

A Study of Mark – Lesson 36

Mark 12:28-44 The Greatest Commandment. The Messiah? The Widow's Offering

12²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came / and heard them debating. / Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, / he asked him, / “Of all the commandments, / which is the most important?”

²⁹ “The most important one,” / answered Jesus, / “is this: / ‘Hear, / O Israel: / The Lord our God, / the Lord is one. / ³⁰ Love the Lord your God / with all your heart / and with all your soul / and with all your mind / and with all your strength.’ / ³¹ The second is this: / ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ / There is no commandment greater than these.”

³² “Well said, / teacher,” / the man replied. / “You are right in saying that God is one / and there is no other but him. / ³³ To love him with all your heart, / with all your understanding / and with all your strength, / and to love your neighbor as yourself / is more important / than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴ When Jesus saw / that he had answered wisely, / he said to him, / “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” / And from then on / no one dared ask him any more questions.

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³⁵ While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, / he asked, /
“Why do the teachers of the law say / that the Messiah is the son of
David? / ³⁶ David himself, / speaking by 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.’ / How then can he be his son?” /
The large crowd listened to him with delight. /

³⁸ As he taught, / Jesus said, / “Watch out for the teachers of the
law. / They like to walk around in flowing robes / and be greeted
with respect in the marketplaces, / ³⁹ and have the most important
seats in the synagogues / and the places of honor at banquets. / ⁴⁰
They devour widows’ houses / and for a show / make lengthy
prayers. / These men will be punished most severely.” /

⁴¹ Jesus sat down / opposite the place where the offerings were put
/ and watched the crowd putting their money / into the temple
treasury. / Many rich people / threw in large amounts. / ⁴² But a
poor widow came / and put in two very small copper coins, / worth
only a few cents.

⁴³ Calling his disciples to him, / Jesus said, / “Truly I tell you, /
this poor widow/ has put more into the treasury / than all the

others.⁴⁴ / They all gave out of their wealth; / but she, / out of her poverty, / put in everything/ —all she had to live on.”

Vocabulary

1. **Flowing:** Freely moving from place to place
2. **Devour:** Eat quickly. Destroy something. Gulp down.
3. **Severely:** Harshly, Extremely unpleasant.
4. **Debate:** Talk or argue about something. Public meeting for a formal discussion.
5. **Burnt offerings:** A sacrifice of burning food, often a whole animal.

Questions

1. Who do you think is our neighbor?
2. How can we love God?
3. Jesus was debating. How could this lowly rabbi hold his own with the educated Pharisees and Sadducees?
4. Rich people gave money for show. What does that mean?
5. The poor woman ‘s giving only pennies is often called the story of the widow’s mite. What do you think mite might mean? Why was her gift more important to Jesus?

Notes

1. Three hard questions were asked of Jesus:

Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? ¹⁵
Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

²³ At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

^{28b} "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

Then Jesus asked them a hard question:

"Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David?"

2. Three or more rival groups were evident in the Temple Courtyards: Sadducees, Teachers of the Law, Scribes, Pharisees and Herodians. They can overlap a little, but no love was lost between them. All were Jews. It is a bit like our American political parties. All are Americans, but they disagree philosophically.
3. Jesus took the *shema* the prayer all Jews knew, and added the neighbor part to it. The *shema* was worn in boxes tied to the forehead and wrist, called a *mezuzah*. This is also on the doorframes of the home of a Jew and on the doorframes inside the home. It was to be a constant reminder of God. (Mark 12:29-31).
4. In Mark 11:30, the Sadducees wanted to know "in whose name" Jesus taught. Now. In the debate, Jesus asks an equally difficult question, "Who is the Son of David?" This became an interesting debate for the listeners. Jesus silenced his questioners.