**BCM Bible Study – Nov. 3/4, 2021**

**Mark 12:28-13:37**

*Context: Jesus has been verbally sparring with the Pharisees. They attempted to trap Him with questions, but He navigated each with ease. This study picks up at the end of this “discussion.”*

**Matter of the Heart**

**Read Mark 12:28-34**

* Who in your life has loved you well? What did they do that conveyed that love?
* Jesus asserts that the greatest command is a passage known to the Jews as the Shema (see notes for more information). It calls us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. What does it look like to practically love God in each of these areas?
	+ Which of the four is easiest for you? Which do you struggle with the most? Why?
* Jesus goes further and adds a second command. Why is it significant that Jesus connects the command to love our neighbors to the first command to love the Lord?
	+ *“When you obey the second, it shows that you have embraced the first.” (Akin, 289). Our love for God demonstrates itself in our love for others. We love them because God loves them.*
	+ What does it look like practically to love your neighbors?
* The scribe’s response impressed Jesus, but his heart posture was still incomplete.
	+ What made the scribe close to the kingdom of God?
		- *The scribe understood that the spirit of the law was loving God and was willing to think for himself and disagree with his religious peers.*
	+ Unfortunately, his courage and intellectual acceptance were not enough. What was he missing?
		- *He needed to recognize that he was incapable of fulfilling the Law, place his hope in the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice, and submit to Christ as his Lord.*
		- Of these three ideas, which is hardest for you? Why?

After this exchange, Jesus challenges the Pharisees with a question. **Read Mark 12:35-37.**

* Jesus quotes the first verse of Psalm 110, which was widely known as a messianic prophecy. What does it reveal about the Messiah?
	+ *The Messiah is not just a human, He is also God.* Why is this significant?
		- *It highlights that the Messiah is greater than just a descendant of David. He is not just a new human king for the Jews (Garland).*
* Unfortunately, the religious leaders had missed that point even though they knew Psalm 110. They were blinded by their culture’s desire for a national savior.
	+ What cultural messages easily distract you or other Christians from God’s truth?
	+ How can we avoid being deceived by our cultural context?

**Read Mark 12:38-44**

* What do you want others to notice about you? (Character traits, abilities, etc.)
	+ *These can be good things, and the desire for them can encourage us to develop them further. However, if we are not careful, we can let our desire for others to notice them override our desire for them to be true. When that happens, we can fall into the same trap as the scribes of putting all of our effort into making ourselves look good instead of actually developing those traits.*
* What things are you tempted to do or say to get others to notice you? Are there specific situations that tempt you to act for praise instead of out of a love for God?
	+ How can you fight those temptations?
* The widow in v. 42 provides a stark contrast to this mindset. **Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3**. Why was the widow’s offering more noteworthy than the others Jesus observed?
	+ *The widow gave out of love for the Lord. She was living out the Shema.*
	+ How have you seen this type of sincere, sacrificial giving in the church today?
	+ What other things might God call you to give besides your money?
	+ This type of sacrificial, selfless giving is challenging. What tends to hold you back from giving in this way?

**The End Times**

How do you feel about the end times? Do you find this period fascinating, scary, irrelevant, etc.? **Read Mark 13:1-37.** Then, give everyone a chance to glance through it again on their own.

To clarify before moving forward, Jesus is addressing two different future events.

1. When the temple will be destroyed (v. 1-23, 28-30)

2. When He will return (v. 24-27, 31-36)

Looking at the first 23 verses, what are the signs that the temple is going to be destroyed?

* Of these signs, the abomination of desolation is the only one that predicts the temple’s imminent destruction. Why, then, does Jesus mention the other signs?
	+ *He shares these signs with the disciples “so they will not be disheartened by persecution, panicked by wars, fooled by appearances, or led to apostasy by false prophets during uncertain and trying days. They need discernment to distinguish between what has to do with the end of their own little worlds and what has to do with the end of the world.” (Garland, 491)*
	+ Why is it dangerous to believe something is the end of the world when it is not?
	+ How can warnings of suffering help believers remain faithful?

In contrast to the destruction of the temple, there will be no warning of Jesus’s second coming. As a result, we must always be ready for His return.

* **Read Titus 2:11-13**. What should we be doing while we wait?
* In what ways do you often grow apathetic while waiting for Jesus?
* What steps can you take to remain alert?

**Conclusion**

The overarching encouragement in this passage is that we have hope! God is in control, and our salvation is guaranteed. Though we do not know the timing of the end times, we can endure through these trials because we know Jesus WILL return. The Lord’s victory is certain. Over this next week, take time to reflect on that truth.

**Extra Notes**

* In Mark 12:29-30, Jesus quotes the Shema (literally “to hear”) from Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (Garland). It opened every synagogue service, and devout Jews wore it on their foreheads and wrists while they prayed and hung it on their doors (Hughes).
* The second greatest command comes from Leviticus 19:18.
* Combined, these two commands summarize the entire 10 commandments (Exodus 20:2-11), and they fulfill the whole law (Romans 13:8).
* Parts of the Shema (according to Garland and Akin):
	+ Heart: command center (where we decide for or against God), emotions
	+ Soul: life, spirit, motivation
	+ Mind: thoughts, judgments, perceptions, reflections, opinions, intelligence
	+ Strength: physical abilities and possessions, will
* The scribes had many systems in place that made them noticeable to others. Their long, white linen robes stood out against the bright colors normally worn by lay people, they were greeted with respectful titles, they were invited to feasts, they were given seats of honor, and everyone was expected to rise when they walked by (Hughes).
* The widow offered a lepton, which was the smallest Greek coin. It was about 1/64 of a laborer’s daily wage (Garland)
* The destruction of the temple foreshadows Jesus’s return, but Jesus will not necessarily return immediately after the temple is destroyed (Garland).
* The “abomination of desolation” is a reference to a figure in Old Testament prophecies (Daniel 11:31, 8:13, 9:27, and 12:11; Jeremiah 7:30-34) that will desecrate the temple.
	+ Antiochus Epiphanes sacrificed a pig and built an altar for Zeus in the temple in 167 BC, partially fulfilling Daniel 11:31 (Akin).
	+ Jesus’s prophecy most likely refers to an event during the war with Rome, possibly when the zealots occupied the temple (67-68 AD). It could also refer to General Titus, a Gentile, entering the temple before his soldiers destroyed it (70 AD) (Garland).
	+ This prophecy may also find future fulfillment during the Great Tribulation (Akin, Hughes).
* “Let the reader understand” was likely intended to notify the person reading Mark to the congregation that the grammar was intentional. In the original language, “standing” was a masculine participle and “the abomination” was a neuter noun. This was an unusual grammatical choice, so the reader may have been tempted to correct it, believing it was a copier error. However, it was an intentional choice to convey that the “abomination of desolation” was a person (See also 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) (Garland).
* Many commentators have struggled with verse 30, but there are two main possible explanations. First, Jesus may have been referring to the destruction of the temple, which occurred within the disciples’ generation (70 AD) (Garland). Second, He could have been referring to the generation that will exist when He returns. In that instance, this verse means that that future generation will see the first signs of Jesus’s second coming, and then Jesus will return before that generation passes away (Akin).
* The ambiguity surrounding Jesus’s return is meant to discourage us from trying to determine it. The search for His return date only distracts us from our purpose here.