

Mark 11:27-12:44

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[0 : 00] Well, good evening. We're looking at the Gospel of Mark tonight, as we have been in our evening service this year. We are at chapter 11, starting at verse 27.

We are coming toward the climactic ending, which we will hit right around Easter Sunday. Today, last week, we looked at the story that's associated with Palm Sunday, Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem and being welcomed as a king and hailed as a king, and then coming to the temple and driving out people who are selling and buying and clearing the temple and then cursing the fig tree as sort of a parable of his judgment on the temple as a lifeless and barren place.

So we looked at that last week, and today, tonight, we're looking at some controversies that come out of that. So actually, for the next two weeks, tonight and next week, we're looking at the end of chapter 11 and chapter 12.

So I'm going to be focusing on some parts of it tonight, and then Malcolm is going to preach next week and focus on some other parts of it. So tonight, we're going to start at 11:27 and read the rest of chapter 11, and then read chapter 12, verse 13 through 37.

There's a lot of details in this text. I'm not going to be able to explain everything as we go along, but we will have, as we usually do in our evening service, a question and answer time at the end. So if you have questions that I don't address or that you want to pursue further, we'll take a note of those as we go along, and you'll have time to ask those at the end.

[1 : 49] All right, so Mark 11, beginning at verse 27. 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.

And they said to him, by what authority are you doing these things? Or who gave you this authority to do them? Jesus said to them, I will ask you one question.

Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me. And they discussed it with one another, saying, if we say from heaven, he will say, why then did you not believe him?

But shall we say from man? They were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. So they answered Jesus, we do not know. And Jesus said to them, neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Chapter 12, verse 13. And they sent 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 that you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God.

[3 : 03] 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 it. And 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, he 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 wife. Jesus said to them, is this not the reason you are wrong?

[4 : 19] Because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in 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?

Jesus answered, the most important is here, 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 scribe said to him, you are right, teacher.

You have truly said that he is one and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

[5 : 42] 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 to 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 in 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. So how is he his son? And the great throng heard him gladly. If you could ask God one question, what would it be?

The website ted.com did a survey. So here are some of the answers that people gave. How did you create this beautiful world? Why don't you show yourself clearly to everyone?

Will I ever be happy? Why is there so much suffering and evil if you are loving and all powerful?

Can I really be forgiven for all the wrongs I've done?

[6 : 55] Another author wrote a book entitled 50 Questions Kids Ask About God, including chapters on the following. Will my dog be in heaven? Did Jesus get into trouble when he was a kid?

Why did God make the sky blue and not green? Will God get mad if I don't finish my broccoli? Why do some kids have more toys than I do? Will God love me no matter what?

You see, people ask all kinds of different questions about God. For all kinds of different reasons. There are philosophical questions, theoretical questions, and there are personal, existential questions.

There are deep questions, and there are shallow questions. There are sincere questions, and there are smoke screens. Now, in tonight's passage, four groups of people approach Jesus with questions.

Four different kinds of questions. So, first, we, we, and Jesus gives four very different answers to these four questions.

[8 : 04] But each answer displays something about Jesus' character, his wisdom, and his authority. Now, as we look at each of these questions and answers, I want you to think about two things.

First, what kinds of questions are you asking God? Or are you just on your mind? Maybe you haven't actually voiced them. But what kinds of spiritual questions do you have?

And how would Jesus respond to you? And second, perhaps others ask you questions about God or about Jesus. And maybe you wonder, how should I respond when other people ask me spiritual questions?

And I think the way that Jesus responds, in some ways, gives us some guidance and some direction in that way. So, let's look at each question in turn. The first question is in chapter 11, the end of chapter 11, verse 27 through 33.

It's a threatening question. By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority? Now, as we said in the beginning, as we saw last week, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

[9 : 13] People shouted Hosanna and hailed him as the coming king of Israel. And then he came to the temple, which was the center of Jewish religious life, where sacrifices were offered on a daily basis.

And he began driving out all the people who exchanged money and sold animals. It says he wouldn't let anyone carry anything through the temple, making it practically impossible for people to offer the sacrifices that they were used to offering.

So, the head honchos, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, got together and confronted Jesus. And they basically said, what are you doing here?

Are you trying to shut the whole place down? Who in the world are you? Who? You're walking in here as if you own the place. Now, in one sense, it's a very reasonable question.

They recognize the symbolic significance of what Jesus did. He wasn't only protesting that the temple had become corrupt and it was too noisy and people need to just be quieter.

[10:21] He was saying the temple has become corrupt and it's on its way out. And God's going to scrap it like the fig tree that didn't produce any fruit.

And Jesus said, it won't produce any fruit ever again. So, the leaders of the temple understood what Jesus was doing there. But they were threatened since they were the leaders of the temple.

So, they thought, who in the world? What's going to happen to us? And who in the world is this guy to do this? And so, they confront him. They try to intimidate him.

They threaten him. Now, look at Jesus' response. Jesus is not intimidated one bit. He doesn't back down one bit.

He doesn't go into a long explanation of how he was quoting from Jeremiah and whatever. Give all the background to what he was doing in the temple.

[11:22] He actually asked them a question in return. He says, I will ask you one question. Answer me. Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?

Now, everybody back then knew about John the Baptist. John the Baptist was a popular preacher, well-known preacher. Went out into the wilderness and called people to turn away from their sins and get dunked in the Jordan River to make a new start.

And the people recognized him as a prophet sent from God to give his people a new start. But John was also the one who introduced Jesus.

John said, I'm the voice crying out in the wilderness. Prepare the way for the Lord. And he said, someone's coming who's so much greater than me that I'm not worthy to even untie his sandal to be the lowliest servant in his kingdom.

The Lord himself is coming. And when John saw Jesus, he said, look, he's the one. Now, what Jesus is saying here is this.

[12:41] If John the Baptist was a prophet from God, sent from heaven, then you should listen to him and believe what he said about Jesus. That Jesus is the King and the Lord who is prophesied to come.

But if you don't accept what John says, then don't call him a prophet. In other words, Jesus is saying it's one way or the other.

And the in-between position is completely illogical and completely unreasonable. You see, Jesus isn't trying to avoid a hard question by abruptly changing the topic.

That's not what he's doing here. He's not changing the topic to something totally irrelevant. But his question exposes the heart of his questioners.

And sometimes, that's the wisest response to a threatening question. It's not to try to explain everything, but to ask a sincere question that gets to the heart.

[13:55] Of what's behind the threat. And Jesus is a master at doing this because he sees that behind their threatening question is fear and cowardice.

They don't want to take a side publicly. They're not willing to commit to Jesus and following him as the Lord. But they also don't want to say that John wasn't a prophet.

They want to have it both ways. They want the people to like them. And they don't want to commit to following Jesus. And Jesus says you can't have it both ways.

You can't stay neutral. In the end, it's one way or the other. And the middle ground doesn't exist. C.S. Lewis wrote this. He says, people often say, I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher.

[14:54] But I don't accept his claim to be God. He said, that is the one thing that we must not say. A man who is merely a man and said and did the sort of things that Jesus said and did would not be a great moral teacher.

He would either be a lunatic or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the son of God as he claimed to be or else he was a madman or something worse.

In other words, there's no in-between position. And that's what Jesus exposes in his first answer. So we see first a threatening question and a bold answer.

Second, we see a trick question. This is the political question in chapter 12, verse 13 to 17. Verse 13 says, they sent him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians to trap him in his talk. Now, if you lived back then and you heard that, it would sort of be like saying they sent to him the head of the Tea Party and the head of the left wing of the Democratic Party together to ask some political questions.

[16:13] You think, how in the world are those people working together? The Pharisees were religious conservatives. They were the Jewish nationalists who resented the Roman Empire's interference in local affairs.

The Herodians were Herod's party and Herod was the Roman ruler in Judea. The Herodians were pro-Roman. They loved the empire. They were worldly pragmatists.

They were as far off as you could be. But they come together to ask Jesus a trick question about a hot-button political issue in their day.

Should we pay taxes to Caesar or not? You see, if Jesus said, no, don't pay the tax, he could be immediately accused of subverting the government.

Now, the background is, about 25 years previous, Caesar had instituted a new tax, a poll tax. And immediately, there was a guy from Galilee named Judas the Galilean who stirred up a revolt, a violent revolt against the Roman Empire.

[17:25] He did not succeed. So, if Jesus said, no, don't pay the tax, immediately accuse him. But if Jesus said, yes, pay the tax, he would seem to be taking Caesar's side against his own people.

Caesar was the Roman Emperor. And the Roman Empire ruled over Judea. The Jews were an oppressed minority group. And Caesar was a ruthless pagan ruler.

Caesar made, who made grandiose claims about himself. In fact, the coins that Caesar made, that you had to pay the tax with, had a picture of Caesar on it.

A bust of Caesar. And the inscription said, Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the divine Augustus. In other words, he was claiming to be the son of God.

Or divine man. And on the back it read, high priest. Caesar was making idolatrous claims.

[18:34] And that's what offended so many of the Jews. That they had to pay this tax to this guy who was making an idolatrous claim. So what's Jesus going to answer?

You see how they want to trap him. Of course, many people today try to do the same. To try to co-opt Jesus into a political agenda.

But Jesus will not be co-opted. Jesus does not always side with the conservatives. And he does not always side with the progressives.

He will never be contained by the agenda of any political party. He will always challenge people on both sides in different ways.

Not because he's a wimpy moderate who stands in the middle on everything. But because he's the sovereign lord over all. And because no one's political agenda fully lines up with his claim to be the sovereign king over all.

[19:42] And so what he says here, he says, Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. And give to God what is God's. So his response challenges both the Pharisees and the Herodians.

First he says, Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. In other words, pay the tax. If the money belongs to Caesar, give it to him. And making a violent revolt is not the way to bring in the kingdom of God.

But he also says, Give to God what is God's. In other words, God, not Caesar, is the ultimate authority here. And if coins with Caesar's image stamped on them belong to Caesar, every human being with God's image stamped on you and me.

We belong to God. And we owe him every part of our lives. And so Jesus challenges them. Are you giving yourself fully to God?

Is he your first and foremost loyalty above everything else? Or is it, or are you somewhere in the middle?

[21:03] You see, Caesar claimed to be the Son of God. But Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, the true image of God was standing right in front of them. So they came to trap Jesus.

But in the end, Jesus challenged them. So we see, first, a threatening question and a bold response. Second, a trick question and a clever response.

Third, a mocking question. This is the Sadducees. Now the Sadducees were powerful and rich. They controlled the highest positions of religious authority, particularly the high priesthood. But unlike most of the other Jews at that time, they did not believe in any kind of afterlife. So they make up this crazy story. In the case of a woman married in succession to seven brothers, whose wife will she be in the resurrection?

Now, the background to this custom is in many traditional clan-based societies, a man was obligated to marry a childless widow of his brother in order to preserve the deceased brother's memory and keep his inheritance within the family line.

[22 : 17] It was an ancient custom. It was practiced in many societies. It is still practiced in a few traditional societies. But that's just the background. It's probably not a real event that they were referring to.

But it seems like one of these stories that comes up in, you know, a late night college dorm discussion around 2 a.m., you know, or maybe a philosophy class. Now, okay, if you're a philosophy major, it's no offense.

I almost was a philosophy major. And I know there's more things in philosophy than silly questions that can't be answered. But Jesus responds to their mocking question with a blunt rebuke.

Twice he says, you're wrong. The first thing he says is, isn't this why you're wrong? And at the end he says, you're quite wrong. Jesus isn't afraid to tell people you're wrong.

And he explains why they're wrong. He says, you're wrong because you don't know the scriptures or the power of God. Which is ironic because that's exactly what the Sadducees claim to know best.

[23 : 33] They claim to know the scriptures. In fact, they believed that the only authentic scriptures were the first five books of Moses. They didn't accept anything else. They said, we got Moses.

We go right to the source. That's where we stake our claim. And they also held the highest positions of power in the temple.

Jesus says, you don't understand the scriptures and you don't understand the true power of God. Even though you claim to have both. He says, you're thinking in merely human categories and projecting your human assumptions onto God.

She says, you're thinking of the resurrection and you think it's just life on this earth. Extended forever in time. But Jesus says, no.

The resurrection isn't just the kind of life we experience now extended forever. It's a whole new kind of life. That we can hardly imagine.

[24 : 42] Much less described in concrete terms. It's like the difference between the life of a caterpillar and the life of a butterfly. Or it's like the difference between the experience of a baby in the mother's womb and a full-grown adult.

You can hardly compare the difference in the experience. Between this life and the resurrection that God has promised.

So he says, your question betrays your ignorance. You're taking your own experience and your own categories from the life you have right now.

And projecting it onto God and what God promises in the world to come. And then he says, the scripture clearly teaches that there will be a resurrection. In fact, he goes right back to Moses.

When God talks to Moses and God says, I am the God of Abraham. And the God of Isaac. And the God of Jacob. Now where were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when God spoke to Moses?

[25 : 50] They were dead. Right? And if they were dead, never to return again. Like the Sadducees believed. Then it would make no sense for God to say, I am their God.

Because they're dead. They're never going to return. In what sense is he ever, is he really their God anymore? No. But he says, no. When God says, I will be your God.

And you will be my people. It's a promise that remains forever. And death does not cut it off. So he says, even if you look at just the five books of Moses.

They testify to the reality of the resurrection. Now, what do we take from this? So first, Jesus would respond to some questions with a blunt rebuke.

You're thinking in merely human terms. You think you know what the Bible says. But you are wrong. Because you are projecting your own assumptions onto it.

[27 : 00] And your own categories onto it. And so you don't understand it. Rightly. You see, every question that we ask.

Or every doubt that we entertain. Has an assumption behind it. And sometimes, before we question God. Or conclude that some part of the Bible just doesn't make any sense.

We need to first question our own assumptions. About God and the Bible. So there's a mocking question.

And a blunt rebuke. Number three. Finally, number four. We have a sincere question. And a straight answer. A scribe has been listening to this dialogue all along.

And it says he saw that Jesus had answered well. And so he came to Jesus and he said. Which commandment is the most important of all?

[28 : 03] Now when Jesus was asked a threatening question. He gave a bold answer. Which revealed the people's cowardice and fear.

When he was asked a trick question. He gave a clever answer. Which exposed people's ultimate loyalties. When he was asked a mocking question. He delivered a blunt rebuke. To uncover erroneous assumptions.

But when he was asked a sincere question. He gave a straight answer. To guide a soul who was hungry for the truth. In fact.

He gives them even more than an answer. To his question. He doesn't just give the number one command. Love the Lord your God with everything you have. He also gives the number two.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Now many rabbis had already tried to answer this question. Which is the greatest in the law? And some of them said number one. And some of them said number two.

[29 : 04] But as far as we know. Nobody put them together. Quite like Jesus did here. You see. If you just say. The greatest commandment is to love God. Period. Then you could be tempted.

To isolate yourself. From other people. Because other people are too messy. And difficult to deal with. And if you just say. The greatest commandment is to love your neighbor.

As yourself. Then you could be tempted. To live a very busy life. Doing lots of things for other people. But ignore God. Or simply see God.

As a means to an end. But if the greatest commandment. Is to love God. And the second. Is to love our neighbor. It protects us. From both extremes.

And it points us. To the fullness of the life. That God desires for us. You know. If you come to Jesus. With a sincere question. He will give you a wise answer.

[30 : 04] And he may give you. Even more than you ask for. Verse 34. Jesus says. You're not far. From the kingdom of God. The scribe had come close to Jesus.

And so Jesus says. Because you've come close to me. You're close to the kingdom of God. See even in this exchange. We see. Jesus says something. That nobody else would say.

What other teacher could say. You're not far. From the kingdom of God. Because you're close to me. And you've shown that you agree with me.

Only Jesus. The true king. So there's the four questions. That people ask Jesus. And how he responds. But there's one more question. In this chapter.

As one person put it. A day of questions. Leads to the question of the day. Verse 35 through 37. Jesus doesn't only respond.

[31 : 04] To people's questions. He also asks. His own question. To us. And the question is about. Whose son.

Is the Messiah. Messiah. The scribes assumed. That the Messiah. Would be the son of David. That he would be like David. Descended from David. But Jesus also.

Jesus points to this psalm. Where David. Calls the Messiah Lord. And so he says. In other words. The Messiah has to be. Even greater. Than David.

Now the whole point. Of this question. It might seem like an obscure. Old Testament. Quotation that Jesus is asking. But the point of Jesus question is. What are you expecting me to be? Are you expecting me to be.

Like David. A military leader. Who brings you military victory. Over your enemies. Or are you expecting. Me to be.

[32 : 06] On your side. In some. Debate. Jesus is saying. What. What. What box. Are you expecting me.

To fit into. And why do you think. That I should fit. Into your box. I'm the one who draws the boxes. I'm the Lord overall.

I want to conclude with. The story of a person. Who for a long time. Asked questions. Of Jesus. But was eventually confronted. By the questions.

Of. Jesus. For many years. His name is Sheldon Van Ocken. He. For many years. He was an agnostic. Or as he called it. An easy going theist.

Believe in God. God's somewhere out there. God's sort of a vague. Force in the universe. And. Maybe. Behind some of the beauty. We experience. But he never really.

[33 : 03] Took the Bible seriously. He thought Christianity. That's a fairy tale. Maybe a nice fairy tale. I'm not that interested in it. But over time.

He. He met some Christian friends. He actually came and studied here. In New Haven. For a couple years. And that was part of his journey. Then went to Oxford. As is his. Friendships. And in his reading.

He was gradually confronted. And he. He thought. You know. I really should. I guess I really should read the Bible. It's sort of an important. Historical book. And so he starts reading. And he reads the gospels. About Jesus.

And he starts to ask more and more questions. And he sees his Christian friends. And. And he says. They've got something. They're. These Christian people. They. They just approach life.

A little differently. And. You know. It's a little weird. But it's. In some ways. It's attractive. They start asking all these questions. But then he got to a place. Where he was stuck. And he describes it this way.

[34 : 01] He says. At that point. Christianity. Or in a word. The divinity of Jesus. Seemed. Probable. To me. Makes sense.

Perhaps. But there is a gap. Between probable. And proved. How was I to cross it? If I were to stake my whole life. On the risen Christ.

I wanted. Proof. I wanted. Certainty. I wanted to see him. Eat a bit of fish. I wanted letters of fire. Across the sky. I got none of these.

And I continued to hang about. On the edge of the gap. But one day later. Came the chilling realization. That I could not go back. In my old. Easy going theism.

I had regarded Christianity. As a sort of fairy tale. And I had neither. Accepted. Nor rejected Jesus.

[34 : 58] Since I had never. In fact. Encountered him. Now. I had. The position was not. As I had been comfortably thinking. All these months. Merely a question. Of whether I was to accept.

The Messiah. Or not. It was a question. Of whether I was to accept him. Or reject. My God. There was a gap. Behind me.

Too. Perhaps the leap to acceptance. Was a horrifying gamble. But what of the leap to rejection? I might never have. Absolute certainty.

That Christ was God. But there was no certainty. That he was not. If I were to accept. I might. And probably would face. The thought through the years. Perhaps.

After all. It's a lie. I've been had. But if I were to reject. I would certainly face. The haunting. Terrible thought. Perhaps it's true. And I have rejected my God.

[35 : 55] I could not reject Jesus. There was only one thing to do. Once I had seen the gap. Behind me. I turned away from it. And flung myself over the gap.

Toward. Jesus. So we began by asking. If you had one question to ask.

God. What would you ask? What would you ask? But I want to conclude by asking. If Jesus were to ask you. One question. What would he ask you?

And what would you answer? What would you answer to this question. That he asks here. About who he is. Let's pray. Lord Jesus. Lord Jesus. We thank you. For your wisdom.

We thank you. For your wisdom. That we see in this passage. Lord. We. Each may come with different questions. And different assumptions. We pray that you would.

[36 : 54] Speak to us. In the way that is most appropriate. To our needs. We pray that we would. Not only. Think about the questions. That we have for you.

But as we read in your word. That we would listen to the questions. That you have for us. That we would consider. Your probing questions.

That expose our hearts. And that we would. By your grace. Be drawn. To embrace you. And to walk with you.

More and more. Pray in your name. Amen. I've got five or ten minutes. For questions. And. I'm not as good as Jesus. By any means. In answering. But I will do my best. Lord. Since we are. Praising pastors. Or as spokesmen. Persons on the earth. Do you have any guidelines. [37 : 53] For which type of answer. You would answer when. Aside from say. Guidance of the Holy Spirit. Or wisdom. They presented four answers. Four types of answers.

Are there any further guidelines. For us as Christ. As to when we would give. Which type of answer. Yeah. So the question is. Are there guidelines for us. As to when we. As Christ's ambassadors. Would give which type of answer. So I think. I think it depends on the question. Now. We are not always.

As perceptive as Jesus. As to the exact nature of the question. And. So I think it takes time. With carefully listening to people. And knowing them.

Well enough to. To be able to discern. What's. A sincere question. Where Jesus just gives a very direct.

[38 : 45] And simple. And plain. And clear. And beautiful answer. And where he. Pushes back. And or even. Rebukes them. And says. You're wrong.

And this is why you're wrong. So I think it's. I think it depends on the nature of the question. And I think. What we can grow in. Is. Seeking to carefully listen to people.

And. And get to know them. Well enough. To be able to. Discern that. Dorothy. Isn't there a verse about. Giving the word to the swine.

People are exposing themselves like that. Is you not supposed to do that? Yeah. So Jesus. Jesus says. In the sermon on the mount. He says. Don't. Throw your pearls before pigs.

Lest they trample them underfoot. And turn to attack you. It's very obvious. That there's a lot of you. And tell your minds. You're really not looking for an answer.

[39 : 43] Just not to. Trick you. Yeah. Yeah. So I think. You know. We see. Examples of that.

Even in Jesus parables. Where. He tells a parable. To. Large groups of people. Including some people. Who are just out to get him. But he.

Reveals more of the meaning. To his disciples. And to anyone. Who comes to him. And says. Please explain this to us. We really want to know. And he goes into more detail.

And so. I think. Yeah. Sometimes. Sometimes. Sometimes if someone's being antagonistic. The most loving thing to do. Isn't to try to get into a long debate with them.

Which might just be unfruitful. Is. But simply to show. To show the love of Christ. And to. Show integrity in your life. And. You know.

[40 : 38] Some. And pray that. God would. Change their heart over time. So. Yeah. Dan. So I'm sorry. I have a comment. Question. That's right.

The comment was. Just in the context of that. You know. Everyone probably saw the Ken Ham. Bill Nye. Debate that went on. And I think there's. A lot of antagonism right now. And I think the point you're making.

Also makes the point that. We shouldn't approach people this way. That we shouldn't ask questions. That are antagonistic. And leading and creating circus stunts. So the other side of when people ask you questions.

That are very obvious. That you're just trying to get. They're trying to get a gotcha. At the moment. We shouldn't do that same thing to other people. You know. When they're presenting you. And maybe we should ask them. Well please. Please explain evolution to me.

Or whatever the debate happens to be. That would be my comment. My question is. Because you're. Maybe a philosophy major. Almost a philosophy major. I feel. I can ask this to you. It seemed like.

[41 : 35] At the end. We got to this point. Where we had almost like a. Pascal's wager. Of. Well. We don't really know if it's true. But we also don't know if it's not.

And that is equally. For perhaps even more dangerous. To take the risk that it's not true. Than to maybe give up. A life of gratification. And it turns out not to be true.

And you've lost nothing. But the worry for me would be. That it's not as simple as. Well I have a gap. In front of me. And a gap behind me. But I have all of these gaps. Of. Buddhism.

Islam. Christianity. You know. All of these. Mormonism. All these multiple gaps. And. It's not as simple as. Well. I need to pick. God. Because I have to choose. Which version of this.

That I'm going to believe. I guess. Kind of. What would you. What would be your response. To that kind of worry. That comes out of this question. Okay. Yes. So. If.

[42 : 29] If you didn't. Let me briefly summarize. So. His comment was. We shouldn't approach people. In. Antagonistic ways.

That we wouldn't want to be approached. So basically. Apply the golden rule. To this scenario. Don't. Don't. Question other people. In a way that's. Acting like a pig.

That I guess to. Put it that way. All right. So. But. Let's be truthful. And sincere. And ask honest. Questions.

Other people. Who we disagree with. So that's a good point. The question was. The quote. At the end. Seemed to be a choice. Between. Not believing in Jesus.

And believing in Jesus. What if. In. The world we're in today. There seems to be. Many different religious options. Buddhism. Hinduism. Islam. Christianity.

[43 : 23] Christianity. Maybe various forms of Christianity. Atheism. So. It's more complicated than. Simply. One or the other. So. When I say that.

I gave a short quote. From a long book. That. He deals with more of the questions. If you read. If you read more of the book. So. He had already spent. A lot of time.

Reading. The. New Testament. And. Seeing. That Jesus makes claims. That. No other. Founder. Of a major world religion. Made. Moses. Did not claim to be. The son of God. Who died and rose from the dead.

There's no claim. That's. Not claimed. Mohammed did not claim that. He claimed to be a prophet. Pointing the way. Buddha. Claimed to be. A wise teacher. Jesus claim is unique.

[44 : 19] Among the world religion. So I think. He had already come to that point. Where. Where he had sorted through. Some of that. But that's a good question. I think people are at different stages. Of. Of that.

And for some people. Considering Christianity. Feels. Almost. May. May feel. Arbitrary. Because like. Well. Why would I pick that. Among the 20 options. Out there. So I think.

I think. I think the unique claims of Jesus. Is. Is one of the things that Mark highlights. Throughout his gospel. He just keeps saying things. And actually. Especially. Doing things. You know.

Going into the temple. And acting like he owns the place. And. Basically saying. This is corrupt. And. It's on the way out. Because I'm here to replace it.

I mean. That's basically what he says. If you put together. Him going into the temple. And then talking about. How the temple is going to be destroyed. In chapter 13. Which we'll get to in two weeks. And then. His claim that something greater than the temple is here.

[45 : 20] In other words. Himself. So. He's basically claiming to replace. The temple that God had instituted. Who in the world. Could make that claim. Like. That's completely preposterous.

Unless he is. The son of God. Who became a human being. God who came to dwell among us. And to be the place. Where human beings and God can meet. And be reconciled.

That's the only way that that claim makes any sense. So anyway. So I. That's what I would. Good question. Brief answer. Samuel. Why would somebody follow.

Herod. Herodians. Herodians. Herod. Who else. Had a trading relationship with his. Some kind of relationship. And killed that. He brought John the Baptist.

From the head. Why would somebody follow. Such a person. Why would somebody follow. Okay. So why would somebody be a Herodian. A follower of Herod. When Herod had killed. Beheaded John the Baptist.

[46 : 24] And was a. Sort of a ruthless king. Is that. Your question. Yes.

Why follow him. Because he was powerful. And people follow a powerful leader. Even when he's not. In the right. And sometimes the cost. Of not. Being in line with Herod.

Could get pretty high. Because. Herod was so ruthless. And he liked. And he. Did not hesitate to kill people. So. Yeah.

Noelle. I have a question. In response to my third question. We talked about. They have a question. There. There. There. And then there are modern pastors like Tim Keller who might be tempted to follow everything they say.

[47 : 37] And so how would you suggest approaching the Word knowing that we're bringing assumptions to it and others are bringing assumptions to it and to not be paralyzed for that idea?

Like, how would we know anything? Yeah. So we all bring assumptions to God's Word. How do we be honest about that and not be paralyzed by our assumptions or not fall into the trap of the Sadducees?

So I think be honest first. Be honest about the assumptions that we bring. And that's even hard because sometimes we don't realize what our own assumptions are.

You know, it's like, you know, you drink chlorinated water. You know, water that's filtered through chlorine and you don't. That's what I drink every day. I guess if you have a fancy filter, then maybe when you drink regular New Haven water, you taste the chlorine.

But I don't, you know. So a lot of our assumptions are like that. It takes time and experience to realize what our assumptions even are.

[48 : 41] So recognize our own assumptions. And then I think letting the categories and the worldview of Scripture and the narrative of the Bible and the categories that God introduces in Scripture question our own categories and question our own assumptions.

And I think that's a key is basically letting, being honest about our assumptions but letting Jesus question them.

And then seeking to revise our categories and assumptions in light of who Jesus is most centrally and what God has revealed through all of Scripture.

But yeah, that's a great question. Because I think it's, you know, if you're in, it's a good thing you can think about in small groups this week.

Is, you know, what are the, what's the passage teaching us? How does it, in some ways, Scripture fulfills some of our, the things that we already know to be true, that God has implanted in our hearts because we bear his image.

[50 : 03] And some of our godly desires, some of our even human desires that God has given human beings. So he's put eternity in the heart of man, you know.

So there, there are some things that it, that's where Scripture fulfills something that we already recognize or feel. And then there are other things, other parts of Scripture or other teachings that challenge things that we don't naturally gravitate to.

And that we might even think, no, that can't be true. But Scripture clearly says otherwise. And so then we need to grapple with, well, why do I assume what I'm assuming?

And why do I feel that what the Bible is saying can't be true? But really start to question where are my assumptions coming from in light of the teaching of Scripture?

Good question. Dorothy, quick. No, I just wonder, the verse came to mind about where he says he'll be renewing our mind day by day.

[51 : 07] Which is why even though I'm old, I know he can still renew my mind day by day. It's spiritually I can grow. When I was young and I read the Old Testament, how could he send these people to kill everybody in this nation?

Until I found out they were eating their children. I hadn't read the whole thing. I hadn't found out how disturbing, how disturbed God must have been to have to watch that.

He had to stop it. You have to stop it. Just like even our nation has had to stop certain people from doing things like Hitler. Yeah. Yeah, there's often, I think recognizing that we don't see the whole picture is sort of what you're saying.

And being, you know, being patient and realizing God's not going to answer every single question we have all at once.

But he will, as we faithfully dig into his word, as we talk about it together, as we pray together, as we seek to submit our lives to Christ.

[52 : 13] He will help us to grow. And sometimes it can be encouraging to look back five or ten years in your life and think, what were the burning questions that I had five or ten years ago?

And how many of those do I see differently in light of what God has taught me now? And of course, you'll have new questions that you didn't have five or ten years ago, too. But that's part of the growth process, I think, too.

All right. Andrew, did you have a question? Did you raise your hand? I did. I was clear. Okay. All right.