

Growing Deeper in Mark

MARK 12.1-27

VERSES 1-5: Jesus has just proclaimed judgement upon the religious leaders and their practices at the temple and outside the temple. In this parable we are reminded of God's longsuffering with his people and their repeated rejection of him. Just in case someone is tempted to think that God is being rash in his judgement, Jesus reminds them of the track record. In the parable the vineyard is the people of Israel, the tenants are the leaders, and the servants are the prophets. Throughout Israel's history God has sent his prophets to remind them that he is looking for fruit, but the people would not listen to the messengers.

VERSES 6-11: The owner of the vineyard finally sends his son, but he is killed so that the tenants can have the vineyard for themselves. Jesus wastes no time in asking what the result will be. He does not wait for anyone else to answer his question, he answers himself (the owner will kill the tenants). And Jesus wastes no time connecting all of this to the scripture quoting Psalm 118.22-23 (why don't you take the time to look that passage up and read just a couple more verses before you go on in these notes...you might be surprised what you read!). The stone (Jesus) the builders (the religious leaders) rejected has become the capstone (the one who completes God's salvific work, the one who is glorified). Jesus will indeed answer the cry of the crowds, "Hosanna" (God save). How masterfully interwoven this story is. From the triumphal entry, to the cursing of the fig tree, to the trashing of the temple, to this parable that Jesus tells...all pointing to Jesus as the perfect lamb of God whose death on the cross provides the eternal victory over sin and death. All that opposed him could do nothing but plot and scheme to have him arrested and put to death, unwittingly playing their part in God's plan of salvation.

VERSES 13-14: To that end the Pharisees and the Herodians team up to try and trap Jesus (this is something akin to the KKK and the Black Panthers collaborating with one another!) They seek to trap him, but begin with flattering words. Perhaps Jesus had Proverbs 29.5 on his mind "Those who

flatter their neighbors are spreading nets for their feet." They want to know if they should pay their taxes to Caesar. This is a mine field of a question, yet it takes Jesus only 2 statements and 3 questions to navigate it and even us it as a continuation of his teaching! Some of the mines are: to say not to pay taxes would be insurrection against Rome and raise the ire of Herod; to say to pay the tax would irritate the people who hated paying for the army that oppressed them and it would also seemingly condone worship (an offering to a deity) of Caesar for the coins bore his image and the inscription claiming his divinity.

VERSES 15-17: Jesus asks for a coin and asks whose image and inscription are on the coin. The answer is Caesar's. Jesus tells them to give to Caesar what is his. What is Caesar's? The coin, certainly. Jesus says they should indeed pay their taxes to Caesar because they benefit from Rome (peace, roads, building projects) even if they do not like or agree with all the things that come with it. Jesus affirms respect for civil authority, even imperfect authority. But he also says to give to God what is God's. What is God's? Obviously, worship belongs to God alone. They should respect civil authorities, but not worship them. But also, in this passage bearing one's image denotes ownership. What bears God's image? "God created mankind in his own image" (Genesis 1.27). Jesus brings the whole thing back around to our appropriate response to God is to be. We are to bear fruit as a means of worship. That was the command in the garden, to be fruitful in every part of our life. We are to do all we do to God's glory.

VERSES 18-27: Maybe the Sadducees weren't around for the last question, maybe they really thought their question was a stumper, maybe they just had to ask because that is what their boss sent them to do. I don't know what they were thinking, bringing such a goofy question (they didn't even believe in resurrection!). The ancient practice was for a brother to marry his brother's widow to continue his family line and to provide for the widow and any children. Jesus makes clear there is no marriage in heaven. One of the great qualities of marriage is that husband and wife can complement one another. There are many things Kim is better at than I am, and vice-versa. God said Adam needed a helper. Most of us Adams need a lot of help! But in heaven we will not need help, we will be perfectly provided for in the presence of Jesus, even as the angels are. O what a glorious day!