When Worship is about Me, I get it Wrong

6.9.19

Mark Series

Message 58

Mark 12:35–44 (CSB)

**THE QUESTION ABOUT THE CHRIST**

**35**While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, “How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? **36**David himself says by the Holy Spirit:

**The Lord** **declared to my Lord,**

**‘Sit at my right hand**

**until I put your enemies under your feet.’**,

**37**David himself calls him ‘Lord’; how then can he be his son?” And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

**WARNING AGAINST THE SCRIBES**

**38**He also said in his teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who want to go around in long robes and who want greetings in the marketplaces, **39**the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets. **40They devour widows’ houses** and say long prayers just for show. These will receive harsher judgment.”

**THE WIDOW’S GIFT**

**41**Sitting across from the temple treasury, he watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. **42Then a poor widow** came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. **43**Summoning his disciples, he said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. **44**For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had—**all she had to live on.”**

# 1. Jesus has been sitting and teaching in the Temple.

A. All of what He has said from the last few paragraphs, Jesus has been right where He belonged, in the Temple.

1. Jesus’ life has come full circle:

2. When He was a child, His parents found Him in the Temple listening and teaching.

3. Now, as an adult, Jesus is in the same Temple teaching.

B. Jesus has answered many difficult questions meant to expose Him as a fake or fraud.

1. Through all of this, Jesus not only defeats his critics but people continue to sit at His feet to be taught by Him.

2. Then Jesus takes the offensive.

C. These 3 sections or pericopes are often treated separately.

1. In other words, we approach them as 3 different instances.

2. That’s partly because in our Bibles there are these bold headings that label them as different.

3. When we look closely, there is a common thread to all 3.

4. That common thread is that Jesus is not happy with the religious leaders.

a. He is calling “bull” on the super religious.

b. In their pursuit of perfect religion, the super-religious have rejected God.

c. It is possible to be religious without being saved.

d. It is possible to have religion and not have relationship with God.

e. Jesus speaks out against the super-religious scribes

D. Jesus’ calls out 3 areas that the scribes religion was wrong:

1. Their understanding of the Messiah was wrong.

2. Who they worshipped was wrong.

3. The result of their worship was wrong.

# 2. The Scribes were wrong in their view of who their Messiah would be.

A. Messiah and Christ are the Hebrew and Greek titles referring to the coming savior.

1. All of the Jews were looking for the Messiah to come.

2. And they knew that Psalm 110 said that the Messiah would be a Son of David.

3. In other words, the great deliverer would be related to and would look a lot like David.

a. Too often, we have a picture of what deliverance and freedom should look like.

b. We have these running pictures of what the future should look like.

c. Yet, our deliverance often comes in a form much different than we expected.

B. Jesus’ response to the scribes showed that the Messiah was not only a Son of David, but far more.

1. The people were looking for a conquering hero like David, not a suffering Messiah.

2. They were looking for someone who looked like a king, talked like a king, and acted like a king.

3. What they wanted was someone like David who was handsome, powerful in battle, and religious.

4. Jesus shattered all of these biases.

5. Jesus was so much more than they expected.

C. As believers today, it is helpful to pay attention to the picture of Jesus we are drawing.

1. It is easy to create a picture of who WE think Jesus should be. For EXAMPLE:

a. He should be ALWAYS loving and never hold us responsible for sin.

b. Or maybe we draw a picture of a god who is aloof and distant.

c. Or a Jesus that is at our beck and call for all of our whims and desires.

2. Instead, we need to make sure that “our” Jesus reflects the biblical Jesus.

a. It is not Jesus’ job to meet my expectations.

b. It is my job to know Jesus so well that I know His expectations.

3. The Scribes could not answer clearly who the Messiah was and what He would be like.

a. And that’s why they missed Him.

b. When we establish false or unrealistic expectations the result is disbelief and we miss out on God.

c. Most conflicts happened because of unmet expectations.

1. This is true in marriage.

2. Church.

3. And our workplaces.

d. When we wrongly expect God to do one thing, and He doesn’t do it, the result is often disbelief and loss of faith.

e. That is why it is vital for us to know who Jesus really is.

# 2. The Scribes were wrong for wanting attention during worship.

Mark 12:38–40 (CSB)

**38**He also said in his teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who want to go around in long robes and who want greetings in the marketplaces, **39**the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets. **40**They devour widows’ houses and say long prayers just for show. These will receive harsher judgment.”

A. The worship setting of Jesus’ day is a lot different than ours.

1. Today we are very casual.

a. They were very formal.

b. Most pastors wear jeans today or, myself, an inexpensive suit.

c. They wore extra fancy robes and long tassels “that reminded them they were the people of God.”

2. Many of you call me by my first name, which is fine for our culture.

a. But the scribes demanded to be called Rabbi (family name).

b. We often translate Rabbi as “teacher” but according to scholar William Barclay, it actually means “My great one”.

3. The local synagogues were also designed differently.

a*. In the synagogue, in front of the ark where the sacred volumes were kept and facing the congregation, there was a bench where the specially distinguished sat. It had the advantage that no one who sat there could possibly be missed, being in full view of the admiring congregation.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

b. All of these attributes led to one thing:

c. The scribes made worship all about themselves and not about God.

4. Even their prayers were not for God’s benefit but for the benefit of those listening.

B. Jesus is upset by this.

1. Earlier He had cleared the temple because those who were called to worship God were encouraging worship of themselves.

2. Jesus had overturned the Temple saying that they have made turned a place of prayer into a den of thieves and robbers.

a. It wasn’t just money they were robbing.

b. The super-religious were robbing God of worship by their fancy dress, long prayers, and prominent seats at worship.

c. When we keep for ourselves what belongs to God, we rob God.

C. We are all guilty of this at times.

1. In a “me” culture, we have been conditioned to make everything about me.

2. My wants, my dreams, my needs, my feelings, and my opinions are valued higher than others.

3. The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 2:3, Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.

a. To consider others over ourselves is what should distinguish Jesus’ followers from everyone else.

b. When we realize that the local church does not exist to accomplish our own will or preferences, we find an incredible freedom and power to be who God wants us to be.

Lastly

# 3. The Scribes were wrong for placing impossible burdens on the poor.

A. Jesus has set up in the Temple and He is people watching.

1. The normal worshippers, the scribes who were the scholars of the day, and the religious leaders.

2. Everyone was coming to the Temple and giving tithes and offerings.

B. In the Court of Women (where all the Jews could gather) there were collection boxes called “The Trumpets”.

1. Each one had a special purpose.

a. Just like we often give to special purposes to pay for special needs, the Temple had a similar structure.

b. You would put the coin in the wide opening, and it would send the money down a narrower path to the appropriate box for use in the Temple.

2. Giving this way was very public and many of the Scribes were making really big deals about how much they were giving.

C. Then comes along a widow.

1. The coin is a “lepton” which means thin one.

a. It was literally the most worthless coin anyone could give.

b. In the scheme of it all, it added nothing to the Temple and to the ministry.

c. Yet, the widow gives all she has to the Temple.

2. Jesus takes notice of a sacrifice that no one else does.

a. There is no loud “jingling” of coins going down a tube.

b. There was no loud proclamation that she gave.

c. Only Jesus notices the gift.

D. As I read this, I believe Jesus is both proud and saddened by this occasion.

1. Jesus is proud of the widow who gave so sacrificially.

a. She gave without no thoughts of gain or profit.

b. And she didn’t hold back anything, although it was her right to do so and she obviously had the need.

2. Remember, though, that this section is not about the great faith of a widow but Jesus’ accusations against the religious leaders.

a. Jesus uses the poor widow as one more accusation against the religious leaders of the day.

b. They had perpetuated a system where the poor were manipulated and ignored to give while the wealthy were celebrated for their giving.

3. If anyone should have been praised for giving, it was this poor widow.

a. If anyone should have had the best seat that day at worship, it should have been the poor widow.

b. If anyone should have led the prayers, it was the poor widow.

c. Because of all the scribes and religious leaders there that day, SHE was the one who worshipped the best.

d. True worship is worship that involves giving everything we have to God.

e. What we give out of our poverty is worth more than what we give out of our abundance.

f. Why? Because the cost is higher.

g. King David said it best when He said, “I won’t give to the Lord sacrifices that cost me nothing.”

h. Worship has a cost, and the Religious leaders paid that cost to themselves through their long prayers, fancy clothes, and pompous giving.

# 4. Application: When we make religion about ourselves, we mess it up.

A. One of the things we all must learn is “It’s not all about me”.

1. We teach this to children.

2. We teach them to share.

3. Because it is a valuable life lesson.

4. The world does not revolve around me.

B. When we make religion about ourselves, we mess it up.

1. But when we make it about Jesus, we experience the freedom and power of giving ourselves fully to Him.

2. Some of us today need to be reminded that “there is a God, and we are not Him”.

C. How do we respond today?

1. I feel led to take some time here in this part of the service to repent.

2. To repent of using our talents, our treasure, and our time as tools to worship us.

3. To repent for not putting others above ourselves.

4. To repent for not being humble with our spouses, our brothers and sisters, and those in authority over us.

D. This morning, that is what we are going to do.

1. We are going to take a moment or two, and right where we sit, we are going to ask God to forgive us.

2. Then I want to lead us in a time of prayer to ask God to help us to walk and worship in humility and not pride.

3. Psalm 51:17 says, The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. You will not despise a broken and humbled heart, God.

4. Let’s let humility and brokenness open the doors of our hearts to God this morning.

1. William Barclay, [*The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark*](https://ref.ly/logosres/ndsb62mk?ref=Bible.Mk12.37b-40&off=2052&ctx=s+in+the+synagogue.+~In+the+synagogue%2c+in), The New Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 2001), 349. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)