

Mark 2

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[0 : 00] I would like us to turn this evening to words that we read in the New Testament in Mark's Gospel and chapter 12, reading at verse 32.

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth, for there is one God and there is none other but he, and to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the soul and with all the strength and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly or wisely, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God, and no man after that durst ask him any questions.

Thou art not far from the kingdom, says Jesus, to this scribe.

As I said in the introduction to the reading, we find that many people come to Jesus and they come for all different kinds of reasons.

[1 : 22] And in this numerous occasion, in these numerous occasions, much of it has been spurred on as a result of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his time in the temple when he overthrew the money changers' tables.

And the response of the priests, the chief priests, remember? The chief priests and the scribes and all of those that were there looking on this, there was great indignation, there was hatred building up against Jesus for all the things that he had said and all the things that he had done.

Their conscience, I am sure, was pricked on numerous occasions, but yet they were still bent on their pursuit to destroy the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this chapter 12, we see that various groups have come to Jesus, including some from that pharisaical sect and sent by the scribes, and others who were and have been noted as the Herodians who come to Jesus.

And of course, Jesus, in response to their question, speaks of them as being hypocrites. It's not the first time we come against this statement, this condemnation of the Pharisees and everyone that is like-minded with them.

[2 : 47] He speaks of them as hypocrites. It's very interesting, of course, to see that you have the Pharisees and the Herodians coming together here, because not normally would that be the case, because these Herodians were much more political in their orientation.

They weren't really religious people. They weren't even all that interested in the keeping of the law, at least not like the Pharisees. But as we see many of the time, when you get two groups of people that are as far as part as East is from the West, coming together united, that are always united against one, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. And of course, that rings bells, doesn't it, in our own ears. How cautious we have to be with respect to this great danger of being hypocritical, presenting before Jesus something that is not really true.

The language of these Pharisees might have sounded very great, didn't it, at the very beginning there. They came and they said, Master, we know that thou art true, and that carest for no man, for thou art regard to no person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth.

Even that, of course, they got wrong. But nevertheless, they tried to pretend that they had authenticity about themselves. They believed that they had great respect because they were the teachers of the law and so on.

[4 : 23] But by the ordinary people, they didn't have much respect. Part of the reason of that, of course, is demonstrated very clearly in the fact that many of those people whom the Pharisees ought to have taken greater care of, came running to Jesus.

But they came running to Jesus, not in the same way as their audience or the Pharisees did. Here, of course, we see that Jesus knows their mind and knows exactly what they're about.

They're trying to trip him up. Now, I know it's not very easy. We shouldn't dismiss these people just like that, but I want to move on a little bit because my thought is further on.

But we do come across another group, and that's the Sadducees. And we know a little bit about them. Basically, there were a people who didn't believe in the resurrection.

Oh, they were great on the Torah. They had great understanding of the Torah. But beyond that, and especially with regard to the soul, teaching of the soul, they had little understanding, and therefore they didn't believe in the resurrection from the dead.

[5 : 30] And they come to Jesus. And then again, in a sense, they are mocking him. They're ridiculing him. They come away with a fanciful story. It's the kind of argument that you get with people who want to find fault with the church and the church's witness and the church's testimony.

They want to pull holes in the arguments and the teaching of the church. And they make up ludicrous situations. That's what the Sadducees have done here with this woman whose husband dies, and so on until she is seven.

And then last of all, she dies, and there's no heritage left. Whose is she in the resurrection? What did Jesus say? Again, if the hypocrisy was bad, as an accusation against the Pharisees and Herodians, how much even more this was.

And this too is a warning light to every one of us. Because it's all very well thinking that we know, but do we understand the truth as it is revealed to us in the Word of God?

The whole truth, and nothing but the truth. No point in arguing against the truth of the Word of God, unless you're willing to argue against Christ himself, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

[6 : 48] And anyone take on that task, and you're in danger of hell. Mark my words, that's a dangerous thing to do. You can argue against the church if you like.

You can argue against those who, like you might think, understand more than you do. But to argue against Christ and His Word, that's blasphemy.

And Jesus said to them on two occasions here, He said, You do err, not knowing the Scriptures. So before you pick an argument with anybody, before you think you can stand up, and that you are the smart aleck of the present generation, ask yourself, what do you really know?

What do you really understand? It's all very well, picking holes, and making arguments, and thinking that you are smart. But you stand before Christ, and one day you will.

You may be like the Sadducees, like the Pharisees, mocking and ridiculing. But one day, Christ will have the answer, and Christ will say it to you straight and direct, and you will not have a leg to stand in.

[8 : 08] You think you're smart today, maybe, but you won't have a leg to stand in. Jesus says, You do err, not knowing the Scriptures.

That's a huge condemnation to anyone, if we don't know the Scriptures. That was the fault in the Pharisees, and the Herodians.

It was the fault of the Sadducees. But what about our friend the scribe here? Because he's the one that I'm more interested in this evening. He is not like the other groups, and many others that came to Jesus, with a mocking intent.

I don't believe for one moment, that this man had an inch or an ounce of mocking within his heart. I think this man was standing on the sidelines, and he's like many to a person, sincere.

Maybe even something like Nicodemus. There was a sincerity there. And this scribe, I think, was sincere in this way that he came to Jesus.

[9 : 16] Because, as we are told, he says to Jesus that he believes Jesus, or we are told, anyway, concerning this man.

He says, I heard, having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked them, which is the first commandment of all.

Having heard, this man was listening. And he comes with an authentic question, with an authentic spirit. He really wants to know.

After all, this man is not like the Pharisees or the Herodians. As I said, the Herodians, they were very much influenced by politics of the day. The Pharisees, well, they were too steeped in their own laws and their own making of religion to even see the truth.

The Sadducees, well, Jesus said, you don't know them at all. But this man, remember what his employment is. He's a scribe. A very important person.

[10 : 21] He's a person. He's a reader. He's a writer. He is the one who was set up. There was a group there set up at the time, you remember, when the synagogue came into being in Babylon, when they were given the opportunity and the privilege of writing the Word of God.

They would spend hours writing and rewriting. There is something we ought to understand about the scribe. I'm not saying, please, for one moment, that every scribe that rewrote the Scriptures, writing down for each synagogue to have a copy of the Scriptures, that these scribes were in some way angelic.

They weren't all angelic. Far from it. Jesus tells us that at the end of the chapter, that some of them were very bumptious. They were conceited. They loved going out into the marketplace.

They liked people to talk to them. They were very pompous. They were full of pomposity. But this scribe was not quite like that. This scribe, I think, is very much like many people who come into the house of God and they have an ever-deepening interest and an ever-deepening understanding.

And maybe they've had a good background of teaching of the Word of God. They've never come to faith in Christ. They never even desired faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[11 : 53] But they are people with many questions. And this kind of man is the kind of man that you should try and latch on to. If you've got somebody who has an interest, I would say, I would almost go as far as to say this man was a seeker.

He had come to a knowledge of the truth. Not a heart. He had an understanding in terms of what his work was about.

Transcribing the Word of God. And he asked Jesus this question. And I believe, as I said, it was authentic. And I think we get that idea from Jesus' statement here concerning him.

You are not far from the kingdom. But he still placing himself in a very precarious position. He is not far from the kingdom.

Why is he not far from the kingdom? Because he is so privileged. He is so privileged. Every one of us who have that privilege of sitting under the Word of God, being part of the congregation of God's people, having the opportunity to sing the praise of God, having the opportunity to listen to the reading of his Word, and even the opportunity of reading it ourselves.

[13 : 13] Tremendous opportunity. Tremendous privilege. This man was privileged in many respects above the Pharisee, and the Sadducee, and the Herodian.

Why? Because he was steeped in the Word of God. Maybe some of us here found ourselves, maybe boringly at times, being taught by our parents, our Sunday school teachers, going through big sections of Scripture, learning stories from the Word of God, learning the theology and the teaching of the Word of God through catechism or whatever, we've had these opportunities.

Are we like the scribe? Have we found ourselves having opportunities, maybe even in school, to take a subject? Maybe like religious education, religious teaching, biblical knowledge.

And we're able to write down great long essays on these things. things. But what's the effect? Yes, surely it might be said that you are not far from the kingdom, but that all depends on what interest you really have on this Word.

Let's see what the response of this scribe is to Jesus. Having listened to what Jesus said, Jesus said, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

[14 : 54] This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. Now, someone asked you, what is, what are the great commandments, or what is the great commandment?

I'm sure we could all, even from the very youngest of us here, we all must be able to answer, just like this man, what is it? Now, listen to what he says, because that's so important.

What's important about it is, knowing the truth, and not practicing it, not believing it, in one's heart, and in one's soul.

Even with the admission, as he says himself, all this I must do, with heart, and with soul. I must give my all, to this word, to this word, and to this testimony.

Listen to what he says, and this is going to be, the judge of his heart, as it is the judge of the hearts, of each and every one of us. Master, thou hast said the truth.

[16 : 06] Is he mocking Jesus? The language doesn't seem to suggest that, that he was mocking. You see, he's a scribe, and he knows what the word of God is saying.

He could quote, the passage that we read in Chronicles, I'm sure, almost verbatim. He knew all the teaching, at least as it came to him, out of the pages of the word of God.

And he could say to Jesus, Master, yes, you said the truth, for there is one God and there is none other, but he. Is that your testimony and mine?

Very often, we could ask people, individual people, we could ask them, do you believe in God? Yes, they say, I believe in God. Is that my salvation?

Is that my redemption? If I say, I believe in God, does that save me? I'm sure this man would say that he could believe in God or believe that there was such a person.

[17 : 11] He wrote about him and rewrote about him time and time again. It was part of his profession and everything. He knew that there was one God. That's what the Holy Scriptures taught him.

And every one of us here knows that the Holy Scripture teaches us there is only one God. Okay, thus far, so far, but it's still not good enough.

Because that might be our condemnation, the fact that we could admit and being able to say, even with common grace, that there is one God that it won't save us.

This man wasn't saved. yet he could say that it's one God. He could also say, as he says here to Jesus, to love God with all the heart and with all the understanding.

to love God. There's the problem. There's the problem with this man as it is with all of us.

[18 : 22] Do you ever find yourself speaking to children, your own children? Do you ever ask them the question, do you really love Jesus? Do you love Jesus more than anything else?

Do you try and encourage your children to think of what it is to say, I love you. Do we love Jesus?

Does everyone here this evening love Jesus? This man had a perception of what it was to get to the kingdom.

But only a perception. And the thing was, he was living so close to the word of God and yet his soul was so far away. He knew that being a scribe, a writer of the word of God, that these things were true.

The Pharisee didn't. The Pharisee was much more content with making sure that people and other people, not him, were obedient, not to these great commandments, but to the commandments that the Pharisees had set up.

[19 : 41] The Sadducees, on the other hand, would have people be reading the Torah. Let's read the law. Let's be before the law all the time.

Let us never move away from the law. There is nothing in life more important than the law, the Torah. But this guide knew the scope.

And so many people do know the scope of it all. They know what the Bible says. You know what Christ demands of you. You know what the word of God demands of you.

He demands hard life. He demands a commitment to Christ. With all one's heart, with all one's soul, with all one's mind.

In other words, this whole being of mine and yours submitted to the word of God in Christ Jesus. And nothing less will do.

[20 : 45] This man was not far from the kingdom. That's what Jesus says. Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. but how far is not far.

Is there someone here this evening thinking that they are very close to the kingdom and because they are close to the kingdom, because they have an interest in these things and maybe even an increasing interest in these things that if I were to die tonight, maybe, just maybe, I will go to heaven.

Is there someone thinking like that at all? Jesus said to this man, Thou art not far from the kingdom and for a disappointment.

He's not like the rich young ruler. This man has got nothing to barter with. He's got no money directly to barter with. Oh yes, there may be of his troop of his kind.

There is a kind of a professional pomposity, but this man is sincere. But he thinks in some way or another the fact that he knows the word of God, the fact that he has had a position in the church, so to speak.

[22 : 05] And maybe there is that kind of inclination and generally you find it in the older generation that attend the house of God and who are not yet committed to Christ.

They put all their trust in the fact that they can answer the questions. But they cannot answer the one question, which is, do you love me?

Christ asked that question of each and every one of us, do you love me? You could be as vigorous as you like in your religious life.

You can attend the means of grace as often as you wish. You can give the appearance of being a very religious person and yet, as Jesus suggests to us here, you can be very far from the kingdom.

Now, how many disasters are there? I wonder how many disasters there have been that have ever walked into this building and walked out again and never came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[23 : 23] How many disasters have there been with regard to those people who have found themselves in the very privileged position of being exposed to the Word of God and at the same time walking away from the promises that God has given?

Let me go back to what I said right at the very beginning this morning. The words which are very familiar and they ring in your ears constantly, the words of John 3.16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

that's what God wants. What do you want? What do any one of us here want? However young you are, what do you want out of life?

Because everything that you might want from a human perspective, you're going to have to pay for it. It'll cost you dearly. Not just in monetary terms, in physical terms, in emotional terms, it'll cost you dearly.

[24 : 36] that what God is offering in Christ will cost you absolutely nothing. And that's what's wrong with this scribe.

He was really way off the mark if he thought for one moment that his upbringing, his position in jury, his position within the temple, or the synagogue, or wherever he did his business, if he thought for one moment that that was going to give him a clear road, a clear run, right into the kingdom of God.

It wasn't. It's as though he came so far, and it's as though he had all the privileges, but all of these were nothing to him, and he didn't benefit from them.

I go back to this morning again, and if I'm speaking to some of you younger folks, you have been privileged. Oh, I don't mean to hear me far from it, but you have been privileged to have maybe been baptized into the church of Christ, the visible church.

You have been privileged in that you have had the word of God in your hand, placed upon your mind, you have been taught, you have been encouraged, and you have been prayed for by how many people?

[26 : 06] You imagine if you sit there tonight, how many people have prayed for you as a young person, as a baby, as you were growing up, into your teenage years?

Those of us who may be in that area, think of it. How many people have prayed for you? Your parents have prayed for you?

How much love, yes, how much tears have been poured out before the throne of God for you? Oh, you are privileged.

I'm not going to mention names, but I remember being at a communion in the west coast, oh, many years ago. It wasn't in the islands, but it was in the west. And I remember I stayed with an elder there, and as he got down on his knees with his wife, and did I say it, his dog, the dog was there as well, and as he got down on his knees, he prayed to God for every single member of his family by name.

And he appealed to God not to save them because they were his children alone, but to save them on their own right, that the Lord would speak to their heart and to their soul.

[27 : 35] And how many prayers have gone up. And the sad thing sometimes is that many as a child a youngster has been prayed for and they have not realized what has been done on their behalf.

This scribe was as far from the kingdom as anybody else at one level because the fact that he was a writer of the word of God was only to his greater condemnation.

We are not told in scripture that this man was saved, and I can't say that he was, but one thing I can say, there's not one person in this building who will be in the kingdom of Christ without having faith in a Savior who loved so much that he died, that he suffered in our room instead.

And I appeal to any one of you, people, if you don't have that Christ in your heart, don't be like the scribe who was so close to the kingdom and yet was in danger of losing his own soul.

What will it profit any one of us if we gain all that we have ever had aspirations for in this world and we lose our soul?

[29 : 11] What's the end? A lost eternity. And that doesn't bear thinking. I leave it with you. Don't be near the kingdom.

Don't be far away from the kingdom. Come right into it because Christ is saying, come to me. He doesn't want the hypocrite.

He doesn't want the Sadducee. He wants the sinner who knows that they have nothing to commend unto God at all. He wants you.

Repent and believe in him. Let us pray.