

Mark 12:13-37 | Pleasant Life Under a Future Hope

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So we only have four more weeks here at GCF and because of that we are flying through the remaining portion of the gospel of Mark. Starting next week here is what we are going to see: 1. The Human Response to the Gospel, 2. Divine Judgment and the Gospel, and the final week of GCF this year we are going to see, The Glory of the Gospel.

But tonight we are going to consider these two questions: How do you think about your life? How do you think about your death?

More importantly, what is your motivation in this life? And what happens to you when you die?

We are in the portion of the book of Mark where Jesus' enemies are going to try and trap him. And they are going to come at him with questions for the sole purpose of tripping him up and with his flaws being finally able to get rid of him.

And what we are going to see tonight are four questions which Jesus answers. And those four questions shape our lives in the present by providing a hope for our lives in the future. What we are going to see specifically is that **Christ is the key to understanding life this side of death and the hope for life on the other side of death.** We are going to find this by looking at three things in Mark 12 tonight, 1. The Sovereignty of God, 2. The Resurrection Glory, 3. The Key to the Kingdom.

So let's **pray**.

The first question we see Jesus answer has to do with government, taxes and authority. Let's read this together: **Mark 12:12-17**. This first question gives Jesus the platform for this first teaching in this text, and that is **The Sovereignty of God**.

Sovereign is a word which means a lot. We have included it in the name of our church. The biblical usage of the word sovereign can mean a few things, but the two that help us understand what Jesus is saying here are 1. One who is in a high position, and 2. One who has the ability to be effective. To rule and to be ultimately effective. For humans, we almost never have the two of these together, but in Jesus we find them married in perfect harmony.

Here are the three ways we see the sovereignty of God in this text. First, Jesus doesn't judge our faces. Look at **Mark 12:14a**. The Pharisees and Herodians come to Jesus with a question and what they literally say in the Greek is, "you do not look at people's faces." They come to him and they wish to ask him a question because Jesus is impartial to appearances and only deals with the truth. The irony of this is that Jesus saw straight through their flattery into their heart.

They came to Jesus with praise and concern, flattering him with flowery language, hoping to catch Jesus, but look at what Mark says, **Mark 12:15**. Jesus sees your heart.

We as humans have a phrase we like to use, we "take things at face value." And we say that because when all is said and done ultimately we must take things as they appear. In our limitations, in our finite existence diligence and discernment is the best we have and because of that we are vulnerable to scams, extortion, exploitation and shame from those who manipulate us into believing false things. Jesus will not be so

manipulated. He was not manipulated by the Herodians and he will not be manipulated by you. The idea of the Sovereignty of God means that nothing is hidden from his sight.

You can talk the talk and walk the walk, you can fake sincerity, you can falsify faith, you can do enough on the exterior to both fool yourself and those around you but you will not fool Christ. Christ is sovereign in perception of this reality. One day all of this will be laid bare before God and you will not have to answer for your face, you will have to answer for your heart.

Secondly, God is due more than Caesar. Look at **Mark 12:15-17**.

Jesus is walking at tricky tight rope here. You see these critics tried to trap Jesus because on one hand the Jews following him wanted him to overthrow Rome. So if Jesus were to say pay the oppressive taxes to Caesar they would have turned against Christ. Yet if Jesus would have said don't pay taxes to Caesar, he would have been jailed as a zealot by the Roman officials.

The argument Jesus makes is that of likeness. He holds up a coin and he asks, "Whose likeness is this?" On the denarius is a portrait of Tiberius Caesar, and under it the phrase "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus."

In side stepping one controversy, Jesus radically ignites a new counter cultural understating of things because on the coin which promotes Caesar as the "divine being," Jesus shows that Caesar is not God. And that he is due what is his, but God is due something entirely different.

You see the Greek word which is translated here as likeness is literally, "eikon." Whose icon is this, but it is translated more than simply icon because the term brings with it not simply a representation, but an ownership. What is more significant is that that word shows up in the Greek version of the Old Testament. The scriptures that these Pharisees and scribes would be very familiar with, and there is one very important place where this word shows up: **Gen 1:26**.

Man is the icon of God. Do you see what Jesus is doing here? In saying render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's he is saying to the Pharisees and Herodians, the controversy of Christ is not about where you are to render your money, the controversy of Christ is where you are to render your heart.

You see whether the zealous Jews who wanted to overthrow Rome realized it or not, the image of Caesar on that coin really did make it his property. Whether they realized it or not, it was due to him. The same is true of your heart. Whether you realize it or not, you were made in the image of God. In his very likeness. And not so that you may find autonomy and belonging outside of God, but that you may find your full purpose and your full identity in the hands of God. That is the natural ramification of being made in the image of a sovereign and effective God.

This first question reshapes our existence on this earth. Our hearts will be judged on this earth according to the merit through which we choose to render our hearts to God or to ourselves.

The second question continues to reshape our existence on this earth, but it does so by focusing on the life after life on this earth. **Mark 12:18-27**.

So here we have another group of religious officials questioning Christ and here Jesus frames their answer in with the truth of **The Resurrection Glory**.

Have you ever thought of the question: What happens when you die? I mean for those of us in here we have probably thought of it, and we have probably come to the conclusion that when we die we will go to be with

Jesus. But that's about as far as our understanding goes. Typically this going to Jesus looks more like a disembodied existence where we sit on harps as spirits with wings and play glorified lawn darts.

You see there were two thoughts on the afterlife during the time of Jesus, there were the Pharisees, who we just saw. And they saw the Old Testament affirming a real, bodily resurrection at the judgment day. For them at the end, when all was said and done, we would be resurrected to real bodies. The Sadducees, who were the academics of the Old Testament scriptures thought otherwise. They thought that when you died, you simply died. Your body died, your soul died, and you ceased to exist.

So what these Sadducees do is they try to trap Jesus in this wild hypothetical situation. So some background is needed first to understand what is going on here. In ancient near east cultures there was very little protection for women and children outside of the family name of the husband. If a woman had a husband who died before bearing any male offspring, that line of the family would ultimately die and in dying be excluded from the coming promise to Israel.

So what God prescribed in the Old Testament where in order to protect the woman and any non-male children she might have, if her husband were to die, the husband's brother would be allowed to impregnate the widow in hopes that she would bear a son. If that son was then born, the deceased father's name would live on and that line of the family would continue to live in the promises. It was an act of cultural continuation and population control in a culture where population and offspring were everything.

So these Sadducees point to this crazy story of seven brothers sleeping with one lady and all of them dying before a son was born. They wanted Jesus to admit that this resurrection life would be improbable because of problems such as this.

But once again, this question is not a problem for Jesus. Jesus does two things with this question, I'm actually going to look at them in the reverse order Jesus shared them. First he affirms life after death by pointing to Moses at the burning bush: **Mark 12:26-27**.

Now here is why this is important. When God spoke to Moses out of the burning bush it was over 600 years since Abraham was born and yet God says that he is the God of Abraham. Now if Abraham was just dead, how would God still be his God? More importantly God made a promise to Abraham, he said he would be blessed with offspring as numerous as the stars in the sky, he said that kings would come of him.

Now remember when we talked about sovereignty and one of the components was that God was effective? If there is no life after death, and if God made this promise yet Abraham died with one son and no kings, was God effective? But the fact that God makes promises to people who die before the promises are fulfilled does not show that God is incapable but it shows that some of those promises are realized for those people after their death, in their life after death.

God fulfills his promise to the living even though they are dead because God is a God of the living not of the dead. You will have life after death. Everyone looks for the Holy Grail to make them immortal, but we are all immortal we will all live forever.

Secondly Jesus points to the nature of the life after death: **Mark 12:24-25**. Jesus says that 1, you will rise from the dead. There is a real resurrection of the dead which is yet to come. And in that day, you will not be given in marriage for you will be like the angels. Now angels are spirits? Is Jesus saying that we will just be spirits in heaven? No. What Jesus is saying is that when we get to heaven we will not have a driving need to be married because like the angels our relational void will be filled by the glory of God himself.

Now I want to come back to this in a little bit, but here is what I want us to see in this passage on resurrection glory. One, there is life after death, two, we will be bodily resurrected, three, we will have a different nature of existence, but lastly the complications and hurt of this world will not carry into our resurrection life.

You see the reason this story exists, even hypothetically is because of sin. It is sin that caused her husband to die, it is sin that prevented her from becoming pregnant. It is the curse of sin which lead to death, after death, after death in this woman's life because when sin entered the world it brought with it the minions of hurt, harm and death.

But in the next life they will be no more. In the next life we won't have to sort out the lingering effects of sin because in some way they will have been sorted out perfectly and wonderfully already and we in that existence will exist in the perfect contentment that the angels now experience before God himself. This coming life, while the same in many ways is going to be wonderfully different. And for the Christian, rather than letting this life shape our view of the next life, it is the next life, our glorified life before God which should shape our understanding of this life.

Briefly, here is the final portion of our text today. One which has contains two more questions, but a completely different tone: **Mark 12:28-34**.

So here we have a scribe ask a question, but rather than seeing the spiteful and deceptive tones we saw in the previous two critics we see one of sincerity. And this scribe who saw Jesus answered well asked a question about the greatest commandment.

Why? Why do you think this was the question, and this was the story Mark put in here. The other two gospel's which include the previous two stories do not include this story. So why? Because this scribe had just seen that God is sovereign in this life, and that God is the hope for the resurrection in the next so the most natural question when seeing the reality of what already is and what is yet to be is: "How then should I live here?"

And Jesus tells him: Love the lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, secondly love your neighbor as yourself. And the Scribe agrees and affirms Jesus' answer and Jesus is pleased with him yet, he says "you are not far from the Kingdom of God." You see this is the final point. This scribe saw the sovereignty of God in the now, the hope of God in the future, the purpose of God in the present and yet he wasn't yet there. What was he missing?

Jesus fills in that gap: **Mark 12:35-37**. You see the scribes and the Old Testament, they all agreed that the coming Messiah was going to be the Son of David. Heir to David's throne. But they all thought that he would simply be a son.

What Jesus does in this passage is how he is more than just a son. Citing David's Psalm 110, he provides the true meaning of the Psalm. David recognizes God, "Yahweh said." All the scribes saw this, but then they assumed that it read Yahweh said to my Lord (my Lord being King David), and yet Jesus said that David is not the subject of this Psalm, David is the witness to this Psalm.

If the second Lord is not David, then there is a Lord who pre-existed David, there is a Lord who is the extension of Yahweh himself and that Lord is the mighty scepter of God. Through that Lord all the enemies of God would be destroyed. The final point tonight is the **Key to the Kingdom**.

You see what the scribe missed was that Jesus is God. He knew how to serve God, he knew how he had to love God, he knew what God demanded but he didn't yet see the fullness of who God was. And here Jesus reveals himself as God in the flesh, second person of the trinity, son of David, but more importantly son of God.

And this is where we find our application tonight. The Kingdom of God is only entered through Christ. Christ changes the entire outlook on your life. He is not an addition to it, he is not a supplement to it, for those who want to follow Christ he must become the entire substance of it.

You see we were created in God's image but sin came and smeared it. Our hearts no longer seek to identify with God so we see to find our own identity in this world. With jobs, careers, sex, money and aspirations. But look at what God has done to restore that image: **Col 1:13-15**. Where we had blurred the image of God through sin, Christ came as the restoration of it, the clearest portrait of who we were and who we could be. And by dying on the cross the perfect image of God in Christ Jesus is once again impressed against us and through that we render the whole of our lives back to God.

This doctrine of the resurrection makes no sense outside of Christ. It sounds creepy weird. Outside of science fiction where do we get this idea that those who were dead will one day physically take up new bodies? **1 Cor 15:20-23**.

We will rise because Christ rose. For those who are in Christ we will rise to eternity with God and before God. Christ is the key to understanding the resurrection because Christ is the resurrection.

So my question to you is, how do you view the whole of your life?

Do you see your life as impressed with the image of God? Do you see your life as rendered to him in willful worship filled obedience? Or do you operate under the false assumption that you are all that matters. Regardless of how this appears, it is Jesus who knows your heart, and it is to Jesus you will have to give an account.

Are you shaped by a resurrection hope? Because we are owed to God we are freed to live for God because we have a resurrection through Christ. What can separate us from our love if not death itself? What can keep us from our mission if we will rise again?

Disciples of Christ the doctrine of God's sovereignty and the promise of resurrection glory is not a lounge chair in which to kick up your feet and relax, it is a call to arms, a call to discipleship. It is a beacon of hope to an otherwise dying world and a call to come and go and proclaim the Kingdom of Christ to the ends.

You who are in here who find this odd, weird, and slightly creepy, hear our message and see our hope. The way to life as it should be is not through the way of the world, but the way of the cross. Take heart and seek God with sincerity and he will kindly answer you with his mercy.