

Announcements:

- 1) Kingdom Man Study
 - 1) Thursday @ 6:30pm or Saturday @ 8am
 - 2) 2nd and 4th weeks
- 2) Kids4Truth training @ 6pm Thursday
- 3) June 26th Family Movie Night
- 4) Graduates
 - 1) Alicia Stiles
 - 2) Devyn Kinney
 - 3) Malachi Dunnavent

Bigger than Taxes Mark 12:13-17

Priorities are a part of life. Wrong priorities usually get us in trouble, hurt feelings, maybe even destroy a relationship, can get us fired from a job, cause us more work, and more. Right priorities can get us in trouble, hurt feelings, maybe even destroy a relationship, can get us fired from a job, cause us more work, and more.

There is a priority list in the Bible that Jesus gives, and can easily be misunderstood for the wording that is used. It's found in Luke 14:26 and also in Matthew. Jesus while speaking to a large crowd following Him, began to speak about the cost of being a follower of Jesus and He said this, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

At first glance this sounds contradictory to 'loving our neighbor', serving one another, what the Bible says about the family unit. But, Jesus is trying to get a point across using a strong contrast. The point is this: there is a priority above other priorities and it is to follow Jesus, to be about the things of God, to obey His commandments. When we do that, all those relationships have the opportunity to become the healthiest they can be... but, they can also be destroyed if those close to us choose not to follow Christ and have disdain for Christ.

The word 'hate' that verse, in the original language has less to do with being an enemy or shunning or an emotion of anger, but more with priority. But, not just priority, the fervency to put the priorities in the right order which is making Jesus first and foremost even if it means losing that which

is closest to you. Jesus is taking things that we are bound to, relationships that we should be about and pouring into, providing for, committed to, and saying those are priorities, but there is a great priority that comes first. Jesus is saying that there is something of bigger priority than even family.

The passage we are going to look at today has a few great truths for us about taxes, but the real truth is really bigger than taxes. Jesus is making some strong statements, but the biggest statement He is making is about ownership, its about priority, it's about responsibilities. The statement is wrapped up in His simple statement, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."

Let's read our passage, Mark 12:13-17

The background to this passage:

- last week of His ministry
- 2nd full day in Jerusalem
- the people chanted Psalm 118 which is about the Messiah
 - “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”
- Jesus had many followers
- The Sanhedrin (pharisees, sadducees, and scribes) have now vowed to kill Jesus
 - They were the enemy of Jesus
 - He was upsetting their control of the people
 - He challenged their self-proclaimed and self-governed power
- Jesus turned over tables and through out money changers.
 - said they made His Father's house a “den of thieves” and instead it is to be a “house of prayer”
 - the religious leaders had made it hard to worship instead of easy to worship (*May we never make it harder for people to worship because of our actions, traditions, or need for control*)
- The second day of His last week
 - He is in the temple teaching
 - The Sanhedrin is watching Him closely, looking for a way to destroy Him and turn the people against Him
 - They have already tried one attempt
 - They challenged His authority asking Him “by whose authority does He do the things He does”?
 - He responds with a question they cannot, really better

- said will not answer because if they do, they reveal their hypocrisy
- They go back with their tales between their legs and regroup for another attack
- This time they send 'spies' according to Luke to try and trick Jesus.
- The religious leaders are upping their game because they realize their opponent is wiser

V. 13-14a The Plot and Flattery

- Goal: to get Him arrested
- How: by asking Him a question that would trap Him into saying something against Rome
(the word trap in original language was used to denote trapping as in ensnaring, like one would set a trap to catch a wild animal. This is how they saw Jesus, an absolute threat)
- Let's look at the opponents of Jesus
 - Unlikely teammates; common enemy:
Pharisees and supporters of Herod (Herodians)
 - Pharisees: a religious group fighting to keep to their traditions and keep ritual purity
 - Jesus exposed their hypocrisy
 - Herodians: supported Herod the Great and His dynasty and were fans of Rome
 - After Herod the Great died his four sons each got a quarter of his kingdom
 - Rome took over, but let them rule over their part of the kingdom
 - The son over the area of Judea was seen as unfit because of civil unrest, so they pulled him and put in a Roman governor
 - The Herodians were concerned Jesus was going to start an uprising and Rome would never allow the Herodians power again
- *Pharisees and the Herodians did not like each other.
 - Pharisees believed the Herodians sold out
 - Herodians did not like the Pharisees need for power and control and stance on Jewish purity
- Listen to the flattery
 - “Teacher” — was a distinguished and honored title

- “we know how honest you are. You teach the way of God truthfully. You are impartial and don’t play favorites.”
 - Goal: trying to butter Him up and get Him to lose focus
 - Manipulation is not a godly trait, but actually one of the devil
 - manipulation is an act of deception, a form of lying, it’s a selfish act of personal gain
 - Satan is a master manipulator
 - He takes truth and spins it to deceive
 - What they were saying was true of Jesus, but the goal was to deceive
 - Remember Jesus said motive matters
- Scripture has much to say against manipulators and it has much to say about our need to be vigilant against being manipulated
- Jesus told us we would face an enemy
 - First and foremost Satan
 - 1 Peter 5—‘roaring lion seeking to devour’
 - John 10:10—‘steal, kill, and destroy’
 - Our flesh, that sin nature
 - Romans 5:10—‘while we were still enemies of God’
 - Colossians 3:5—‘put to death whatever belongs to your earthy nature’
 - The world (worldly systems)
 - 1 John 2:15 says “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
 - Romans 12:2—“Do not be conformed to this world”
 - James 4:4—“Friendship with the world is hostility with God”
 - The things of this world have a place...they are competing for our allegiance, to be a priority above God...many of those things may even be good
- We must be wise and have a reason for what we do
 - God grows us up in wisdom if we seek it
 - seek it in His word, prayer, with other Christians seeking it also

Verse 14b-15a The Trap

- They spring the trap. “Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or

not? Should we pay them, or shouldn't we?"

- If Jesus answers it's right to pay taxes
 - the Jewish people would now question everything about Jesus and probably begin to turn away from Him because He favored Rome
 - Remember the goal is to get the people to question the validity of Jesus and His words
 - The Pharisees saw the tax as going against God's law because it was in support of a government that made themselves out to be God and supported ungodly things
- If Jesus answers it's not okay to pay taxes
 - then He was going against Roman law
 - The Herodians would turn Him in for insurrection and treason

Verses 15b-16 Jesus is Wiser

- Jesus gives us an example of being vigilant against being manipulated
 - Luke says "He saw through their trickery"
- He asks for a denarius
 - roughly a day's wage
 - had a picture of Caesar stamped on it
 - it was seen as Caesar's property since it was minted by Rome and used for Rome's currency.
 - had stamped "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus" and on the back "Chief Priest"
 - This is one of the reasons the Jewish people had a problem with this...the Caesar was made out to be god
- So Jesus asks for a coin and then asks them a question "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?"
- The answer is obvious, but incriminating, "Caesar."
 - It was Roman property with the authority of Caesar to be used by the people and for the people...kind of like our money
 - The people were allowed to use it to buy and give back (really to pay what is owed) to use and keep the structure of the nation
 - They had an infrastructure the people used
 - roads, communication, courts, and many other
 - They had a military to provide safety
 - They had governing officials who provided law and enforced law

- Having the coin gave ability to be part of the country
- At this point, you have to imagine that the Pharisees and Herodians are thinking to themselves, “Great! He is asking a question. What did we get ourselves into!?! How is He going to make us look like a fool this time?”

Verse 17 Jesus’s response, “The real issue is Bigger than Taxes”

- Jesus is revealing an issue of the heart and bringing us a clear theological statement, a truth to live by
- When Jesus says, “give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar” He is saying:
 - God has put authorities in place and we are to obey them
 - Romans 13:1-2 “Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished.”
 - In scripture when it speaks of ‘masters’, ‘government’, or ‘rulers’ the command that follows is to obey
 - When it comes to taxes, we should pay them
 - it’s part of our civic duty
 - it’s what God commands
 - Daniel was a man who faced these issues
 - He was captured by Babylon and then trained up in the ways of the Babylonian government
 - He obeyed and played an important role in the success of Babylon, but he would not compromise his faith
- But then Jesus makes a statement that is bigger than owing taxes. He says, “give to God what belongs to God.”
- What is Jesus saying? He says watch your priorities, because there is a priority.
- There is a priority to obey the government. They are given for our benefit from God.
- But**, there is a higher priority: giving to God what is owed Him.
- The question that must follow is what is owed to God? The answer is simple, our whole life...our obedience.
- Why? Because His image is stamped upon us.
 - Genesis 1:26 “Let us make man in our own image.”
 - Males and females are both made in His image. Every

single person on the planet has been made in God's image

- God created us for His glory and for our good
 - God created us for a relationship with Him
 - God created us with a purpose
 - God created us with value
- What does it mean to be made in God's image?
 - we are created to resemble and represent Him
 - we have ability to reason
 - we have ability to rule
 - we are created as relational beings, most importantly in relationship with God
 - we have responsibility to each other
 - we have intelligence
 - we have a moral consciousness
 - we have creativity
 - we have ability to choose

- What we owe God is to live as if we are the image of God.
 - because He made us (Genesis 1:26-27)
 - and not for earning salvation, but as a response to God's love through Jesus making salvation possible
 - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body."
 - we owe God honor with our life because Jesus was born in the image of man so He could save man, by being the perfect sacrifice.

The truth is followers of Christ have dual citizenship

- We are citizens of this world, in that we live in this world and are here to be ambassadors of Christ in every aspect
- We have a responsibility here and are have a part in this world
- But** our ultimate citizenship is in Heaven. (Phil 3:20; Eph 2:19)
 - for the Christian our citizenship is in heaven today
 - The way our responsibility and the part we play is dictated by the things of heaven.

-When the two line up, great. It will be easy and little friction.

-But, when they two don't line up, there is a higher calling, and that calling and authority we are to follow comes from God.