

The Wisdom of The King – Mark 12:13-37

This week we have been looking at the next chapter of Mark's Gospel. Over previous weeks we have seen Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem and then the way in which he turned the tables in the temple after seeing His Father's house - a house of prayer - turned into a den of thieves. This week, in Mark 12: 13- 37 we see that not only does Jesus know what is going to happen to him, that His journey is heading to the cross; but He also has incredible wisdom in seeing the purpose and plan of God through it. On Sunday we looked at the wisdom of the King. We saw how Jesus responds to three challenges that come to him from crowds that are gathering to confront him.

The first, a group of Pharisees come and ask Jesus whether or not they should pay their taxes to Caesar (read Mark 12: 13- 17). The first point to look at is how Jesus is addressed by the crowd of Pharisees. *"...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 ways of God."*

Jesus here is not swayed to give an answer that is conformed to a worldly viewpoint. His opinion is not changed based on the view of the crowds that are gathered, instead He stands firm in what He knows is the truth and teaches the 'ways of God'.

Q. Do we change our views and convictions based on who we are talking to?

Think about the ways in which we allow culture to shape our beliefs, rather than standing firm on what we know to be true. Are there any current issues that we can think of where culture and the Bible differ (gender, sex, marriage etc...)?

Jesus' response to their challenge about taxes is this, *"...render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."* Jesus knows that his purpose is about more than setting the Jews free from the oppression of the Romans. His concern is not to free the people from paying taxes, He is here with his eyes fixed on the cross. Jesus knows that His purpose is to redeem a people that live under the oppression of sin, and to liberate those captive so that they can live free. He is not interested in money, with the impression and likeness of Caesar; He is here to free those who are made in the image of God, who bear His likeness, and to ransom a people back to their Father.

Q. What do we get distracted by, that takes our eye off of our real reason for being here?

Do we get caught in irrelevant thoughts that are taking our focus off of the real work of Jesus and the way we are called to live? Do we value things that are good (jobs, friends, relationships, things) over God?

The second encounter is with a group of Sadducees. They challenge Jesus over the resurrection (read v. 18- 27). Jesus knows that what His disciples are going to be thinking about over the coming days is death. They will see Jesus die, but in Jesus' wisdom He knows that His death is bringing about life for people to God. The Sadducees know the scriptures but they do not understand them, or the power of God.

Q. Does reading the Bible and hearing the Gospel bring us to life? How do we make the Gospel alive to those with whom we share it?

The last encounter is with a scribe who asked Jesus what the greatest commandment is (read v. 28- 34). Jesus replies saying that it is to *'...love the Lord your God with all your mind, strength and soul and to love others as yourself.'* Here Jesus is looking to the sacrifice that He will make and the way that He calls those that follow him to live. Jesus is set on the cross, He knows what God is calling Him to and He knows that it is the love of God that will be demonstrated on the cross. Jesus is completely and perfectly in tune with what God is calling Him to, and He is loving others, to the point of His own death, and working to bring about their salvation.

Q. How do we live in light of the sacrifice of Christ? How can we love God, and see that love outworked in how we serve and treat others?

What does a truly sacrificial life look like today?