

Jesus' Showdown with the Religious Leaders

Mark 12:13-44

Brandon Stern March 1, 2020



It is truly a joy to be with you and open God's Word together. Please turn in your Bibles to Mark 12; we'll be looking at verses 13 through 44. We're continuing our series through the Gospel of Mark called "Ransom Road," based on that word in Mark 10:45 where Jesus says, "*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*" That's what's coming up.

In this passage things are coming to a climax in Jesus' life and ministry. Jesus' public ministry is coming to a close and in less than 72 hours, He will be hanging on a Roman cross. However, instead of hiding in fear and self-pity, Jesus is in the temple teaching. He knows His time is short, so He gets right to the point.

As the attacks and questions from the religious leaders come at Jesus, He keeps bringing them back to the main thing—their relationship with God. Jesus is laser-focused in this section. He continually refocuses the conversation on what a relationship with God should look like. He knows there is no more important thing in life to talk about than this.

This was not just an important topic in Jesus' day; it's an important topic in our day as well. In fact, the reason the vast majority of us are here today probably is that we want to have a right relationship with God. We believe God exists, so we want to live a life that pleases Him. We know we don't do that perfectly, nevertheless the desire is there. We got up on Sunday morning and we came to church.

However, I also recognize there may be some of you here today who don't know what you think about God. You may not even know for sure if you believe in God, let alone if you'd be willing to give your life to Him. If that's you, I am so glad you're here. Jesus is not afraid of your questions and doubts. In fact in our passage today, some of the people He's talking with don't believe in Him either. Instead of dismissing them, Jesus lovingly engages with them. He answers their questions and keeps bringing them back to their need to be in proper relationship with Him.

Jesus wants to do that with you this morning as well. So my prayer for you and for each one of us here today is that God's Spirit would give each of us hearts to respond in faith to what Jesus is teaching us. There really is no more important topic than our relationship with God.

So let me give you the outline for the sermon today, and then we'll read God's Word together. We're going to work through this passage by asking and answering four questions.

- First, what should we do with our lives?
- Second, why should we do this?
- Third, what does this look like?
- Fourth, whom are we to love?

We'll then conclude by looking at both a negative and a positive example of what Jesus has been teaching us.

Let's look together now at God's Word to us in Mark 12, beginning with verse 13:

¹³ Then they [the religious leaders] sent some of the Pharisees and the Herodians to Jesus to trap him in his words. ¹⁴ When they came, they said to him, "Teacher, we know you are truthful and don't care what anyone thinks, nor do you show partiality but teach the way of God truthfully. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

¹⁵ But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at." ¹⁶ They brought a coin. "Whose image and inscription is this?" he asked them.

"Caesar's," they replied.

¹⁷ Jesus told them, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

¹⁸ Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and questioned him: ¹⁹ "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife behind but no child, that man should take the wife and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰ There were seven brothers. The first married a woman, and dying, left no offspring.

²¹ The second also took her, and he died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. ²² None of the seven left offspring. Last of all, the woman died too. ²³ In the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be, since the seven had married her?"

²⁴ Jesus spoke to them, "Isn't this the reason why you're mistaken: you don't know the Scriptures or the power of God? ²⁵ For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven. ²⁶ And as for the dead being

raised—haven't you read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to him: I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? ²⁷ He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are badly mistaken."

²⁸ One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, "Which command is the most important of all?"

²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

³¹ The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these."

³² Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him.

³³ And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices."

³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to question him any longer.

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.

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."

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. ⁴² Then 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."

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God endures forever (Isaiah 49:8). Let's pray.

Father, we come now to Your Word and ask for Your Spirit's help. We want to understand what You are saying to us this morning. But we want more than that. We don't merely want to understand conceptually what You are saying, we want to believe what You are revealing to us about Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So do this good work in each of us, we pray, for our good and the glory of Your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

1. What should we do with our lives?

In verses 13-17, some of the religious leaders have gathered into a little huddle and come up with a question to trap Jesus. They want to trick Him into saying something they can use to destroy Him, because they hate Him. They want Him gone and out of the picture. So they butter Him up with flattery, then pose their question to Him at the end of verse 14: *"Jesus, is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we pay?"*

This is actually a very, very clever question the religious leaders have come up with. What they are trying to force Jesus to do is give a yes or no answer to a very politically charged question. Just like today, taxes back then weren't overly popular, but this particular tax was especially controversial for Jewish patriots. This tax was first imposed less than a generation earlier when Judea had become a Roman province. The Jews already hated Rome, so this was just the icing on the cake for them. Sure enough, it wasn't too long before a Jewish patriot named Judas led a revolt, but Rome quickly squashed it. But that did not change people's feelings toward this Roman tax.

So for Jesus to answer, "Yes, pay the taxes to Caesar," would mean He would immediately be alienating Himself from the crowd who hated the tax. But for Jesus to answer, "No, don't pay the tax," would mean He would bring the entire wrath of Rome down on Himself. They were not going to deal with another Judas revolt. So either way, the religious leaders thought, "We've got Him!"

But look at how Jesus responds in Mark 12:15-17:

But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why are you testing me? Bring me a denarius to look at." They brought a coin.

"Whose image and inscription is this?" he asked them.

"Caesar's," they replied.

Jesus told them, "Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

Instead of getting caught in their trap, Jesus sprung the trap and turned their question into an opportunity to teach them something important about their relationship to God. Remember, Jesus is laser-focused in this section. Notice what He says and listen to the logic of His argument. He is making the point that because the coin bears Caesar's image, it belongs to Caesar. However, Caesar is not the only ruler who has created something after his image and likeness, is he?

Back in Genesis 1 we are told that God made us—male and female—in His image and after His likeness. So whereas they have a duty to Caesar to give to Caesar what belongs to him, they have an even more significant obligation than that. They bear God's image, so they belong to God and thus they are to give themselves completely to God. "Give to God what is God's."

So in answer to our first question— "What should we do with our lives?"—Jesus says we are to give our lives to God. Jesus is teaching that God is our Creator and we belong to Him. Our lives are not our own to do with whatever we want. This means you don't have rights over your eyes to look at whatever you want; they don't belong to you. This means you don't have rights over your hands to do whatever you want; they don't ultimately belong to you. Likewise, you don't have rights over your tongue to say whatever you want.

This is something Jordan and I talk to our kids about whenever one of them says something unkind to the other. We'll ask, "Sweetie, Who made your tongue?" "God did." "So who gets to decide how you can use your tongue—you or God?" "Well, God does." "So how does God want us to use our tongues? To be mean and unkind, or to love and bless?" "Well, to love and bless."

You see, in shepherding them this way, we are wanting them to understand this foundational truth that their lives do not ultimately belong to them; they belong to God. This is also a really good reminder for their Daddy to make sure that, in correcting them, I am using my tongue in a way that pleases God and blesses them.

What Jesus is doing here is bringing us all back to the foundational reality of our existence: we are not our own. We have been created by God, so we belong to God, therefore we are to give ourselves to God. But is this giving of ourselves to God like paying a hated tax? Or is it just a miserable obligation we have to keep?

2. Why should we do this?

Now, in some sense we have already answered this question, right? We should give ourselves to God because we belong to Him. But Jesus is wanting to go a little deeper than that. He wants to show us why giving our lives to God is actually the best and most wonderful thing we could ever do with our lives. But before Jesus can do that, He has to correct some false teaching the Sadducees believed in.

Let's look at Jesus' interaction with the Sadducees, beginning in Mark 12:18: "*Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and questioned him.*" Notice how the Sadducees are described. They are a religious group that does not believe in the resurrection of the dead. They think it's absolutely ludicrous to believe there can be life after death. So they bring out their tried-and-true trick question with the hopes of making Jesus look stupid in front of the crowd.

They begin in verse 19 by setting the stage: "*Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife behind but no child, that man should take the wife and raise up offspring for his brother.*" Here they're referring to the practice of Levirate marriage which was put in place in order to preserve the family name of a man who had died. In that situation, the dead man's brother was obligated to marry his brother's childless widow and provide children for him. This would then ensure the deceased brother's property and inheritance would be passed on. It's a little strange, but that's what they did.

The Sadducees aren't so much interested in Levirate marriage per se as they are in using the concept of Levirate marriage to make the idea of resurrection seem absolutely ridiculous. So they come with this bizarre—and let's be honest—shockingly morbid hypothetical situation, right? Look at verses 20-23.

"Jesus, there were seven brothers. The first married a woman and died and left no offspring. Then the second brother married her, but guess what? He died too. Then the third, then he died. Then the fourth and fifth and sixth and seventh—they all died. Then the woman died. So Jesus, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be since the seven had married her?" Can you just hear how they're trying to hold back their laughter? "Jesus, this is ridiculous. People who believe in the resurrection are idiots. Seven brothers, one wife—come on."

I love what Jesus says in verse 24. They're trying to make Him look stupid, but He exposes the foolishness of what they believe: "*Jesus spoke to them, 'Isn't this the reason why you're mistaken: you don't know the Scriptures or the power of God?'*" Despite what they thought they knew, Jesus assures them they've got it all wrong. They don't know their Bibles or the power of God.

This is quite a strong rebuke for those who are considered the religious leaders of Israel. But Jesus, being the good Teacher that He is, seeks to correct their error and reveal to them the glorious hope they can have in the power of God. Remember, He's laser-focused on their relationship with God and wants to show them, "This is why you should be in relationship with God."

Let's look at how He builds His argument, beginning in verse 25. Jesus says, "*For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in*

heaven.” What we need to notice first is that Jesus is clear and unapologetic in His teaching about the resurrection. There will be a resurrection of the dead; to believe otherwise is just plain wrong.

However, it won't be exactly like people commonly thought. It seems like the popular understanding of that day among those who believed in the resurrection was that resurrected life was pretty much identical to the present life. What Jesus seems to be indicating in His comment about being “like angels in heaven” is that our experience in the life to come will not be the same as this life, but will be transposed into a higher key. Thus the institution of marriage that God created and gave to humanity will not carry over into the life to come.

The reason for this is that God didn't create marriage to be ultimate. Rather, marriage was created by God to point toward the loving, joyful, intimate relationship He desires to have with all His people for all eternity. Just like animal sacrifices throughout the Old Testament pointed and looked forward to and were fulfilled in Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross for His people's sins, so too marriage points forward to and will be fulfilled in the return of Christ.

We see this idea throughout the Bible. Take Revelation 19, for example. This passage speaks of the return of Christ to this earth as the great marriage of Christ to His bride, the church. You see, on that wonderful day, all of Christ's people will be resurrected to live with Christ in the new heavens and the new earth for all eternity in perfect love, joy and intimacy. So what marriage points to will be fully realized as God and humanity make their home together in the new world and live happily ever after. It's the greatest story ever told.

But Jesus isn't done. In verses 26-27, Jesus is going to show them from Scripture why belief in the resurrection from the dead must be true and why that's good news for them—and for you and me today. Jesus says:

And as for the dead being raised—haven't you read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning bush, how God said to him, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are badly mistaken.

Jesus' argument here is brilliant and I don't want us to miss what He's saying. If the all-powerful God had promised to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, would death be able to stop Him from being their God? The answer of course is “No. There is nothing—not even death itself—that can cause God to break His promises to His people.” Think about it. If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ceased to exist, God's promises to them would be left unfulfilled. And this, according to Jesus, would be impossible. Thus the obvious conclusion to draw is that God will powerfully raise them from the dead and fulfill His promises to them.

So in answer to our question, “Why should we give our lives to God?” Jesus says, “Because in doing so, you will gain eternal life with God.” He is not the God of this life only, but of the life to come. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. This is just like what Jesus was saying back in Mark 8. To die to yourself, to give your life to God, is the only way to truly save your life.

Jesus' point is that every moment of self-denial will be worth it in the end. We are not just living for this life, but for the life to come. There will be a resurrection of the dead. This is so, because when God binds Himself to His people in covenant love and faithfulness, it is not simply for the short duration of their lives on this earth. No, His faithfulness continues to us through death into resurrected life. Death is no match for the power of God's Word.

If God has promised that He will be our God and we will be His people, and that we will live with Him forever, then you can guarantee in the end, we will be raised. As with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and all of God's redeemed people throughout history—we will live in God's restored earth with Him forever and ever. The power of God's promise to His people Isaiah that it can overcome death itself.

So entrust yourself to this powerful God of resurrection; you will not be disappointed. Do not live like a Sadducee, thinking that this life is all there is so you've got to live for yourself and get the most out of it. God has so much more for you than that. This life is not all there is. God has promised eternal life with Him in the new heavens and the new earth. So give yourself to God.

3. What does this look like?

So first, what should we do with our lives? Give our lives to God.

Second, why should we do this? Because God promises eternal life to all those who give themselves to Him.

Now question three: What does this look like? What does it look like practically to give ourselves to God? This is the question Jesus will answer in verses 28-34. Look with me at verse 28: *“One of the scribes approached. When he heard them debating and saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him, ‘Which command is the most important of all?’”*

This was a popular question for the scribes to wrestle with. They had counted up all the commands of God and discovered there were 613 commands God had given His people in the books of Moses—the first five books of the Old Testament. Out of the 613, they often debated, “What were the most important commands of all?” They wanted to know which commands summarized or captured the essence of what God required from His people. Jesus doesn't hesitate giving His answer. Look at verses 29-31:

²⁹ *Jesus answered, "The most important is Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. ³¹ The second is, Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other command greater than these."*

What Jesus is saying is that to give ourselves to God means we are to love God with all that we are. Giving ourselves to God is not an emotionless experience; it's an emotion-filled experience. Our love for God should have a reorienting effect on every aspect of our lives. Notice the "all's" throughout this passage. All your heart. All your soul. All your mind. All your strength. This love is to be so all-encompassing that there is not one area of our lives that is not informed by our love for God. Our passions, wills, affections, desires—even our very bodies—are to be completely devoted to God.

But Jesus doesn't stop there, does He? He goes on to show how love for God necessarily spills over into love of neighbor. So according to Jesus, I cannot love God and hate those who are made in the image of the God I claim to love. To love God means I must also love others because this is what pleases God. Since I love God, I want to do what pleases Him. So the two go hand in hand. This is so important for us to realize.

There is always a direct connection between my vertical relationship with God and my horizontal relationship with people. My failure to love others reveals my failure to love God as I should. The Holy Spirit says it this way in 1 John 4:20: *"If anyone says, 'I love God,' and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen."*

Ask yourself this morning, "What are my horizontal relationships revealing about my love for God? Does the way I interact with my spouse reveal that I am loving God with all that I am?" What about your relationship with your children? Children, what about your relationships with your parents? What are these relationships revealing to you about your love—or lack of love—for God? What about our relationships with friends or coworkers? Does our love for God shape and inform the ways we interact with them, talk to them and about them?

What are your horizontal relationships revealing to you about your love for God? What Jesus is doing here is showing just how extensive and exhaustive God's claim over our lives is. Our love for God should permeate every aspect of our lives. There is nothing we should withhold from Him. He said we are to give Him everything—all that we are.

Well, the scribe is impressed with Jesus' answer. Look at how he responds in verses 32-33:

³² *Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, teacher. You have correctly said that he is one, and there is no one else except him. ³³And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, is far more important than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices."*

This is remarkable. The scribe actually seems to get it. In the midst of all the attacks on Jesus, here we have a man who asks a genuine question and then agrees with Jesus' answer. But look at what Jesus says to him in verse 34: *"When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'"*

What an interesting thing for Jesus to say. Whereas the other religious leaders are clearly far from the Kingdom of God, this man is close. He's standing just outside the gates. And in saying this to him, it's obvious Jesus wants him to think deeply about what he has just said. You see, knowing you should love God with all that you are and your neighbor as yourself is one thing; doing it is another.

What Jesus wants the scribe to realize is that try as he may, he is unable to meet God's demand of wholehearted love. What the scribe—and what you and I—must come to realize is that it is not proper theology that will get us into the Kingdom of God. No, entrance into the Kingdom of God is only possible by drawing near to the King. It's King Jesus, not our ability to love God, that will bring us into His Kingdom. So the scribe must come to see Jesus, not merely as a wise Teacher, but as the promised Messiah, the Savior of law-breakers like him—and of law-breakers like you and me.

4. Whom are we to love?

This brings us to our final question: whom are we to love? What Jesus is going to do now is graciously reveal Himself as the God Whom we should love. Jesus is not a mere man. He is the powerful God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the God to Whom we must give ourselves. Look how Jesus reveals Himself in verses 35-37:

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.*

At this point, Jesus has withstood all the attacks and questions the religious leaders have thrown at Him. Each time, He has brought their attention back to their relationship with God. This is what Jesus wants to focus on. And now Jesus is narrowing His focus and bringing the conversation directly to Himself. He wants them to see that He is the promised Messiah which means far more than they had imagined.

So let's look at Jesus' argument here in the text. He begins in verse 35 by noting the popular belief that the Messiah would be the son of David; that He would come and re-establish David's kingdom. This belief grew out of passages like 2 Samuel 7, Isaiah 9 and Isaiah 11 where God promises that there will be a son of David who will rule on David's throne forever. What's important for us to realize is that Jesus isn't opposed to this belief.

In Mark 10, He was quite comfortable with the blind man Bartimaeus calling to Him, "*Son of David, have mercy on me!*" And in Mark 11 He had just ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey to the cries of, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!*" So what then is Jesus' point in asking this question about how the Messiah can be the son of David? Has Jesus changed His mind about this? Does Jesus no longer think the title "Son of David" is an accurate title for Him? Not at all.

Hear me on this. Jesus is not taking issue with the accuracy, but the adequacy, of the title. To view Jesus merely as the great-great-great-great-great-grandson of King David is to have way too small an understanding of the Messiah. He is certainly not less than David's son—but oh, He is so much more than David's son. Look at what He says when He quotes Psalm 110 in Mark 12:36. David himself says, by the Holy Spirit, "*The Lord declared to my Lord [Messiah], 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'*"

Jesus is pointing out that if David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is calling the Messiah his Lord, then surely He must be more than simply his son; He must also be David's Lord. But how can this be? Jesus doesn't answer His question, does He? He just leaves it hanging in the air for us to ponder. He wants each of us to think long and hard about Who the Messiah really is.

But as readers of Mark's Gospel, we have already been given clues along the way about the identity of Jesus the Messiah. Way back at the beginning, in Mark 1:1, the Holy Spirit told us this is the story "*of the gospel of Jesus Christ [the Messiah], the Son of God.*" Then in Mark 1:11, after Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit tells us a voice came from heaven, saying, "*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.*"

Throughout His earthly ministry, when Jesus would encounter demons, what would they yell? "Son of God! Son of God, get away from me!" Then in Mark 9:7, Jesus is on top of a

mountain with some of His disciples and He's being transfigured. He's revealing His glory to them. And a voice comes from heaven again that says, *"This is my beloved Son; listen to him!"* Then in the parable Jesus just told at the beginning of Mark 12 that we looked at last week, He made it clear that He is God's Son. So even though Jesus didn't answer His question directly, the answer is there for those who have eyes to see it and hearts to believe it.

Jesus, the man standing before them in the temple, is simultaneously the eternal Son of God, David's Lord and the promised Messiah, David's son. He is their Creator, the One to Whom they owe their very lives. He is also the powerful God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Who in just a few short days from then will rise from the dead. And He is the God Who is calling them to love Him with all that they are.

What Jesus is revealing to them is that He is the promised Messiah, the eternal Son of God, Who is the King of the Kingdom of God. And it is only through loving Him and giving yourself completely to Him that you can enter into His Kingdom and be saved.

In Mark 12:38-44, Jesus concludes this section by giving both a negative and a positive example of what He has been saying. So let's look first at the negative example in verses 38-40:

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."*

According to Jesus, the scribes are the exact opposite of what God desires. Instead of loving God with all that they are, they love themselves. They love the greetings they get in the marketplaces. They love the honor and status they receive from men. Instead of loving their neighbor as themselves, their self-love leads them to exploit the weak and vulnerable. Do you see what Jesus says? They devour widows' houses. So although the scribes were teachers of the law, they missed what the law was teaching. This is not what is pleasing to God.

However, there was one person that day in the temple who got it. Look what the Holy Spirit says in verses 41-44:

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.* ⁴² *Then 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."*

I love what Jesus says; don't miss this. She put in everything she had—all she had to live on. Here is a woman who recognized that all she has and all she is belongs to God. So she gave to God what was God's—everything she had. Here's a woman who loved the Lord her God with all her heart. She held nothing back, but gave her very life—all she had to live on. So this poor little widow becomes the picture for Jesus of what wholehearted devotion to God looks like.

But if you're anything like me, as we've been going through this text together, you've had a mix of emotions, haven't you? There's a part of you that really wants to be like this widow, giving yourself to God and loving Him with all that you are. But you know that you don't always do that. More often than not we're like the scribes who live for ourselves, aren't we? We fail to love God and fail to love others as we should.

So is there hope for law-breakers like you and me? Yes. The good news for us today is that God in Christ has done for us what we could not do for ourselves. Notice that Jesus is the One Who faithfully came to this earth and gave His very life to God in humble obedience—for you. Jesus is the One Who trusted in the Scriptures and the power of God to raise Him from the dead—for you.

It is Jesus Who perfectly loved the Lord His God with all His heart, with all His soul, with all His mind and with all His strength, and Who loved His neighbor—you and me—as He loved Himself. It is Jesus—the eternal glorious Son of God—Who became David's son, the Messiah, our Savior. And it is Jesus Who, through His death on the cross, gave everything He had for sinners like you and like me.

So how should we respond to such extravagant love? Give yourself to Jesus. Hold nothing back from Him; He held nothing back from you. Love Him with all that you are, then in loving Him, love others as you love yourself.

In a moment we're going to have the joy of partaking together of the Lord's Supper. As we think about this meal, I want us to see that in the bread and cup, Jesus is offering Himself to us again in love. Jesus is saying, "This is My body given for you. This is My blood poured out for the forgiveness of your sins. For all the times you have not loved Me like you should, My blood will cover that. I'm dying to pay for your sins."

So in eating the bread and drinking the cup, we are saying we believe Jesus really is Who He says He is. He is the eternal Son of God Who became a man Who lived a perfect life of love and obedience to God. He did what we could not do, then He willingly laid down His life for His people's sins—for all the times we have failed to love God as we should. Then three days later He rose in resurrection power, never to die again! And now He invites each and every one of us to turn

from our foolish ways of living for ourselves, to give our lives to Him and to live for Him. He calls us to love Him with all that we are and to give ourselves completely to Him. So for those of you who have recognized your need for such a Savior, this meal is for you. Enjoy the grace and love of your Savior given for you.

But for those of you who are here today who are not trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and the hope of eternal life, we would ask that you let the elements pass you by. But as you do, I encourage you to take a moment and consider what you have heard from God's Word today. Consider the love of Jesus Who was willing to give everything for you, then ask yourself, "Why would I not be willing to give everything to Him?"

New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ www.newcbc.org

All Scriptures quoted directly from the Christian Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

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