

## Mark 12:35-44

### “Loving God, not counting coins”

- I. **Introduction**
- II. **Vs. 35-37 The destination of our devotion**
- III. **Vs. 38-40 What can happen**
- IV. **Vs. 41-44 How we give**

#### Introduction

I purposely left last Sunday's study with an unanswered question. We were looking at Jesus' answer to the question from a scribe who wanted to know which was more important; devotion or duty. When *Jesus replied that devotion would always drive right behavior but duty will never motivate devotion and the scribe enthusiastically agreed with Jesus' teaching.* Yet surprisingly Jesus only committed that this scribe wasn't **FAR** from the kingdom of God. When I consider that statement I want to know how a person can have the right “*theology*” but still only be “*NOT FAR*” from the kingdom of God instead of having “*ARRIVED*”? I've dedicated my life to being an instrument to make sure that people arrive, and not “*just missed it*” with regards to the kingdom of God! Eternity is not a place where God will give out “*participation ribbons*” or “*2<sup>nd</sup> place trophies*”! Instead I believe that there will be many in hell who would be able to say that they missed heaven by inches! That is one of the questions this section answers; “*How to not miss the kingdom of God by inches!*”

## II. Vs. 35-37 The destination of our devotion

Vs. 35 For us this passage is difficult to understand as it uses thoughts and language which are strange to us. But it would not have been difficult for the people in the temple to understand. Verse 34 left us hanging after Jesus' statement that this scribe was "*not far from the kingdom of God*" as it appears at first glance as told by Mark that "*no one dared question Him.*" The scribe had agreed whole heartedly that the most important commandment was to "*love the **LORD God** with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength*". The unanswered question was: "*What part of that was this scribe unable to perform? Where was he failing to lay hold of the kingdom of God?*" He sees that God is more concerned with the devotion of the inward attitude than He is duty of the outward performance, yet Jesus says He is still missing something, but what? And with the apparent close of this section we are left with no answer, or are we? You see the linkage to the next paragraph is obscured in the English translation, as we are only told that "***THEN** Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple....*" The New International translation renders this "***WHILE** Jesus was teaching in the temple courts...*" And the literal translation is "*And Jesus **ANSWERING** said, teaching in the temple...*" Each of these words translated (THEN, WHILE and ANSWERING) are important as to the timing of the next paragraph; they put the next section NOT at a later date and another conversation but rather an extension of the same conversation with the same scribe. Jesus was answering this scribe while he was still teaching in the temple. These next words of Jesus are aimed directly at what was missing from this theologically correct scribe making him **ONLY NOT FAR** from the kingdom of God instead of **ARRIVED** at the kingdom of God. It is here that Jesus

launches into a teaching with regards to Psalm 110 verse 1 and the question as to “*How could David call his son LORD, making the son greater than the father.*” The answer to that question is the key to understanding what this scribe was missing that left him not far from the kingdom of God instead of IN the kingdom of God.

Vs. 36-37 There are two things that I notice before we even get into Psalm 110:1 and the two questions Jesus asks concerning it:

1. First notice that there is ***no recorded answering*** of Jesus’ questions of:
  - Vs. 35b “*How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?*”
  - Vs. 37a “*Therefore David himself calls Him Lord; how is He then his son?*”

The scribe doesn’t answer the questions we are only told that the common people heard Him gladly.

2. Second, notice that in verse 36 Jesus makes sure that all who were listening, specifically the scribe understood that what David wrote in Psalm 110:1 was inspired by the Holy Spirit. In saying this Jesus is making sure that what is said here was not a mere interpretation or mistake but rather divine information!

The key to Jesus questions are to be found in defining terms and words especially in light of the Septuagint (*the translation of the Hebrew Bible into the common Greek language of the day*):

- The word “*Christ*” is the translation of the word “*christos*” which means “*Anointed One*” and was used to translate the Hebrew word translated into English as “*Messiah*”. The use of the word refers to the part of the coronation ceremony for a king to be anointed with oil. The definition was used for the future King of Israel who would one day reign of the throne of David.
- The word “*son*” is a Hebrew expression used to speak of a future descendant, not just a son.
- The word “*Lord*” is the Greek translation of the word “*kurios*” which means “*master, one who has the power over another.*” In the Septuagint it was used as the title of God and was the transliteration of the Hebrew word Jehovah, as such its use implied deity.

It was common place for the Jews to refer to the coming Messiah as the Son of David but in this passage from David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, David himself refers to the “Anointed One” not as his “son” or offspring but rather as Lord. Both the scribes as well

as the Jewish people believed that the Messiah would come from the royal lineage of David and as David was human so too would the Messiah be human, He would be David's son or a direct descendant of David. What Jesus brings to the attention of His listeners is that David wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and that David calls his future heir who would be the Messiah, Lord, the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The question is how can the Messiah be both human and deity bringing before them the incarnation. The Jewish leaders rejected the idea of the incarnation and the deity of the Messiah. Now to the two questions:

- Vs. 35b *“How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?”*
- Vs. 37a *“Therefore David himself calls Him Lord; how is He then his son?”*

The answer is to the mystery of Jesus identity:

- A descendent of David according to the flesh
- The Messiah according to prophecy and the promise of the Father to David
- And the Lord of glory according to the Holy Spirit, in Psalm 110:1

The only way a son could be greater than his father is if he was more than just a descendent! **What this scribe had missed was not devotion before duty but who He was to be devoted to, namely Jesus the Son of David the Son of God!** You can't have the proper order of devotion above duty if you miss the person you are to be devoted too! All this scribe needed to do was recognize that Jesus was the Messiah as described by the Holy Spirit in Psalm 110:1.

### **III. Vs. 38-40 What can happen**

Vs. 38-40 In these next two stories Jesus gives a perfect illustration of the difference when a person has the religion but are not devoted to the right person. First notice that Mark starts off by saying *“Then He (Jesus) said to them in His teaching.”* The **“THEM”**

in this passage is “*the common people*” who heard Him gladly in verse 37. Jesus spoke specifically of the scribes, the very sect that this man belonged to, saying watch out for the Scribes who make a great show of their religion, but are the first ones on the scene to rip off widows. Scribes were employed to make out wills and would swindle widows into giving their homes and property to the Temple and then would take a portion of the proceeds of the sale for themselves. **Even if we have the proper order of devotion before duty but are not devoted to Jesus we will sooner or later be reduced to a religious show that exists for our own benefit.** We will want the respect and adoration of people all the while taking what they give us.

#### **IV. Vs. 41-44 How we give**

Vs. 41-44 Jesus then contrasts this with that of the widow who they observed while they sat opposite the treasury. The location of this treasury was in an area called Solomon’s Between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women there was the Gate called Beautiful, from that vantage point you could look directly to the 13 collection boxes for the needy known as the “trumpets” because of the way they were shaped. Each of these boxes had a specific dedication and would collect a considerable amount but no greater amount ever given then when Jesus noted this widow giving her two cents. The coin she threw in was called a lepton as it literally meant “*thin one*” and was the smallest of all coins 1/16<sup>th</sup> of a penny. Some of the Scribes and Pharisee had taken up such an absurd level of religion that they hired a trumpeter to go before them as they made their way to a donation to the poor. The truth was they gave more to the trumpet player than they did to the needy as what was more important was getting noticed for giving instead of the gift.

Jesus has never been interested in **WHAT we give** but He has always been interested in **HOW we give!**

So as they were watching here came this “poor widow” who threw into the needy box two tiny coins that were 1/8<sup>th</sup> of one cent. Jesus informs us that she hadn’t found these coins behind the sofa, it was her last and only cent and she gave it to the needy because she loved the Lord with all her heart, with all her soul, with all her mind and with all her strength and she loved her neighbor as herself. She had put into the treasury more than all other combined as she gave for love of God. What we see in this is three points of our giving is to be devotional:

1. **Giving must be sacrificial:** It is not the **amount** of the gift, it is the **cost** to the giver! It is not the **size** of the gift but the **sacrifice** of the gift. True devotional giving costs us, it is a sacrifice, we forgo what brings us joy and pleasure for the work of God.
2. **Giving must be carefree:** This widow held nothing back as she didn’t consider holding a coin back for her own needs. Symbolically there is a deeper truth to this devotional giving and that is that we are typically holding onto or hanging onto something for ourselves instead of giving all of ourselves to the Lord.
3. **Giving must be by faith:** This is the story in the Bible that goes down as the greatest illustration of generosity but at the hands who gave the least amount. This suggests to us that devotional giving focus is not on what we give but on what God can do with what we give!

God is not impressed with our show; He is blessed by our hearts towards Him seen in our love for others! **True devotion is not giving what you have to God, it is understanding that God has all of you, so you can give all back to Him.**