

An Upside Down, Right Side Up Gospel: Lose Control

Mark 12:35-44

³⁵ And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared,

“The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet.”

³⁷ David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?” And the great throng heard him gladly.

³⁸ And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces ³⁹ and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁰ who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

⁴¹ And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³ 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. ⁴⁴ 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.”

1. Jesus challenges the cultural misunderstanding of the King. (vv. 35-37)

Questioning the religious party from an offensive position, Jesus challenges their understanding of the promised Christ. He affirms the common belief that this King would restore justice in Israel and the belief that this King would come from the line of King David. However, Jesus challenges their misconception that this King would be and do only that. Jesus quotes Psalm 110 (a Psalm of David) as evidence that the promised King would not be a mere human king, but a Divine King. He would be the Son of God, carrying with Him all the authority of God.

2. Jesus shows the wrong way to follow Him as King (vv. 38-40).

a. Jesus told His disciples to “beware of the scribes.” He was describing the religious party as men who were at odds with God and therefore enemies of God. These men were described by Jesus as those who “desired” and were “pleasuring in” their own success, self-importance, and authority. These men demonstrated this “desire” by exalting themselves over everyone, including God, as we see in verse 39.

b. Jesus shows us that this framework of relating to God and others is completely against the first and second greatest commandments that Jesus laid out earlier in Chapter 12.

c. It is concluded then that the religious party's love for their own success, importance and authority was greater than their love for God and those whom He created. They refused to hand over their authority to the One in authority. Jesus says this is not the way to respond to Him and to follow Him as King.

3. Jesus shows us the right way to follow Him as King (vv.41-44)

a. Jesus uses the widow to show how one is to follow Him as King. The widow's offering (two coins that were of the least value in all of Roman currency) indicated that she was extremely poor and most likely gave all that she had. Even more powerful is the meaning of the Greek word translated “lived-on” in this section. The original Greek word means physical life and activity associated with it. Therefore, the widow gave not only her money but also all of her resources, faculties, and motives. She gave her whole life!

b. When Jesus calls us to follow Him as King, He calls us to abandon all that this world holds dear. All that the religious party held dear. We abandon our pursuit of self-significance, authority, control, prestige etc. We are called to submit and to handover our authority to the One who has true authority!

c. We can do this because we know that Christ Jesus didn't come into this world as the world expected. He came into this world as the True Widow. He gave up His whole life so that we may have life in Him!

Discussion Questions

1. Is our Jesus too small? Are we like the religious party in that we are treating Jesus as a mere man, someone we have to put up with as we continue in the business of ourselves?
2. Are our motives and actions meant to build our own kingdom and social resumes? Or are they meant to serve and love God and those He's created?
3. Are you trusting that Jesus became the True Widow for you? Are you trusting that He gave everything, His whole life, so that you may have life in Him?
4. How will trusting God in this way play out in the way you relate to Him and to other people?