

Controversies with the King (Part 3)  
Mark 12:35-44

Last week we announced the fact that we have found a new facility, and that we are in a fund raising mode. **I told you that we rarely talk about money at IDC** – that is, unless it comes up in the book that we’re preaching through. And it just so happens that the subject comes up here in the Gospel of Mark! **I didn’t plan it like this!**

But that’s not all we’re looking at... We’re still looking at Tuesday of holy week...

You might say that Jesus “**dropped the mic**” in **verse 34**: “No one dared to ask him any more questions.” After a series of questions, Jesus gave answers that left people in stunned silence. Plan A, as we said, failed. The religious leaders could not trap Jesus with their questions.

Now Jesus asks a question. It is **the question**.

He picks the mic back up and raises a riddle of sorts... (**You kids probably know some good riddles?**). The answer to this riddle as at the center of the universe.

Jesus has been asked questioned by the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin, and a Scribe.

Now he calls out *the Scribes* in particular. They were the intellectual and religious elite. They spoke with “unrivaled authority.” Here Jesus takes them on in the temple.

**In these three paragraphs, Jesus corrects their theology, condemns their behavior, and contrasts their hypocrisy with a faithful widow’s sincere devotion.**

Three words: (1) clarification, (2) condemnation, and (3) commendation.

**#1: Jesus’ Clarification about His Identity (12:35-37)**

The issue of Jesus’ identity has been the question throughout Mark (1:1; 8:27, 12:1-12). Here, **in the temple**, in the center of religious and political power, Jesus speaks about his identity **publically**. He “**tosses a grenade**.” All of 11-13 is temple context

**This is essentially Jesus’ last public sermon that Mark records for us. This ends his public ministry.**

- What would you expect Jesus to teach on?
  - “**Accept me into your hearts?**”
  - Jesus chose Psalm 110.
  - It may look a **dud to us!**
  - **Psalm 110?** It seems kind of **confusing, academic, and technical**.
  - **It’s a riddle of sorts: Kind of like, “How much wood could a wood chuck...”**
  - But the crowd didn’t see it like this. They heard him *gladly*.

## Jesus believed in the authority of Scripture, the inspiration of Scripture, the unity of Scripture, and therefore, the need to expound Scripture.

- **Authority** – He views the Bible as God's Word. If anyone wouldn't need to refer to Scripture it would be Jesus to make his point, but he did.
- **Inspiration** - "in the Holy Spirit"
- **Unity of Scripture** – This Psalm, and the story of the OT, and the NT fits together in one great redemptive story, of which Jesus is the hero
- **Exposition of Scripture** – We see Jesus taking a text and teaching it. A high view of the Bible should lead to a high view of biblical exposition. This is what we're about here at IDC.

## Jesus' Point: He is the Greater David

- Jesus asks everyone to reconsider Psalm 110.
- This is the most quoted OT text in the NT.
- It's quoted or alluded to some 33 times, and 7 times by early Christian authors.

### A. The Christ is David's Son and therefore human. (35)

- Everyone virtually agreed that Messiah must come from the line of David.
  - 2 Sam 7:16; Psalm 89:3-4; Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; 11:1-4, 8-9; Jer. 23:5-6; Mic 5:2-5
  - Bartimaeus declared this.
  - The Scribes taught this.
- Problem: Their Messianic expectation was too **earthly, to ordinary**.
- Jesus says, how do you explain this....

### B. The Christ is David's Lord and therefore divine (36-37)

- This is the big idea stated in the first line: "the Lord said to my Lord."
- Why would David call his son, "Lord?" Why would any father call their son Lord?
- David's words make no sense if the Messiah is merely a human being.
- Jesus is not merely a chip off the old block!
- He's the transcendent figure of human history, who is Lord of even David!
- Jesus is both David's Son and David's Savior!
- Originally this was a coronation hymn recited at the inauguration of an Israelite King.
  - 'The LORD (*Yahweh*) declared to my lord (*adonai*).'
  - The first Lord refers to *God* and the second to *the king* [Messiah];
  - That is, at his coronation, the king of Israel was **inducted as God's vicegerent and seated symbolically at God's right hand**.
  - At the right hand, represents closeness to God, justice, power, and authority...

- With the destruction of the monarchy in 586 the Psalm was reapplied to the Messiah to come.
  - And that's the point.
  - The Psalm is speaking about God and the Messiah, His Son.
  - **The Messiah is both, David's Son, and God's Son.**
- The Messiah is **not merely the extension of David; He's something more.**
- The Messiah is the Son of David and the Son of God.

### Romans 1:1-4

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup> which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup> and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom 1:1-4)

**That's how you start the greatest letter ever written!**

**This concept about His identity is what Jesus explains in this last public sermon...**

**The Messiah will put all his enemies under his feet (36d)**

- Not just physical enemies, but sin, death, Satan

**The fact that Jesus is both God's Son and David's Son means that he is Divine/Human.**

- This was the point made by the **early church repeatedly.**
- **Acts 2:34-36, Heb. 1:13**

### **Application: Get to Know Jesus from the Scriptures!**

#### **1. Reject False versions of Jesus**

- Religious leaders had a version of Christ, and so do people today. It was positive but inaccurate.

#### **2. Read/Study the Scriptures in Order to Know Him.**

- Jesus says, "Read about me, and get to know me."
- If you're exploring the faith, read and consider Him!
- Jesus says: "I dare you to get to know me in the Word of God."

### **#2: Jesus' Condemnation of the Scribes (12:38-40)**

Mark records only a snippet of Jesus' opposition to the scribes...

(See fuller treatments in **Matt 23**; Acts 7:51-53).

**Why did Jesus condemn them? 3 Reasons (these are practices we must avoid!)**

#### **1. They lived for the attention of others (38)**

Scribes like attention

### 38a: Dress:

They had “flowing robes,” like full-length prayer shawls with tassels attached to the four corners...

- Today: We often associate dress with significance
- Airports: Bluetooth, guys with suits on (that guy is going to show powerpoint, etc)
- Scribes were religious “power dressers.”

### 38b: Greetings

People would **rise and greet them.**

They **had titles.** There’s nothing wrong with titles, unless you begin to make that an idol.

- Today: Many like titles, they like being known

## 2. They thought they were hot stuff (39)

### 39: Best Seats

The Scribes would sit up front because they were “significant!”

There were probably the seats up front, in front of the Scripture scrolls, facing the congregation... They would sit in these special seats....

- Pastor thrones up front: hate them.
- Today: the Special seats are the one’s in the back! No one wants to sit here.
- James 2 talks about sin of partiality – poor people here, rich influential people here.

**Application: Pursue humility and honor. The Christian’s attitude should be the opposite of the Scribes.**

- “Let him who boasts, Boast only in the Lord.” (1 Cor 1:31)
- “Outdo one another in showing honor” (12:10). It’s not about trying to receive honor, but giving honor to others:
- “Look on the interests of others...” (Phil 2).
- Fight pride.
  - **2 Chron 26:16:** “But when he [Uzziah] was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was unfaithful to the Lord His God and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the alter of incense.”
  - It can happen to anyone – athletes, actors, students, churches, pastors...
- Luther: “Grace is like water. It runs to the lowest place; so get low.”
- “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” All through the Bible.
- What does God hate? Pride. Jesus is demonstrating that here.
- What’s God attracted to? Humility. We will see an example of that in the widow.

## 3. They were spiritual fakes (40)

### 40a: They devour widow’s houses

- The Scribes weren’t as wealthy as other members so they depended on the generosity of others.

- But apparently this had turned evil, and the Scribes were taking advantage of the elderly.
- They were supposed to honor widows, but instead were devouring them.
- Scripture teaches the need to care for the vulnerable, the widow, the orphan, the less fortunate, not to abuse them.
- Israel had experiences like this:
  - **Isaiah 1:16-17**
  - The prophets had railed against “making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless” (Isa 10:2; also Amos 2; Micah 3).

● **True religion involves a concern for social justice.**

- **Today:** the elderly are taken advantage of, in a variety of ways:
  - TV Preachers: Pray cloths dipped in the Jordan River, touching the TV screen...
- **The Scribes pretended to care for their soul, but only cared about money.**

Jesus says, “They will receive the *greater condemnation.*” (40c)

**Application: Love Your Neighbor; Don’t use Your Neighbor!**

**Context: Mark 12:31**, “Love your neighbor.” He said emphasized this to **a Scribe.**

**What would does Neighbor Love look like?**

**Consider the context of Leviticus 19:18.** 12 specifics:

- Care for the poor (19:10)
- Don’t steal (19:11)
- Don’t lie (19:11)
- Be fair in business dealings (19:14)
- Care for the deaf (19:14)
- Care for the blind (19:14)
- Deal justly with all (19:15)
- Avoid slander (19:16)
- Don’t “jeopardize” the life of your neighbor (19:16)
- Don’t “harbor hatred against your brother” (19:17)
- Correct your neighbor when necessary for his and your good □(19:17)
- Don’t take revenge or bear a grudge against others (19:18)

**40b: For a pretense they made long prayers**

- They faked at prayer
- They wanted people to think that they were spiritually impressive.
- **Pray to be seen (Matt 6:5)**
- **Shut the door and pray (Matt 6:6)**
- **Private devotion is harder the public performance.**
- **People like the throw up big phrases... Jesus is not like, “Wow, look at that one... He said Laodicia and Jezebel, and was parsing Greek verbs! I’ll answer that one.” No.**

- Your prayers don't have to be prostrate, facing east;
- You don't have a *personal earthquake when you pray*,
- You don't have to *put down a mat*, or sit in the Lotus position.
- Talk to your Father.
- It's easier to put on a show, then to have real communion with God.

### Application:

- Is it important to you that people perceive you to be spiritually impressive?
- Let's avoid being the church in Sardis: "I know your works. You have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead" (Rev. 3:1)
- Let's be real. Let's truly God and neighbor.
- Let's pray for the glory of God and the good others.
- Let's seek to bless the poor not abuse them.

### #3: Jesus' Commendation of a Faithful Widow (12:41-44)

- The scene now shifts to the temple treasury.
- And we have someone to follow. It's an **unlikely example**: A Poor Widow.
- She **seems insignificant**.
- But she's a model of faithfulness, generosity, sacrifice, and devotion to God.
- **Unlike the religious leaders, she's not seeking Jesus' life; she's giving her life.**
- Allow me to draw your attention to two lessons:

#### 1. Jesus knows WHAT we give (41-42)

41: He observes people dropping in large sums of money.

**People Watching:** People could kind of stand around and watch things...

**There were no offering envelopes!** Just people with a sack of coins, or in her case, a few copper coins.

Jesus is always watching all our works (cf., 1 Tim 5:24-25). God knows.

The "temple treasury" of 12:41 was located in **the Court of the Women**, where Jewish women and children were allowed to worship.

**There were various boxes/chests:** (1) New Shekel dues, (2) Old Shekel dues, (3) Bird-offerings, (4) Young birds for the whole offering, (5) Wood, (6) Frankincense, (7) Gold for the Mercy-seat, and (8-13) the remaining six were for Freewill-offerings.

**It was the closest thing to a church budget that we find in the NT!**

People contributed offerings for **the upkeep of the temple and those who served in it.**

42: He observes a faithful widow.

She puts in "two lepta" (v. 42), the smallest coinage in circulation. 1/64 of a Denarius.

- It was chump change!
- As far as what it could purchase, she might as well have given nothing.
- But that's worldly thinking. Biblical giving is different!

## 2. **Jesus knows the HEART of the giver (43-44)**

Jesus makes an assessment. It goes deeper than the amount given. He knows the heart.

Jesus says that she has put in **more** (43) than the others! How?

She gave out of **a love for God not to impress others**. She sacrificed.

**Jesus was attracted to her sacrifice.**

James Edwards:

In purely financial terms, the value of her offering is negligible—and unworthy of compare to the sums of the wealthy donors. But in the divine exchange rate things look differently. That which made no difference in the books of the temple is immortalized in the Book of Life.... How powerfully ironic is the word “more” in Mark’s description. Everything about this woman has been described in terms of *less*, particularly in comparison to the scribes and wealthy crowd. And yet, the contrast between her genuine piety and faith and the pretense of the wealthy is beyond compare. “For Jesus, the value of a gift is not the amount given, but the cost to the giver.”

Here’s the good news: By Jesus’ definition, **anyone in the room can give meaningfully.**

- **College Students:** Let this widow encourage you! Your giving matters because it’s not about **the amount** but about **Love-motivated, obedience.**

**Application: What does this lady teach us? Simple: Giving is a HEART Issue.**

- Jesus doesn’t say, “**You guys shouldn’t be giving for the upkeep of the facility.**”
- Nor does he say, “**If you can’t give big money, then don’t give.**”
- No, **he corrects everyone’s thinking by addressing the heart.**

**If giving matters to Jesus, then how can I be a more sacrificially generous giver?**

### 1. **See the Pleasure of God.** Giving is vertical before it’s horizontal.

- “A pleasing aroma” (Philippians 4:18)
- **What smells attract you?** B’cuse, baseball fields, Candles;
- God is attracted to sacrificial giving.
- **Jesus is attracted to this little lady.**
- I can imagine Jesus having a **big smile on his face when He gave.**

### 2. **See Your Heart.**

- Your heart is twisted; giving is a way of caring for your own heart.
- Giving is a way of deepening your trust in God and weaning you off of false gods.
- Every time I give generously I am overcoming the temptation to be greedy.
- Greed will kill you. **It's sneaky.**
- **"Watch out, you might be greedy"** (Lk 12:15).
- You know when you commit adultery, but greed is different.

### 3. See People.

- Scribes weren't loving people; they were abusing people.
- Giving is an act of neighbor love.
- Love acts; love is more the sentimentalism.

**Acts 4:32-37:** The early church' generosity is contrasted with and Annias and Sapphira's hypocrisy.

- Extensive Generosity (32)
- Empowered Generosity (33)
- Extraordinary Generosity Among the Affluent (34-35)
- Exemplified Generosity in Barnabas

**A physical space for worship is not disconnected from people.**

- "We don't need a building; we should give money to the poor, ministry, missions."
- That's a good thought, but you need to stop and consider what can be done with space? It's not disconnected from people, ministry or mission.
  - **Enhancing or Distracting from Worship**
  - **Having significant events: weddings, funerals, conferences, people hearing sermons and getting converted!**
  - **Caring for those who are serve in multiple services... 900 last week!**
  - **Helping us minister to the city through various weekly ministries...**
  - **Providing great space for kids...**
- These are all spiritual matters... These are people matters.
- **Qualifier:** We don't need to build or buy the **Dallas Cowboys stadium**. But a building is not unspiritual. We're not Gnostics. All matter is not evil.
- **When you give to the building, you're giving to people.**
- **When you give regular offerings, you're giving to people.**
- We're giving to reach more and serve more.

### 4. See the Gospel

- At IDC, we believe that the best way to view life is to view every aspect of life – every aspect of life – through the lens of the gospel.
- Regarding giving, look at what Paul says in 2 Cor 8:9:  
 "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."  
 (2 Cor 8:9)



- When you consider the wealth of grace that we have received in Christ, then you become a generous person.
- When you realize that you've been forgiven of an infinite debt, you become a generous person for a lifetime.
- Guilt will not motivate long-term, consistent giving. It will inspire occasional giving.
- What truly motivates one to give over their lifetime is the gospel! It's the engine behind regular, sacrificial giving. It's the engine behind all obedience.
  - "God loves a cheerful giver."
    - How many of you are "cheerful bill payers?"
    - "I love paying bills, and buying groceries!"
  - How can you be a cheerful giver?
    - Be a cheerful RECEIVER!
  - Jesus gives. And gives. All other religions – you pay.
  - When you see His grace, you feel gratitude and you become generous.

A sign that you get grace is that you become generous.

### Conclusion

We have a picture of Scribes taking everything and a widow giving everything. She's commended.

She's commended by the One who matters most – the Son of David and the Son of God!

44: "All she had"

James Edwards

This widow concludes Mark's account of Jesus' public ministry. The sacrifice of "all she had" is the keystone in Mark's arch of faith. The initial call of Jesus to the fishermen beside the sea to leave all and "Come, follow me" (1:17) is perfectly fulfilled in the giving of two simple lepta, which symbolize an undivided heart... The final Greek words of the chapter might be paraphrased, "she lay down her whole life." That is what Jesus will do on Golgotha.

- Yes He will. Jesus will lay down His life for us.
- Jesus is one step closer to Golgotha now.
- This ends his public ministry. This wraps it up.
- We're drawing closer to Friday. Praise God Jesus gave all He had.
- He paid it all, and all to Him we owe.