

RTS Women's Study: The Gospel of Mark

#26: Mark 12:13-34: Setting Traps for Jesus

Intro: "Hoist with his own petard"

I. The Pharisees ask about Taxes (v.13-17)

A. The Trap for Jesus

- They begin with flattery
 - They want to destroy Jesus (v.13), but then they compliment Jesus! "we know that you are true. . . and truly teach the way of God" (v.14)
 - *Note: Not all questions to/about Jesus are genuine...
- They know taxes are "hot button" issues for the Jews
 - Rome collects taxes from the Jews—often in excessive and exploitive ways—that are then used to further oppress the Jews!
 - This is why tax collectors were hated: they were Jews working for the Romans
- This puts Jesus in an unwinnable situation
 - If he says yes, then it will upset the Jewish people who despise the Roman rule
 - If he says no, it will be seen as an act of insurrection and likely arrested

B. The Response of Jesus

- Image of Caesar on coin shows it was his economic system and his coinage
- Jesus' point is simple: if you are willing to use Caesar's money, then you should be willing to give it back when asked. And by doing so, you are not compromising Jewish integrity because it already belongs to Caesar!
- The more important question is not whether you giving Caesar what's owed but whether you are giving God what's owed! (see earlier parable of the tenants).

**Application: As citizens, we are neither zealots trying to undermine government (Rom 13:1-7), nor are we allowing government to usurp the rightful place of God (Acts 4:19)

II. The Sadducees ask about Resurrection (v.18-27)

A. The Trap for Jesus

- There was a longstanding disagreement between the Pharisees (who believed in a resurrection), and the Sadducees (who did not)
- The Sadducees wanted to give Jesus their hardest theological question
 - In Deut 25:5-10, there is a Mosaic statute that addressed brothers who are each married. If one brother dies, before having kids, the other brother is called to marry the widow in order to provide for her.
 - The Sadducees concoct a hypothetical story of this happening with seven brothers, each dying in succession. Since the same woman was married to all seven, then they are asking: "when they rise again, whose wife will she be?"
 - **Since they don't think their question has an answer, they assume that proves there is no resurrection.

B. The Response of Jesus

- Refutation #1: There is no marriage in heaven!
 - In the new heavens and new earth, there will be no marriage because (a) there is no need for procreation, and (b) no need for companionship; in the church we are “married” to Christ!
 - In this way, we are “like angels” (v.25)
- Refutation #2: The OT already shows there will be a resurrection
 - Jesus quotes from Ex 3:6, showing that God maintains a relationship with his people even after death
 - Remember also the transfiguration where Moses and Elijah appeared

****Application:** Keep your current life in perspective by remembering you will live forever. Marriage is not the pinnacle of human existence, knowing God is!

III. The Scribes ask about Law (v.28-34)

A. The Trap for Jesus

- The Torah contained 613 commands: 248 were positive, 365 were negative
- There was a longstanding debate about which was the most important!
- The “scribes” were the textual interpreters in the Jewish community

B. The Response of Jesus

- Greatest commandment
 - Jesus quotes from the “Shema” (Deut 6:4-5) which is Jewish orthodox creed
 - It affirms that (a) there is no other God; and (b) that you shall love him with all heart, soul, mind, and strength
 - Key point: ****Loving God first is the key to everything else in your life. It’s the very first of the 10 commandments (and involves the first 5)!**
- Second greatest commandment
 - Jesus cites Lev 19:18: “Love your neighbor as yourself”
 - This corresponds to the last 5 of the 10 commandments
- The scribe seems to “get it” and “is not far from the Kingdom of God” (v.34)

****Application:** Following God is not primarily transactional (“offerings and sacrifices” v.33), but *relational*. It’s about *love*: love of God and love of neighbor. You don’t become a better law keeper by focusing on law, but on the love you have for God and others.

Discussion Groups

1. How does Jesus’ comments about taxes help you navigate the current political climate? Is your tendency more towards being a zealot (“I will never pay taxes”), or to being a compromiser (“I will pick government over God”)?
2. In what does our current culture idolize marriage? How does the Christian culture idolize marriage? In what ways does this passage help you find a balanced perspective on it?
3. Do you view your relationship with God more transactional or relational? How does seeing it as relational actually make you a better law keeper?