what's at stake here? What's the result of not depending on God, but depending on your self? Well, right there, verse 40, Jesus gives you his conclusion.

They will receive the greater condemnation. Beware of deceiving yourselves. Beware of depending on yourselves, but saying all the right things, but your walk does not look like it.

There's greater condemnation. But that's what we shouldn't do. What exactly are we called to do, though?

[26 : 19] And Jesus flips the coin from the negative to the positive, and he does another object lesson. He's just sitting there, and he's looking, people watching, good old just looking at people and seeing what they do.

And they're right there, right by the treasury, and they're watching people put money in the offering. You know, seeing kind of like the offering plates. It's like he's just watching. And Jesus, he's like, ah, calls his disciples.

This poor widow put in more than all who are contributing to the offering box. Why? For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put everything she had, all she had to live on.

Now you can imagine Jesus and the disciples as they're talking, and the disciples are scratching their head like, wait a minute. Large sum, two coins, possibly a penny?

I don't understand how this math is working now. I think large sums is bigger than two pennies. I mean, you heard that saying before probably, right? You can't rub two nickels together.

[27 : 34] This widow was even more poor. She can't rub two pennies together. So I don't understand. Jesus, what are you getting after? And Jesus is here teaching his disciples about true worship.

It's not a formula. It's not about rich people contributing out of their abundance. But it's a matter of the heart. It's a matter of dependence. So Jesus, he tells you right there, she gave everything she had.

All she had to live on. A picture of absolute dependence on God. See, true worship requires total dependence.

An all-out trust. A reliance. Not upon herself, but upon God. Everything that she had on.

Banking on God. I think we could look at that widow's example and wonder, wait a minute. Does that mean we should drain our bank accounts and sell everything that we own?

[28:48] Give it to the Lord? Should we be broke like the widow? Well, not necessarily. I don't think Jesus, he's not getting after a formula or a spreadsheet about how to budget your money.

He's after the heart that true worship requires total dependence. It's to center and rely and trust God with everything.

So for you and I today, what does it look like to totally depend on God? I think according to this passage, I think one area of dependence shows itself in our giving money.

I mean, your absolute dependence on God is revealed in what you treasure. I mean, in my own life and in premarital, I was told when we were talking about money, that money is just a window into your treasure and what you value.

And I think as we think about, as you and I think about what it means to give to the Lord our money and our finances, I think it's going to reveal, are we in total dependence on God or not?

[30:11] It's not to prove how amazing you are, not to show it off like the scribes, but to be like the widow in this sense that true worship requires total dependence.

Not just on money, but all of life. What does it look like to totally depend on God for all of life?

I think one area is prayer. It's to say that God, it's out of my jurisdiction and authority that I cannot make change.

But to depend on God, we need you, Lord. I need you, Lord, to act. I mean, it's what we desire as a church family here.

Each month at Paulic and Prayer, we're coming together to pray, to depend on God, to say, yes, Lord, we need you to act.

[31:11] In your own personal life, what does it look like for you to depend on God through prayer? To express your dependence by asking him.

But why is it worth it to depend on God? If you remember, Jesus uses authority not to be served, but to serve.

He gives his life as a ransom on the cross. And he gives himself freely and fully. And as the old hymn says, Jesus paid it all, and so all to him I owe.

We can totally depend on him for everything. We're just following in his own footsteps. As he gave himself to us fully, we could fully give ourselves to him.

And so, again, Jesus demonstrates his authority through these confrontations. And therefore, we can respond to his good authority by depending on him.

[32:18] And he expresses to us that true worship requires total dependence. Would you join me as we depend on God through prayer? Almighty God, we praise you for you are worthy of our dependence.

We pray that you would empower us. You would help us to wholly lean on you, to wholly rely on you. We pray that you would help us examine ourselves.

Areas even in our own heart, we're not quite fully depending on you. But we ask that you would help us to change that. We pray that you would strengthen us to put our trust and hope in you.

And we pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.