

April 9/10, 2005

The Good News About Jesus According to Mark

Give God What Is God's

Mark 12:13-44

Pastor Bryan Clark

When Patti and I lived in Broken Bow, we bought a Labrador retriever. That's great pheasant hunting country there, and I thought it would be fun to have a hunting partner. So I set out training the dog in all of the basics. But somewhere along the way, I thought it would be fun to have this dog go to the next level—to operate at a higher level. I didn't think I had the ability to get him there, so I looked into a professional trainer.

I found a trainer in Grand Island and I decided to send the dog there for 30 days. So I dropped off the dog, and after 30 days I went back. I was pretty excited to be reintroduced to this "obedience machine." When I got there, the trainer showed me everything that the dog could now do. One of the things that quickly dawned on me was, *But this was everything he could do before...he just did it a little bit better.*

At the end of the day, I'd have to say I was quite disappointed. For the amount of money I spent, I really wanted a dog that could not only retrieve the bird, but clean it and cook it as well! I certainly expected more than I got.

When I think about our Christian lives, it seems to me that's the way a lot of people live as followers of Jesus. We still basically live like everybody else...just a little bit better. We just live with a little higher integrity, a little more character. But by and large, we are just living like everybody else...just a little better.

That certainly is *not* the radical transforming life of Jesus that God intended. Why is that? Turn with me to Mark chapter 12 and let's talk about that.

It's a little bit hard to pinpoint exactly on what day the events that we're going to talk about happened. Most people think this is probably Wednesday. This is the last week of the life of Jesus. Most likely these events that we're going to talk about happened on Wednesday. Of course Thursday night He's arrested, and Friday He's crucified, so we are really in the final hours of the life of Jesus before His crucifixion. We pick it up in verse 13:

Then they [*the "they" is a reference to the religious leaders that were so embarrassed by Jesus in the previous encounter; they, in a sense with their tail between their legs, have gone back behind closed doors. They've reformulated a plan; they're not going back out there but they send two new groups to see what they can do*] **sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. They came and said to Him, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay or shall we not pay?"** (vs. 13-15a, *NASB)

Now you have to understand, this was not a question off the cuff. The Herodians and the Pharisees did not get along. They were on opposite ends of the spectrum. The Herodians basically had sold out the Jewish people and catered to the Romans. The Pharisees hated the Romans and were loyal to the Jewish people. So they were on opposite ends of the scale and pretty much hated one another.

But now they have come together with this common interest of getting rid of Jesus. When they come out and give this flattery that Jesus is truthful and always does the right thing, I don't think they're under any illusion that they can win Jesus over with this flattery. But I do think they're under the illusion that they can win the crowd over—that it reflects to the crowd that they are men of integrity and they're asking the right questions, and then Jesus gets Himself into trouble and that's not their fault.

But you have to imagine that after the religious leaders were so embarrassed by Jesus, they went back behind closed doors and probably stayed up all night trying to come up with *the* question that would entrap Jesus. They've tried this several times and they've lost every round. So you can just see them at their planning table: over and over and over they're going over questions that they could ask. *What is the perfect question?*

And the perfect question is this one: "Should we pay the Roman poll-tax or not?" You have to understand that there was a tax put upon these Jewish people that was in addition to what many people were taxed. And they highly resented it; they hated the Romans for it. So they understood that if Jesus said that it's unlawful to pay the tax, then the Herodians would immediately go to the Romans and Jesus would be arrested. If Jesus said that it is lawful to pay the tax, then immediately the Pharisees would respond and He would lose the audience, because the Jews hated this tax.

So they had Him: no matter what He said, He was going to get in trouble. They had found the perfect question; there was no way out. So Jesus responds:

But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, "Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at." They brought one. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" And they said to Him, "Caesar's." And Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were amazed at Him. (vs. 15b-17)

They never anticipated this answer. Jesus, once again, answered in a way that baffled them and did not entrap Him. But think about what Jesus said. The coin would have had some sort of an image of Caesar, and Jesus is simply saying that even as followers of Jesus—as the people of God—we still live on earth and we have a responsibility to the institutions and the things of earth. So it is right to pay what belongs to Caesar. In other words, we have to do our fair share to operate on planet earth.

But He's also saying there is a realm that is far greater, that is far better. This earth is not all there is. There is a realm that belongs to God, and we need to make sure we render to God all that is God's—which would raise the question: What does that mean? I think the next several events or discussions answer that question.

Some Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection) came to Jesus, and began questioning Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN'S BROTHER DIES and leaves behind a wife AND LEAVES NO CHILD, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER. There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; and so all seven left no children. Last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection, when they rise again, which one's wife will she be? For all seven had married her." (vs. 18-23)

This is the next group that is going to give it their best shot. These are the Sadducees; Mark identifies them as the group that denied the resurrection. You can always remember the Sadducees because they deny the resurrection...that's why they're sad, you see. (I know that's terrible, but a year from now you'll still remember the Sadducees.) This was a group that was opposite the Pharisees. They were highly religious. They took all of their theology out of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. They were typically very wealthy, very elite; they were basically snobs, and the people hated them. They thought of themselves as a cut above.

You have to believe this, too, isn't just a question off the cuff. This is their best question. Most scholars believe that this was a question that they posed to the Pharisees often in order to mock their belief in a resurrection. Deuteronomy 25 is very clear that if a husband dies and they have no children, then the brother is supposed to step in and father children. And they've created this ridiculous extreme where she goes through seven husbands, no children: *If there really was a resurrection, then think of the problems it would cause. Who would she belong to?*

They apparently have asked this question to the Pharisees over and over again to mock their belief in a resurrection. And you can just picture the Pharisees having no answer; they kind of laugh and they walk off. So they know that they have Jesus. In their minds there is nowhere in the Torah where God speaks of a resurrection: of life after death. So they pose the question, and I'm sure they are kind of poking each other in the ribs, because they know they have Him.

Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures or 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. But regarding the fact that the dead rise again, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the burning 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 the God of the dead, but of the living; you are greatly mistaken." (vs. 24-27)

The first thing Jesus tells them is, "You men are wrong." The translation is "out to lunch" (that's a little bit loose). But He identifies the fact that they've missed it by a mile. And the reason they've missed it is because, number one: "You do not understand the Scriptures," and number two: "You do not understand the power of God."

As it pertains to the Scriptures, Jesus goes back to the passage of God speaking out of the burning bush to Moses. Jesus didn't go back to an obscure text buried somewhere in the Torah. This would have been one of the most well-known passages to these men. And Jesus is saying, "You don't even get this one. When God said, 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,' He did not say, 'I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' And He's not the God of the dead."

He is saying that when God said, "I *am* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," it is because they are still very much alive—as a matter of fact, more alive than they ever were on earth because they are alive in the presence of God. Therefore, even the Torah itself speaks of life after death—that God continues to be the God of the living.

Then He goes back to their silly example, because what they are implying is that life in heaven is like life on earth, only just a little bit better—that everything basically just continues on as it was, maybe just a little bit nicer. And He said, "You don't understand this at all. Because of the life-transforming power of God, the realm of God is radically different from anything here on this earth. Life in heaven will not be like life on earth. We will not marry and be given in marriage.

We will be like the angels. We're not going to repopulate, but rather we will dwell in the presence of God."

I'm convinced that everything in marriage and everything in family is designed for the purpose of knowing what it means to have a relationship with God. Once we are in the presence of God, the need for the marriage and family will be removed and we will dwell intimately and directly with God.

Now, immediately people would say, "Well, that's such a sad picture"—you know, because we love our family and we love our spouse." But think of it this way: Take the absolute greatest moment that you've ever experienced in your marriage or in your family, and understand that *that* is but a taste of what is to come. You will have that experience multiplied many times over in the presence of God.

Will we know one another? Yes, we will. Will we love one another? Yes, we will. We will experience relationship and love and intimacy in ways we cannot even comprehend today. But this idea that somehow life in heaven is just an extension of life on earth is ridiculous. And Jesus is saying, "You don't understand the power of God."

Think about the language that is used in the New Testament. When Jesus was talking to Nicodemus about what it means to be a follower of Christ and to trust Christ as Savior, He said, "You will be born again." Sometimes I think we're so familiar with that language we don't understand how absolutely radical that is. Jesus did not say, "You will be remodeled; you will be refurbished; you will get a paint job—some of the rust ground off." He said, "You are going to be so radically changed that the only way I can describe it is: 'You will be born again.'"

Paul uses the language that we are actually "citizens of heaven." We now have our citizenship in this magnificent heavenly kingdom and we are aliens and strangers on earth. There is a dimension to the heavenly life that we experience on earth that is radically different and radically better than anything this world has to offer.

Even Jesus has been talking about the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, as saying that while we are on earth there is still this kingdom, this realm of God that is far beyond anything this world has to offer. And it is by the power of God that He offers us new life—heavenly life—that can be experienced to some degree on this earth.

Well, there's a scribe—a religious leader—in the crowd, and he's listening to Jesus and he's becoming quite convinced.

One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 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." The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE 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 HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he had

answered intelligently, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions. (vs. 28-34)

Most of the scribes, most of the religious leaders, were so entrenched that they were not listening to Jesus. But here is this scribe and he’s listening to the questions. He’s listening to the answers. He is becoming convinced that Jesus is who He says He is—that Jesus is right.

So he asked Him what was a very honest question, “Which commandment is the greatest?” And Jesus didn’t hesitate. There were 613 commands, and Jesus said the greatest is this one: that because there is only one God, it is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, your mind, your soul, your strength. It’s not really necessary to dissect those out. He’s just saying, “Love God with every fiber of your being; and the second is like it: to love your neighbor as yourself—to love one another.”

As a matter of fact, often in the New Testament those two commands are put together. You can’t really love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength without loving one another. If we don’t love another, we don’t really love God. It’s a package deal.

Well, the scribe hears that and he gets it. He says, “I get it. That’s right. You’re the one and only God. So to love You with every fiber of our being and to love neighbors as ourselves is much more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices.” In other words, he’s putting it all together: *This is why Jesus went into the temple and cleansed the temple. This is what Jesus has been saying all along: “I do not want you going through religious rituals and motions. I don’t want you cranking out all this religious stuff. I want you to love Me; I want you to know Me; I want you to follow Me.” That’s what God wants.*

And Jesus says to him, “You’re getting warmer.” He says, “You are getting really close to the kingdom.” In other words, “You are getting it.” This is what Jesus says over and over and over again: “Don’t give Me a bunch of religious rituals and rules. I want you to know Me and to love Me with every fiber of your being. And if you do that, the outflow will be Christ-like obedience.”

What does it mean to render to God what is God’s? If He is the one and only God, then to render to God what is God’s is to love Him with every fiber of our being. But we are still left with the question: What does that mean?

Well, Jesus responds to the questions, and Mark tells us nobody else dared ask a question. But Jesus is going to ask His own question now.

And Jesus began to say, as He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.”’ David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; so in what sense is He his son?” And the large crowd enjoyed listening to Him. (vs. 35-37)

“Enjoyed” doesn’t mean they understood Him. I think they were enjoying seeing the religious leaders put in their place. But Jesus’ question was this: The scribes, the Pharisees, the religious leaders, they all understood that the Messiah was to be a son of David, a descendant of David. And they believed that Psalm 110 was a psalm about the Messiah as a son of David. So Jesus takes them back to that text and says, “But how do you explain the fact that David called his son ‘Lord,’ *Adonai* in the Hebrew?” In other words, why would David call his son his “Lord”?

And of course, the conclusion can only be because David, inspired by the Spirit of God, understood that the Messiah, who would come through his lineage, would also be God. That's what He's saying: that this Messiah would be God in the flesh, exactly as God promised Abraham in Genesis 15.

There are people today who teach that there was no place where Jesus claimed to be God. And for the life of me, I do not know what Bible they read. It's on almost every page of the Gospels, and this is one of many examples. Jesus has clearly declared Himself to be the Messiah. And Jesus is clearly stating from Psalm 110 that the Scriptures say the Messiah will be God in the flesh—David's son and David's Lord. With that in mind, He goes on:

In His teaching He was saying: “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.”

(vs. 38-40)

“Render to God what is God's.” Jesus is God in the flesh. But woe to those religious leaders who are seeking to steal God's glory. He said they dress up in long robes and they parade around as if they're really somebody. They go to the marketplace and they expect to be treated as if they are on a level above everybody else. They go to the banquet and they expect preferment and to be seated at the place of honor. They stand in the courtyard and they offer these longwinded prayers for show so that everybody will be impressed with how much like God they are. They “devour widows' houses”—which is saying they use their religious position to take advantage of other people, especially the weak and the needy.

I have become convinced over the years that there is no profession that has greater potential to take advantage of people in their most vulnerable moments than religious leaders. The reality is it's very easy to create an environment where, in order to experience God's favor, you have to have *my* favor; and if you don't get my favor, you can't have God's favor. Therefore, we place ourselves on a level above everybody else. This is that whole clergy level and the people level. *Therefore, I expect to be treated with preferment and honor everywhere I go and in everything that I do.* That's what Jesus is talking about.

It is very easy to use God to create a platform for self-glory. There are many religious celebrities—in the music business, in the preaching business, in the writing business—that have used God to glorify themselves. It's very important for us to understand that I am nothing more than a sinner saved by grace. And that is true of every religious leader—*every* religious leader. If God can produce some good through me, it is merely a testimony to His goodness and grace; therefore, to God be the glory.

There can be no pedestals in the church of Jesus Christ—*none*. I want you to appreciate and respect my calling and my contribution to the Body, in just the same way that I want you to appreciate and respect the calling and giftedness of everyone in the Body.

The reality is this isn't just about clergy. This is about anyone who has a position of spiritual influence: Sunday school teachers, LifeGroup leaders, worship leaders, elders. Anyone who has a role of spiritual authority can use that to glorify themselves. But how dare I take what God has given me for His glory and use it for self-glory. Read the text: *That* God condemns. That offends God. “Render to God what is God's.” Dare we never render to a man that which only belongs to God.

Jesus contrasts the attitude and behavior of the scribes with a widow.

And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

(vs. 41-44)

Jesus is sitting in the courtyard with His disciples, and there were these horns, like the shofar, in several places in the courtyard; and people would come along and bring their money. The rich made quite a production of the large sums that they would deliver, and frankly, it impressed the people dramatically. But Jesus wasn't impressed.

Along comes this widow, probably very inconspicuously, and drops in her two copper coins that impress no one...except Jesus. Jesus picked her out as a model. What does it mean to love the LORD your God with all your heart, your soul, your mind and strength? It is to give up everything you have to God. And this woman modeled that behavior.

I do think one day when we stand before God there are going to be some surprises. I think those people that appeared to have it all in the religious world are going to be surprised. And I think there are a lot of very quiet, behind-the-scene, sacrificial servants that impress no one but God. And they will receive their rightful reward one day before God.

This whole idea of giving sacrificially is very convicting. You know, I think back to when Patti and I lived in Broken Bow, and especially our first years there. We were basically just surviving. But all those years we always gave ten percent back to the church. If you were to ask me, “In those days did we sacrifice?” my answer would be yes. That was money we needed for food; that was money we needed for clothes for the girls. That was money we needed, but we gave it to God.

But here we are, many years later. Today I give much more money. As a matter of fact, Patti and I give way more than ten percent. I would say we're very generous givers. But could I tell you with integrity that we sacrifice? The answer would have to be no. When I look at how I am able to live day in and day out, I cannot say with integrity that we sacrifice.

I want to introduce to you the story of Bob. Bob's story is radical. As a matter of fact, it has been sitting in the vault for about a year as we tried to figure out the best way to use it—because it's so radical people may misunderstand it.

Bob was highly impacted by the story of the widow's mite. Do we believe that everyone should do what Bob did? The answer is no. Hear me on this...or the financial planners are going to have a heart attack. But I do believe that God called Bob to do something very unusual. Listen to his story.

(Video): About four years ago I was involved in a new church plant. And well, it needed everything; I could see that. And as I was praying about it, I wanted everything to happen. I had just come back from a church conference that did a lot for me. It really inspired me to want the church to be successful, to learn about the church's purposes. And those really became my purposes. The Bible says, “Every man should

give as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly nor of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

So I thought about how I really wanted to help this church, and I wondered, *What was I going to give? What was I going to do?* And I had to answer, *What was it going to cost me?* Several other examples were given that moved me closer to a major decision in my life. One of those was the example of the widow and her two mites. It was very important to me. The Bible says she gave out of her poverty; in fact, she gave *all* her living.

I had a lot of thinking to do and a decision to make. I wondered if I really had ever given sacrificially before. And the verse that I concentrated on a lot to get me through this—to do what I wanted to do—was a verse in 2 Corinthians 9 which says, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work...being enriched in everything to all bountifulness.” So this was telling me that whatever I do, God can make up for it. So thinking on these verses really caused me to stretch my faith.

The first step I took was to go to an annuity that I had. It had about a year’s salary in it by the time I gave it away. However, it still didn’t really seem like enough of a sacrifice, because at the time it didn’t really seem like it cost me much. I have a 401K retirement fund, and in fact it cost me \$11,000 in taxes and penalties just to get the money out. Also, a stock option was given to us—the first time that had happened—and it was doing pretty good; it had split several ways.

I also had four checking accounts that I used to live on, and one of them was for my car, anything car-related. I went a little bit deeper with a sports account that I had, which was for my sanity—to relax and go out and do things. I had another checking account, while we’re at it—it was for marriage. I wanted to have a really good wedding ring, a really good honeymoon, and had been praying for this for many years. So this account was set aside for that purpose. But again, it was something that God could replace if He wanted to. I had a goal of even paying cash for a house and having college for children, that I didn’t have yet, paid off with cash. And that was tough, because it involved somebody else.

Twenty plus years of me working and planning, and even dreaming and praying and saving, had been offered up to God. And it was up in smoke, but it was a sweet aroma to God.

It was difficult for me to work through this process. It didn’t just happen overnight. My spirit was joyful, but my flesh was still not sure, and I had these nagging questions—maybe good questions: Was I being presumptuous? Shouldn’t I be looking out for myself? Maybe I was testing God unbiblically. Maybe I was just being irresponsible. And how was God going to provide? In fact, sometimes, *was* He going to provide? Well, what if I lost my job? What if I lost my health? What would people think? So I was asking all these questions.

I should have been asking things like: What does God think of the sacrifice? You know, would He be pleased by it and how would He respond to it? The widow and her mites, I kept thinking about again, because I think a lot of people don’t realize that Jesus saw right away what she did. And He called the disciples over and said, “Look at this.”

So He didn't just praise her giving; He was letting God's people know that she had a need.

My boss came up to me—it seems like a matter of days, I can't recall—but unexpectedly I got three pay increases that were each larger than the one before. The first one was the largest one I had had with our new company. And the third one was, I thought, so outrageous that I went to my boss and just said, "Are you crazy?" I said, "You can't do this and I don't deserve this." But he said, "Yes, you do." He also gave me a promotion that I was told pointblank could not happen. Now, four years later, after sowing what I sowed, I can honestly say that I feel more mature. I feel better—healthier emotionally and physically and spiritually—than I did even at that time. And I just could not be more thankful for everything God has done.

Is Bob's story radical? Yes, it is. But he did not make these decisions carelessly, emotionally. He spent many months praying and searching the Scriptures. He believed in his own heart this was what God was asking him to do. I think this is about issues in Bob's life that God wanted to address—just like we all have issues—in order for him to experience a whole new level of life that God offers.

Are we suggesting that everyone should do what Bob did? The answer is no, we're not. In any of these stewardship testimonies, that's not the point. The point is this: If God were to ask, what would you say? This isn't just about money. This is surrendering everything—it's your business; it's your health; it's your family; it's your children; it's your marriage; it's your hopes and dreams.

What does it mean to render to God that which is God's? If He is the one God who is the Savior of our souls, then how could we give Him less than to love Him with our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength? What does that mean? It means to surrender all that I have and all that I am to God.

You say, "Well, I couldn't possibly do that. If I did that, God would do this or God would do that." You see, the problem there is we don't understand two things. We don't understand the Scriptures and we don't understand the power of God. God only wants the best for you. God would *never* take advantage of you or abuse you. But God wants you to live life that's not a little better, but a life that is radically, dramatically different from anything this earth has to offer—to experience the heavenly life to a degree on earth. But the only way that's possible is if you are willing to surrender, to give it up, to put it all on the table and say, "God, it's all Yours. Whatever You want, You can have."

Our Father, we're thankful that You are the one and only God, and that You were the God who became flesh to become the Savior of the world. Lord, what could we render You that's appropriate to You, other than to love You with all of our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength? And Lord, all that can mean is that we're willing to give all that we are and all that we have to You—that we would surrender our lives to You, that we might experience a life unlike anything this world has to offer. Lord, we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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Study Questions
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Opening Discussion

1. If you do not live the truth do you really believe it? Why or why not?
2. List 5 things you believe to be true of God. What are the implications to our lives if we truly believe these things are true of God? What in our daily lives would reveal we don't really believe these things are true of God?

Bible Study

1. Read Mark 12:13-17. What are the implications to Jesus' statement in verse 17? What belongs to "Caesar" and what belongs to God?
2. Read Mark 12:18-27. Read Deut. 25:5,6 for background information to the Sadducees' question. What two mistakes do the Sadducees make?

Are we ever guilty of making the same two mistakes? How do these mistakes affect our daily lives?

3. Read Mark 12:28-34. What is the foremost and second command? Compare Galatians 5:14.

Can you love God without practically loving your neighbor? Why or why not?

If you love God with all that you are and all that you have, are other rules and restrictions necessary? Why or why not? The need for more and more rules indicates a lack of what?

4. Why did Jesus tell the scribe he was not "far from the kingdom of God"?

How was this scribe different from the other religious leaders Jesus encountered?

5. Read Mark 12:35-37. What was the answer to Jesus' question from Psalm 110:1?

How does this tie in the previous discussions from 12:13-24?

6. Read Mark 12:38-40. Rather than rendering to God what is God's and loving Jesus with all they had, the religious leaders were using God to exalt themselves. They were rendering to themselves what belongs to God. In what ways does this still happen today? What is the proper way to respond to a spiritual leader and how should that spiritual leader respond to his/her role?

7. Read Mark 12:41-44. What was the difference between the religious leaders and the widow?
What is the point Jesus is trying to make with His disciples?

8. Summarize from 12:13-44 what Mark was trying to teach us about Jesus and our response to Him.

Application

1. How are you doing keeping the first and second command? What practical things can you do to grow in your obedience to these commands?
2. What are three specific “dangers” we need to beware of from this text in Mark?
3. What is the only right response to Jesus as God who came in the flesh?

Are there any areas of your life you are holding back from Jesus? Why? What will be necessary for you to surrender that area to Him?