

Sunday, August 24, 2025

Trapping Jesus

Mark 12

- Last week we looked at when Jesus overturned the tables in the Temple in order to drive out the things that were blocking and distracting people from Worship
- And remember, this is the most profitable time of the year for the Temple
 - This is when they would make the most money from forcing people to exchange their money for Temple currency, while having them pay for their Sacrificial Animals
 - And the money that would have been made this week, wouldn't be going to the ministry or to outreach
 - No, the money made in the Temple would be going to fatten up the pockets of the richest, most powerful non-Romans in the city
- So the hornets nest has been stirred as Jesus is hitting some of the most powerful men in Jerusalem, right in the wallet.
- And these are the guys that come to address Jesus directly:
 - In chapter 11, verse 27 it says, ***“And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to Him, and they said to Him, “By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You this authority to do them?” -Mark 11:27-28 (ESV)***
 - Now, the authority of Jesus was definitely recognized here. Whenever I read these Temple Turning accounts, I can't help but think about security
 - You know, during this time, the Temple Security would be on the highest alert with the most bodies that they would have all year
 - Yet, no one stops Jesus?

- He's overturning money changing tables, and He's not getting tackled by a guard?
- Nope. Whatever Jesus wants to do. He is going to do. And no one can stop Him.
 - But the Chief Priests, the Scribes, the Elders, all come out to Him...probably after scolding their security for just watching it happen and essentially ask Him, "Who do You think You are??"
 - They ask, "Who gave You the authority to drive out our business and teach in our Temple"
- So Jesus says, "Ok, I'll tell you where My authority comes from, if you answer one simple question.
 - "John's Baptism: Was it from Heaven? Or man?"
 - "Was John's ministry ordained by God, or was He just a crazy man out in the wilderness stirring up trouble?"
- Then verse 31 says: ***"And they discussed it with one another, saying, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But shall we say, 'From man'?"—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." -Mark 11:31-33 (ESV)***
- Now, keep in mind, this is coming right on the heels of whenever Jesus talked about having faith in God so powerful enough as to be able to move mountains,
 - And if you weren't here last week, we discussed how there was a common saying among the most prestigious of Jewish teachers, that they would be referred to as "Uprooters of Mountains,"
 - The ones who were the most skilled in debate and deciphering complex truths were the Rooters Up of Mountains

- And Jesus tells His disciples if you have unwavering faith in God, you can have more wisdom than any of these guys to be able to move whatever mountainous things get in the way of your spiritual understanding
- And to show them, Jesus is going to let the most prestigious and skilled among these teachers and leaders come to Him, and He is going to uproot their mountains.
- So first, it's these Chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders...and they challenge Jesus' authority
- But Jesus, right away was revealing where their hearts were.
 - These are supposed to be the guys overseeing the ministry and the worship
 - They were supposed to be the ones who saw to it that everyone, from all nations, would be able to seek God freely and to help maintain the house of prayer that the Temple was designed to be!
- However, they could care less about the worship, the prayer, or even the people.
 - In fact, they couldn't answer Jesus' question because they were afraid of the people, didn't want to upset them, because they may lose some power or position.
- Everything was all about themselves, making money and keeping their prestige.
 - And now Jesus is getting in the way of that, so now they are going to try and get Him... and Jesus knows this, but yet He stirs the pot one more time
- Chapter 12 starts off with Jesus telling a story.
 - And in this story, or this parable He tells of a man who planted his own vineyard. He makes it just the way that it is supposed to be made, he structures the vineyard in a way that it would be able to produce the best fruit and the best wine.

- Then the man had to leave the country, so he basically hired out some local farmers to work the vineyard for him while he was gone
 - When it was time for the fruit to be ready, the owner sent one of his servants to go get some of the fruit
 - But the workers just beat the servant and sent him away empty handed
 - So the owner sends another servant
 - But again, they beat the servant and sent him away
 - Then the owner sends another servant
 - This time they kill him
 - And Jesus says, "With so many others, some they beat, some they killed."
 - "Until, the owner decides to send His own beloved son, down there," Because the owner says, 'surely they will respect my son?'"
 - But inevitably they killed the son, out of their own greed.
- And Jesus says, "What do you think is going to happen to those guys? The owner is going to come for them...and he'll give the vineyard over to others."
 - It's not hard to decipher the point that Jesus was getting at here.
 - The owner was God the Father
 - The vineyard was Jerusalem, more specifically the Temple
 - The Tenants, or the workers, were those who were in charge of the Temple
 - And the sent servants were the prophets
 - Over the centuries, so many of God's sent prophets had been mistreated and even killed
 - Isaiah was sawn in two
 - Jeremiah was stoned to death
 - Amos and Elijah had constant death threats
 - Micah was slapped around and thrown in prison

- Zechariah was murdered in the Temple
- Everyone knew that there was a long list of those who had been sent by God and rejected by man
 - And Jesus is letting them know that He is the latest, and most important One to ever be sent by God
 - The Beloved Son Himself
 - Yet, they would even kill him...because of their greed
- And verse 12 says, ***“And they were seeking to arrest Him but feared the people, for they perceived that He had told the parable against them. So they left Him and went away.” -Mark 12:12 (ESV)***
- Well, Jesus wasn't really trying to hide the fact that He told the parable against them...but kudos to them for figuring it out I guess
 - But again, they are afraid of the people, and they leave to plan a coordinated attack on Jesus
 - They are going to send their best and brightest at Him. And they start in verse 13:
 - ***“And they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap Him in his talk.” -Mark 12:13 (ESV)***
 - Essentially, their plan was to try and get Jesus cancelled. If they could get Him to say the wrong thing at the wrong time, they could get the public to reject Him and the Romans to kill Him.
 - Cancel culture was a bit more dramatic back then
 - But Mark says that those Chief Priests, Scribes, and Elders sent these Pharisees and Herodians to TRAP Jesus
 - That word “Trap” in the original language literally means: **“Trap” (agreuō): “to hunt” “to take by hunting” “to ensnare”**

- RC Sproul says that this gives the word picture of one who's hunting and trapping a Tiger by digging a hole with shard spears in the bottom of it, so the tiger would fall in and be impaled.
- Mark wants us to know that these guys are not out for Jesus to be discredited...no they are out for blood.
- And first they send the Pharisees and Herodians
 - Now, we talked about this back in Chapter 3, how wild it was for the Pharisees and the Herodians to be working together because they were Political rivals
 - Herodians: believed everyone should submit to Roman Rule
 - Much more atheistic group
 - Motivated solely by political correctness
 - Known for their sensuality, do whatever feels right to you
- Pharisees: Believed that the Jews should be the leading world power. That no one should submit to Rome
 - Firm believers in the written Word of God in the OT
 - But they gave equal authority to oral traditions which added to the word of God
 - This legalism they tried to make equal with God's Word
 - If you didn't keep up with their traditions and their customs then you were outcasted and they said you had no place with God
- These two sides, who were completely opposite sides of the spectrum came together for the common goal of destroying Jesus
 - Why? Because both side make YOU God
 - One side, truth is defined by what YOU think and what YOU feel

- The other side, your holiness is determined by what religious works YOU do and the traditions YOU keep up with...*NEITHER provide any Hope or any Healing for Anyone*
- So these political rivals, try and trap Jesus with a political question:
- And they came and said to Him, ***“Teacher, we know that You are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For You are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” -Mark 12:14 (ESV)***
- Now, this was a hot-button topic of the day. This was the reason why the tax collectors were so hated by the Jews. Because most of them thought that they shouldn't have to pay taxes to a foreign empire
 - The Pharisees would have definitely been anti-tax, the Herodians were pro-tax
- But yet, they both want to get rid of Jesus... so they take this debate to Him, for Him to answer publicly
 - Because if He answered pro-tax He would be going against the Jewish people
 - If He answered anti-tax He would be publicly going against the Roman empire
 - It really is a brilliant trap
- ***“But, knowing their hypocrisy, He said to them, “Why put Me to the test? Bring Me a denarius and let Me look at it.” And they brought one. And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said to Him, “Caesar's.” Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.” And they marveled at Him.” -Mark 12:15-17 (ESV)***
- Welp....that didn't go as planned. They had no answer for Him!

- Jesus has them bring a denarius. That was a silver coin that would have been worth a days working wage of income.
- And on the coin there would have been an image engraved into it of Tiberius Caesar who reigned at that time
- So Jesus asks, “Who’s image is this coin made in?”
 - They say “Caesar’s.”so give what’s his back to him
- But Give to God the things that are His
- He could essentially ask, “And Who’s image are you made in?”
 - You should be more worried about giving God what is His, and that is yourself.
 - You are made in the image of God, so the focus should be giving yourself- and all that you are -and all that you have back to Him for His Glory and for His Kingdom
- And be less concerned with the affairs of man
- So that trap backfired, so next they send the Sadducees:
- Verse 18 says, “***And Sadducees came to Him, who say that there is no resurrection.***”
-***Mark 12:18a (ESV)***
- Now first, let’s get a little background on the Sadducees
 - The Sadducees were the religious elitists.
 - They were very wealthy aristocrats who ran the temple services
 - They were always in charge of the Sanhedrin which was the collection of religious leaders who served as a sort of supreme court for the Jewish people
 - Now, they worked very closely with the Roman officials to ensure that their Temple systems would not be disturbed and they

could keep running their business as they saw fit, even in the midst of Roman Rule

- And being Religious Elitists, they did not have a real relationship with the common people, looked down on them, and talked to everyone like they were stupid if they did not hold the same theological views that they did
 - Their belief system varied quite a bit even from the pharisees.
 - The Sadducees only accepted the first 5 books of the Old Testament as authoritative scripture
 - They rejected supernatural theologies such as the belief of angels, demons, and the afterlife
 - And because they did not believe in an afterlife, the only life that mattered to them was this one...so that is why they focused on obtaining money and power and keeping it at all costs.

- So, in their attempt to trap Jesus...they bring up to Him a theological issue.
- They say, “Moses taught that if a man dies, who does not have any children, his brother should marry his wife so that the family doesn’t lose any land.”
 - “So here’s a scenario: There were seven brothers and the oldest took a wife. He died without having any children so the next brother married his wife. That brother died without any children so yet another brother stepped in. That brother died too, and so on it went until all seven brothers had married her but no children were ever born. Then last of all, the wife dies....So, in this “So-called-resurrection” yall believe in, who’s wife would this lady be if she had been married to all seven of them??”
 - They’re talking to Jesus like He’s dumb...so He talks to them like they’re dumb

- ***“Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor 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. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the 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 God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.” -Mark 12:24-27 (ESV)***

- I love how Jesus handles this one, because this time He doesn't leave an open ended answer...He just shuts them down. He says, “You don't know what you're talking about, the Bible says this, so... you're wrong.”
- So, no doubt these pious, high and mighty, individuals scurry away with their noses high in the sky.

- And then one of the Scribes came up to Him
- Now the Scribes were probably the busiest people in the community. They help so many different hats and responsibilities.
 - They were the scholarly experts on the scriptures, and unlike the Sadducees they held the entire O.T. as authoritative Scripture
 - They were the ones entrusted with hand writing copies of scriptures and they had a meticulous system to ensure no mistakes were made
 - They would teach the scriptures in the schools and the synagogues
 - They would be the ones who would draw up legal contracts such as marriage certificates and business deals
 - They would serve as legal counsel in court disputes

- They were seen as the Guardians of God's Word...but that noble profession can become an idol.
- That's why Jesus warned the people in verse 38: ***“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” -Mark 12:38-40 (ESV)***
- But this particular Scribe that comes to Jesus doesn't seem to be trapping Him. This interaction seems a bit different.
- In verse 28 Mark writes: ***“And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that He answered them well, asked Him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important***

is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 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.” And the scribe said to Him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that He is one, and there is no other 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 oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that He answered wisely, He said to Him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask Him any more questions.” -Mark 12:28-34 (ESV)

- You can kind of feel that this man wasn't trying to debate Jesus. He was really searching for some truth.

- So many of the Scribes would try and determine which of the 613 laws were the heavy laws and the light laws...which ones mattered the most!
- And it seems like this Scribe is genuinely trying to work through something and that Jesus has affirmed something that had been stirring in his heart
- And Jesus tells him, “You’re close! You’re not far off!”
- So what do we make of all of these interactions that Jesus has here in this chapter?
- Well I think Jesus is showing us 3 things that we need to know if we are going to obtain the Kingdom of God. Not just be close, but really take hold of it.
- In this first interaction we see:
- **WE NEED TO KNOW OUR MAKER**
- As we are in the midst of this great self-awareness and self-improvement movement now-a-days..there is so much struggle as to find out who we are
- We make finding our identity such a struggle, but I believe it is actually very simple.
- We as creation, will never understand who we are, unless we know Who our Creator is.
 - We all want to have purpose and meaning, and a place to belong
 - But those things can only be found in the God who made you
 - Only the one who made a life can give a purpose to that life
- The Bible says that we were made in the Image of God, it gives the word picture of a mirror. Therefore we were created as little mirrors that would reflect the Glory of God back to Himself.
- So when our lives are not turned towards God, we fail to function on this earth as we were

created to function, and therefore cease to find true purpose and meaning, because our Purpose is not being fulfilled.

- But we try to find that purpose in so many other things, and Jesus is trying to explain to the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the people listening that the primary duty of their life is to give your life back to the Creator
 - That is more important than tax and law and governmental issues
 - Because if you can find your identity in the right place, the things of this world do not have such a grip on you
- But there are so many people, Christians even, that will find their identity in a political party, view or opinion, or even a denomination before they would Jesus Christ
- I have known and been around wayyyy too many Christian where the title of Baptist, or Methodist, or Presbyterian, or Episcopal, Pentecostal or even Non-Denominational...

hold more weight to them than the title of Christian does

- And the family of God gets skewed because we've politicized it.
 - Now, I am not anti-denomination, I think denominations have value and have had value, I am not anti-political, politics and political systems have value and are very important
 - But these things cannot become of infinite and utmost importance in our lives, because once they do, we began to try and find our identity in man made institutions, rather than the God who made us
- Now, how do you get to know Your Maker? Well you can start with the point from Jesus' interaction with the Sadducees, and that is:
- **WE NEED TO KNOW HIS WORD**
- The Sadducees were missing truth, because they did not know the entirety of God's word, because they disregarded the Scriptures that

did not line up with what they wanted their world view to be

- And that is one of the most dangerous places that we could ever be in our lives, clinging to a world view that we desire, but God's Word does not support
 - It's what originally brought sin into the world whenever satan through the serpent got Eve to question God's word. he said, "*Did God really say....you shouldn't eat of the fruit*"
 - You see if the enemy can get us to question God's word, they can get us to question His Character, and His heart toward us.
- "*No no no, you won't really die...you'll just know good and evil like He does!*"
- *Now was that a lie?? No, that was a manipulated truth*
- He took something that God was protecting them from, and made it seem appealing and it lead to their downfall.

- What the enemy wants to do is subtly turn our attention toward what we think we want rather than keeping it on the One who knows best.
- And we see that in our culture today, do we not??
- *How many times do we hear... "Did God really say??"*
- *Did God really say, that you shouldn't have sex before marriage...*
 - (1 Cor. 7:1-2, 8-9, 36; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3-6; Prov. 7:21-23)
 - *Did God really say, that marriage is only to be between a man and a woman...*
 - (Gen 1:27, 2:24; 1 Cor. 7:2; 1 Cor. 11:11-12 Eph. 5:22-33; Mark 10:6-9)
 - *Did God really say, that you were fearfully and wonderfully made...*
 - (Gen 1:27; Psalm 139:13-14; Psalm 119:73; Psalm 100:3; Jeremiah 1:4-5; Isaiah 44:24 Luke 12:6-7)

- Did God really say, that church is actually necessary...
 - (Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 For. 14:26)
- Did God really say, that YOU are a New Creation, that YOU (after all that You've done,) could be forgiven...
 - (2 Cor. 5:17; Romans 8:1. 1 John 1:9)
- Did God really say, that He wants a relationship with YOU??
 - (John 1:10-13; John 14:23; Rev. 3:20; 1 Peter 5:6-7; James 4:8; 1 John 3:1)
- If you have been wrestling with any of those questions, if you go on our website, you can find the written notes to this message, and I put those questions along with scripture references on pages 15 of the notes that you can look more into to find out what God really says about those things...
- But the enemy loves to get us asking those things, and questioning God's word...
- And then the enemy will start operating in those manipulated truths:
 - "Can you really have a relationship with a God you can't see? Or touch? Or feel? Isaiah said, "His ways are higher than your ways, and His thoughts were higher than your thoughts" can you really have a relationship with someone like that?? Will He ever understand you??"
- Oh the enemy will quote scripture too...and they love to twist the scripture just enough to get you to form your own opinion on it...
 - The enemy loves to hear us say, "Well this verse says that, but I think it actually means this..."
- And so the enemy gets us questioning God's word, just enough, so that we'll slowly begin to question Him entirely, and get us to compromise more and more...
- I cannot stress this enough! My opinions and my worldview means absolutely nothing! I don't want to base my way of life and my

opinions on how I feel things should be...I want to base it solely on His word!

- I want to stop saying, “Well, I think...” and start saying, “Well, He says...”

- And this is so hard for so many Christians because if we're honest, we don't really know His Word that well
 - You can hear a sermon every single week for the rest of your life but if that is the extent of your intake of His word, you will be so unprepared and the enemy will eat you alive.
 - That's why Peter says, our adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour...and those he devours are the ones that do not know God's Word and therefore do not know their Maker, and therefore do not know who they are...
- If you are a believer in this room, struggling with your identity please read Romans 8 every day for at least a week! Because Romans 8 tells you exactly who you are:

- *When the enemy tries to beat you over the head with past mistakes or current struggles you can remind yourself and the enemy that **There is no condemnation for you in Christ Jesus (V.1),***
- *When the enemy tries to make you question if you can even live for God, you proclaim that **the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives inside of you (V.11),***
- *When the enemy tries to manipulate truth and get you to start thinking that you can't have a relationship with God you can confidently say that, **you have been adopted as a child of God (V.14-17).***
- *When the enemy tries to get you to believe that God is absent, and if He was good, he wouldn't let bad things happen; you can stand in the truth that **God works ALL things out for your good and His Glory(V.28),***

- *When the enemy keeps attacking, trying to weaken your faith, you can let them know that **you are more than conquerors through Him who loves you (V.37)** and their attacks will only make you stronger in your faith*
 - *And when the enemy gets you to question His love for you can preach that **no angel or demon, or absolutely anything in, or out, of this world that can separate you from the Love of God (V.38-39)***
 - KNOW IT, REPEAT IT, BELIEVE IT..that's who you are, and there's nothing the enemy can do about it, except get you to question it.
 - It's HIS WORD, AND HIS WORD says that can separate you from the Love of God
 - And that is the final aspect that Jesus hits home on with His interaction with the Scribe.
 - Because we need to know our Maker, we need to know His Word, and finally:
- **WE NEED TO KNOW HIS LOVE**
 - You see Jesus told the scribe that He was not far from the Kingdom of God...but he wasn't there yet either.
 - Because he was beginning to understand his Maker, he was beginning to understand the true meaning and priorities of His Word
 - But he wouldn't be all the way there until he came into a loving relationship with Him.
 - Now earlier, I the said that one of the most dangerous places to be is when we are clinging to a world view that God's Word does not support
 - Now a lot of people will hate a statement like that. However, the only reason they have a problem with that is because they do not know God's Heart behind His Word.
 - Because the old statement is true: "Rules without relationship lead to rebellion"

- So if you don't have a loving relationship with God, you will not understand His prescribed way of life
- Because if we are not in a place where we truly cherish our relationship with Him, we will not understand His deep desire to bless us and how He wants the best for us
- And if we look at any of the biblical commands and instructions outside of the context of a relationship, we will just see them as a set of religious rules
- That's why Jesus told the scribe that Loving the God was the most important command of all
 - And the scribe understood that. He said, you're right, that's more important than all of the sacrifices and temple practices combined!
- God wants you to know His love, and to love Him back
 - We can only Love because He first Loved us
- He has committed Himself to be everything that you need Him to be for you, whether you are what you need to be for Him or not
- He has promised to never to leave us for forsake us
- Even we are faithless, He remains faithful
- And the only way we are going to reap the benefits of that relationship that He offers is if we cherish Who He is and what He has done for us.
- Think about it: The relationships that you cherish the most in this world are the ones that know you the best, that know all of your faults and shortcomings, but unconditionally love you anyway
 - Because they KNOW you, you can be completely open and comfortable with them
- That is exactly what Jesus offers us. He is your Maker and Creator, He knows you better than anyone else on the planet ever will, and He

loves you more than anyone on the planet ever will

- You see, God does not offer a relationship with one foot out the door. He doesn't offer a relationship based on fear, or walking on eggs shells.
- He doesn't offer a relationship based on feelings
- He offers a relationship based on the promises He gave and the commitment that He showed on the cross
- Paul says, ***“But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” -Romans 5:8 (ESV)***
 - This type of love is so counter cultural to us today because we always think that someone has to prove themselves to us before we love them.
 - They have to earn our trust before we offer a relationship to them

- But Jesus, while we were in the midst of our sin, our lostness, and our hatred against God...He still loved us even when we had absolutely nothing to give Him!
- That's what makes His love so mind boggling, because there is absolutely nothing that I can do or give that can add any value to God.
- He is already perfect, Holy, and complete, all on His own. There is nothing I can do to make Him any better or content than He already is!
- But yet He still chose to give me everything, when I had nothing to give back.
 - Look at the way this chapter finishes up.
- ***“And He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this***

poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

-Mark 12:41-44 (ESV)

- Here is a woman who knew her Maker in such a way that she wasn't worried about whether or not her money was going to taxes
 - Here's a woman who knew His word and moved in obedience even it cost her everything she had monetarily
 - Because this was a woman who knew His Love, and Loved Him back, and knew that she would be taken care of. She was cherished by her Maker and was willing to give everything that she had to Him.
 - Jesus wasn't concerned with her money and what she was giving.
- She didn't have anything to give but Jesus knew that He had her heart.
 - Jesus once said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
 - And this woman was putting the little treasure that she had, right where her heart was.
 - And because of that, the two coins that she gave became the most famous donation ever known to mankind.
 - So let me ask you today: Does Jesus have your heart?
 - Do you know Your Maker?
 - Do you know His Word?
 - Most importantly, do you know His Love?