

Day 77, Mark 12

by David Servant

The sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, repentance, and prioritizing God's commandments, highlighting the consequences of unforgiveness and the need for reconciliation.

Scripture: Matthew 23:24, Mark 1:4, Mark 11:25, Mark 12:33, Luke 3:3, Luke 12:48, Luke 17:3, Acts 2:38

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Reconciliation"

Description

David Servant delves into the importance of forgiveness as highlighted in Mark 11, emphasizing the necessity of forgiving others in order to receive forgiveness from God. True forgiveness leads to reconciliation, which involves confronting the offender and seeking repentance. God forgives those who repent, and Jesus instructs us to rebuke and forgive those who sin against us. It is crucial to prioritize loving God and others over religious rituals and traditions, as demonstrated by the scribe who understood the weight of these commandments.

Transcript

Since I mentioned some of today's reading in my last commentary, I think I'll mention some of our last reading in today's commentary! Specifically, I would like to consider Jesus' words about forgiveness in Mark 11:

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions (Mk. 11:25-26).

It is obviously a very serious thing not to have your transgressions forgiven by God. If He does not forgive us, then He is still holding our sins against us. If He is holding our sins against us, then we will have to be repaid for them. That should motivate us to forgive others!

What does it mean to forgive? When God forgives us, He no longer holds our sin against us. Our "debt" is erased and our relationship with Him is restored. We are reconciled. So when we forgive another person, it should also result in reconciliation. When we see that person, we should no longer be angry with them. Yet so often, folks claim they've forgiven someone who has sinned against them, but there has been no reconciliation. A little probing reveals that they are still angry with the person whom they've supposedly forgiven.

The reason for this is because they are trying to obey one of Jesus' commandments while disobeying another one of His commandments, namely, His commandment to confront those who have sinned against them. They attempt to "forgive" people whom they've not confronted and who have not admitted their sin or asked for forgiveness. True forgiveness and reconciliation only occurs after sin has been admitted and forgiveness has been requested.

For this reason, God doesn't forgive everyone, but only those who repent (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3, 24:47; Acts 2:38). And that is why Jesus told us:

If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, "I repent," forgive him (Luke 17:3-4).

Of course, confrontation and reconciliation is possible with fellow believers, but often not so possible with unbelievers. In those cases, we should obey Jesus' commandment to "love our enemies." It is certainly possible to love someone yet not forgive him, as God loves people yet He doesn't always forgive those whom He loves. I've written more extensively on this topic here if you care to study it more.

Mark highlights some questions posed to Jesus, first by some Pharisees and Herodians who wanted to trap Him, then by some Sadducees who were hung up on their pet doctrines, and finally by a scribe, whose heart was apparently pure. That scribe understood what many then and now have missed---that there are some commandments that are greater than others. Namely, that loving God and neighbor "is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (12:33). His understanding provoked Jesus to tell him that he wasn't "far from the kingdom of God" (12:34). Christians can easily find themselves side-tracked from what is most important, and in so doing, drift from what should be at the core. We should strive to obey all of Christ's commandments, but if we zealously obey the lesser ones while ignoring the greater ones, we can become like Pharisees who "strain out a gnat and swallow a camel" (Matt. 23:24).

It is interesting that contributions to the temple treasury could be made in full public view. It was likely designed that way by those who knew that people generally give more when they receive public praise, since so many give, motivated not by love, but by self-love. This is why Jesus told His followers to give in secret.

Jesus' comment on the size of the widow's gift is a window into the righteous judgment of God. He considers how much money we have before determining the praise-worthiness of our gifts, looking at percentages and sacrifices more than dollar amounts. "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required" (Luke 12:48). Help us, Lord, to understand how much we have!

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