

Mark 12:35-44

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[0 : 00] Well it's time for us to think a little bit about that passage that we read earlier. If you want to keep your, just keep your Bible open on that page, page 1018, that'd be great.

And we're going to think a little bit about that passage together. I'm going to pray for us before we look into it. We'll sort of just think through it. Almighty God, we thank you once again for the Bible.

We thank you once again that you speak to us. We pray for our hearts now that you'd engage us by the power of your Holy Spirit. That you'd change us, that you'd mould and fashion us so that we become more like you.

And so bless us we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. One of the topics that you might say that's going to come up this morning is something that's kept coming up over the last few weeks.

It's the issue of authority. Of authority. Of authority. And what you realise as we think about authority is that submitting to authority, to an authority figure, is just as much of an issue today as it was 2,000 years ago.

[1 : 15] It continues to be an issue, doesn't it? Authority. That submitting to it, not getting our own way, continues to be, it can threaten our way of life.

I remember as a child, maybe you remember too, kicking back against your parents' authority. Maybe some of you younger ones are sort of wanting to do that when you don't get your own way.

I remember being told that I had to come in for my tea and thinking that wasn't fair. But as an adult we still do that. We still kick back against authority. I remember it wasn't so long about that I got a parking ticket.

What did I do? I didn't do it. Oh, yes, I shouldn't have parked there. Silly me. You kick back and got mad because I've got a parking ticket. I'm going to have to pay 60 quid or whatever it was. You think it's not fair.

Kicking back against authority comes when it impedes our life. And when we think that what's imposed on us is unjustified, that it's not appropriate or it's misplaced.

[2 : 22] Ultimately, what we see in the religious elite of the day, those that Jesus has been speaking to now, that come up time and time again, the religious elite, the Pharisees, it's those who kick back against Jesus' authority.

The reason they do that is because they don't realise where his authority comes from. Or if they do, they want to dismiss it. So what we're going to be thinking about this morning is we look at what it means to live with Jesus as the ultimate authority over us.

Jesus as the ultimate authority over us. We're going to be thinking about three points. God's king is supreme. Watch out for charlatans. And then the final point is imitate godly sacrifice.

So God's king is, firstly, God's king is supreme over all. I'm going to start in that verse 35. The discussion that we get from Jesus, it is quite technical, I think, to get our heads around.

Before we jump into what Jesus is saying, we just need to pause initially and just remind ourselves of something crucial in Jewish society and Jewish religion. As in every society, there are pre-existing authority structures that are in place.

[3 : 40] And that's in every society. There's pre-existing ways that the society works and you have authority figures. There is two authority figures which Jesus is going to talk about in these few verses.

The first one, which is the same as in our, as in British society really, is the authority of a father over a son. The authority of a father over a son.

That is the same in most societies. A father has authority over their children. In many ways, a son is inferior to their father. What I mean by that is that the way that things show up in the family is that they submit and obey their parents, their dad.

That is normal. Jesus reminds the crowd by cleverly using a question to remind them that God's Messiah, his anointed king, reminding them that God's Messiah, his anointed king, would be the descendant, the son of King David, who lived like a thousand years before.

Here's the clever question. Look with me in verse 35. He says to those listening, Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah, just another time for God's future king, say that the Messiah is the son of David?

[5 : 02] Why do they say that? The teachers of the law, what they say, they're correct to say that about the Messiah because of a promise that God gave to King David many years before.

Part of the promise, it comes from 2 Samuel 7. God gave a promise to King David. I'm just going to read some of it. This is what he says to King David. It's about a thousand years before. He said to King David, When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring, your seed.

I will raise up your offspring, succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. Here it is, verse 13. He says in 2 Samuel 7, He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

That's what he says to King David. A summary of the promise to David is, One of your offspring, one of your descendants, one of your children, literally your seed, will sit on the throne forever.

Jesus is in David's family line. King David was Jesus' ancestor a thousand years ago. So Jesus is the human descendant of David.

[6 : 12] He is his offspring. You might say his great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great answer. That is why the teachers of the law say that about the Messiah, about God's anointed king.

Why do they say that about who the Messiah is? Because that's who he is. What does that mean about the Messiah? Remember the structures of authority. A father is over his son. It would mean that the Messiah would be inferior to King David because he was his son, the father over his son.

So that's the first thing that Jesus is saying. That's what it was meant. That's the first level of authority. The second authority. The second authority is the authority of whoever sits at God's right hand.

That authority is supreme and it trumps all others. It is supreme and it trumps all others. Verse 36.

This is what Jesus is getting at. He quotes that psalm that we sing. He said, David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit. This is Psalm 110, verse 1 that Jesus quotes.

[7 : 21] Psalm 110. Psalm 110. He said, The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand. Those that sit at his right hand. There's ultimate authority. Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.

David is saying, The Lord God said to his Lord. To his Messiah. The second Lord is just the Messiah. The Lord God said to his Messiah, his King, sit at my right hand.

In other words, David's Lord, his Messiah, David's King, has supreme authority over everyone else. If that's the case, there is a natural question that follows.

How do these two levels of authority hold together in the same person? If David calls him Lord, verse 37. If David gives him supreme authority.

If he sees that this man sits at God's right hand. How is then he both David's Lord, the Messiah and David's son? Because the son is a place of Lester or Farrier.

[8 : 24] How can he be both? There's a conundrum. A puzzle. The psalm is shocking, actually, with what Jesus is saying. It's shocking because it seems to suggest that David calls his future son, who naturally would be inferior.

He seems to say his future son is actually superior to him. David says he's inferior to his future son. It's upside down authority.

It seems like it's back to front logic. Jesus is the son of David, no doubt of that. But the reason? He's also the son of God. The opening line of Mark 1, chapter 1.

The beginning of the good news about Jesus, the Messiah, the anointed king, the son of God. Jesus, the Messiah, is the supreme, the highest authority. And David knew that.

David knew that. David knew that Jesus, that the Messiah was, even though he was his son, was superior to him.

[9 : 26] That's actually the answer to the question that came a few weeks ago. You might remember, they were questioning Jesus' authority.

Where does he get his authority from? The reason he gets his authority is because the Messiah is sat at God's right hand. As we've been going through over the last few weeks and seeing people's response to Jesus, we've seen those who reject him and want to kill him.

We've seen those who are deceived, not knowing the power of God and don't understand the Bible. We've seen those who asked him where his authority came from and this is the answer. All of it kind of comes together here.

The misunderstanding, the rejection, because they don't understand or accept who Jesus is, because they don't really know or want to dismiss the authority he has away from. He is the son of God, given authority over all, by God.

His kingship and his kingdom is supreme over all others. It's supreme over all others. It's understanding this that enables everyone, actually, to accept Jesus' authority, his wisdom and his kingdom.

[10 : 39] To be able to accept that he has the position of first place importance in our lives, in their lives. The basis of giving everything to God. Knowing his kingdom is greater than David's.

So that is the basis. That is where he gets his authority from. It comes from God himself.

We then come to point number two. There's two pictures of two people come in the rest of the verses that we're looking at together.

And the point of the second one, Jesus makes it right at the very beginning, is to watch out for charlatans. Watch out for charlatans.

That's my second point. The point is to watch out for people who don't live as if God's kingdom or the kingdom of Jesus is the supreme kingdom. Keep your eyes peeled for those who want their own kingdom project to set a stage.

[11 : 46] Notice with me that what Jesus says, it's not about who they should or shouldn't follow. I suppose in some way that's implied that they shouldn't copy these people that he warns them about.

But his main point is that they need to be suspicious and keep their eyes alert to watch out for how people live. There are types of people that don't have God's kingdom at the forefront of their mind.

And rather they give supreme importance to the prospering of their own personal kingdom. It's that that takes authority in their life. It's what they give allegiance to and it comes out in their behaviour.

Jesus tells the crowd to look out for them. Their actions, as many words as the saying goes, their actions speak louder than their words, than their profession. We see a few things to look out for.

The first thing that Jesus wants them to look out for is their pride. Look with me in verse 38. He says, watch out for the teachers of the law.

[12 : 51] And here's the thing to watch out for. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces. Every member of society would be represented in the marketplace.

It was the place in society where everybody gathered to meet and to be treated with respect in that gathering where you'd be viewed by every sort of subgroup and subset of society.

It'd be seen by every group. Flowing robes were worn by teachers of the law. It told everyone who they were without having to say anything. They were robes used for sort of special festivals and ceremonies.

It told everyone watching on of their status and their religious devotion. They would wait to be greeted. Being greeted was a mark of respect. The person of lesser social standing would always initiate the greeting.

Never the other way around. It wouldn't be uncommon for them to address these men as master, teacher or rabbi. Titles of great honour. Jesus says, beware of people who act like that.

[14 : 00] Who want that. Who say that they expect that or demand it. Be wary of those people. Watch out for them. That's the first thing to watch out for. The second thing to watch out for is greed.

Verse 39. They have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. Not only do the important seats tell everyone they were.

It's pride again. But these places of honour receive the best food. The first cuts of the finest meats. They ate like kings.

They used their position to grab what they could. It's all for personal gain. Watch out for people who are using their position for personal gain.

And the final thing Jesus wants them to look out for is corruption and manipulation. Verse 40. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers.

[15 : 00] Widows in those days were not provided for in the same way they might be today. They didn't have the same earning potential as a man. If a husband died they could be left destitute with nothing.

There are many commands we see in the Bible to look out for widows. To care for them and to support them. These men exploit the vulnerable in their own homes.

We don't know exactly what they're doing to the widows in their own homes. We're not told. At the very least we could assume that it's spiritual exploitation of some sort.

Perhaps receiving money from them. Perhaps receiving hospitality and generosity in exchange for a prayer. It would seem. They make a show.

They go in their homes, exploit them, get what they want and then in return, in return and not before, they will pray for them. It is wicked.

[15 : 56] It is wicked. They are ruthless. Jesus says watch out for them. Their only care is themselves. This is what you're looking out for.

Their own kingdom is more important to them than Jesus. Watch out for them. When a nurse or a GP gives a medical examination, they must pay full attention to the whole body to diagnose the problem.

They block out everything to count the pulse and check the patient's breathing. It is our job to keep an eye, to pay full attention to any problem that might exist in the church.

We must keep our finger on the pulse of the church and watch out for any problems. Leaders that are unaccountable, indispensable, manipulative, coercive, out for personal self-gain, self-interest and self-deception.

Watch out for them. I know what to look out for. And I think, just reflecting on this, I think one of the problems, it's a great blessing that we have in the modern age.

[17 : 04] You know, we've got the internet, we can access someone's ministry, they're teaching them books. Anyway, from anywhere in the world, you can access that. But the problem with that is, as good as it is to receive great teaching, you only get to actually see them from a distance and not up close.

And gifting becomes more impressive than godliness. Competence is valued over character. And that's not what Jesus looks at. The criteria Jesus looks at is for a faithful leader of his church that glorifies him and loves his kingdom.

So it's the things to look for. What value do they place on Jesus and his kingdom, his authority, the values of the kingdom of God? How do they treat the weakest, the most vulnerable? Is it with respect or are they just collateral damage when they get in the way?

The kingdom that you choose, that you acknowledge as supreme, that kingdom will affect the choices people make. Those leaders see their own kingdoms as supreme and say they do what they need to keep their kingdom on top.

Jesus doesn't hold back. End of verse 40. These men will be punished most severely. It is one thing to go after your own kingdom.

[18 : 30] It is far worse if you do it in the name of God and trample on his people in the process. Watch out and stay away when you see it and warn others.

One of the things, I'm always a little bit suspicious of someone who names their ministry after themselves. I'm always a little bit suspicious. It's not universal that. There's some great ministries that have been named after, people have named after themselves.

Or worse, I've seen people name the Bible after themselves. The so-and-so study Bible. A little bit dangerous if you've seen that. Off the back of this, I just want to say, if you ever see even a hint of any of this in my leadership and my ministry, I'm telling you, I'm almost commanding you, come and rebuke me.

And I mean that seriously. Come and warn me and tell me that you've seen a hint of it. And because none of us are free of sin.

And I need to be shown where my blind spots are and I need to repent. So, watch out for charlatans.

[19 : 52] Final point, imitate the godly. Imitate the godly. This poor widow could not be more different, could she, to the teachers of the law.

She could not be more different. Jesus just finished teaching. You can picture the scene. He just finished teaching about who to watch out for. And then after his teaching, maybe he's just full of emotion as he's got all this out to those who are listening to him.

And so he goes and he sits down opposite the place, he said, where the offerings are put. And he noticed someone who, in society, she has zero respect.

She's completely vulnerable. She's poor. I'm guessing perhaps it would have been obvious by how she looked, maybe her clothes. To everyone else, she would go unnoticed.

But Jesus notices her. Verse 41, that's what we read. Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury.

[20 : 55] The way it worked in the temple, there would have been different offering boxes dotted around. Each offering box would have been inscribed with something on the front with different names for different types of offering that you'd want to give your money to.

So it would have been a busy moment in the life of the temple. Lots of people sort of queuing up to put their money in. Each offering box would have been a large container that you dropped money in.

Which means you could tell how much money somebody had put in because of the noise of the rattle as the money hit the bottom of the container. As it hit the bottom.

So you could tell it was obvious who the rich and the poor were. That's what we read. Many rich people threw in large amounts. It would have made it real thin as their money hit the bottom.

You know, lots of noise. But a poor widow, she comes in. It's obvious she's poor. Because she, there's only two noises. Clink. Clink. As she drops in two small coins.

[21 : 52] It's then that Jesus calls his disciples over. This poor widow, we don't even know her name. She's a nameless nobody. Forgotten, not given a second thought by everyone else.

Nobody else sees her. It's almost like she, like, just no one else can see her. She is a second class citizen. In Jewish culture, women were marginalised as it was at that time.

But out of everyone else there, this is who Jesus wants his disciples to take note of. Verse 43. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, Truly, I tell you, this poor widow put more into the treasury than all the others.

They all gave out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty, put in everything. All she had to live on. She displays true worship.

She displays true worship. This woman is the model to them. She gives to God what is God's.

[22 : 58] Her whole self. She understands the scriptures and the power of God. She knows the greatest commandment is to love God and love her neighbour as herself. She loves God's kingdom.

She knows it's the greatest. And that the king of the kingdom, the Messiah, has authority over her life. Her actions demonstrate she knows the Lord personally. And she gives herself everything she has to him.

When something is important in your life, you will do that.

When something matters to you. You might have heard that phrase, people who are playing sport and the game or whatever they're playing matters a lot to them. And you hear that phrase, they left everything out there on the field.

They gave everything. It's because the game demanded and it meant so much in that moment. They left everything out there. It means all their physical exertion. Jesus' kingdom demands that you put him in first place.

[24 : 03] And it demands everything of you. You can't have Jesus competing in your heart with something else. The hymn, when I survey the wondrous cross.

Last line. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. It demands that you acknowledge Jesus' kingdom as supreme in every moment.

The widow knows that the two coins will not make a great financial difference to the temple. She knows that. She knows. She's not giving the money to the temple so that it's going to be able to build its next whatever.

Or provide all the wages for some priest. She doesn't know that. She knows that's not going to do it. She's giving the money to God.

That's who she's giving the money to. She's giving the money to God out of love for him. Her actions just show us that she adores the living God. She loves the Lord. She's so enamoured with who God is that she just wants to devote everything she has to him.

[25 : 18] You look at this woman. It is so challenging to us. It's so challenging to us, isn't it? Everything she has. It's the act of worship to make a sacrifice for Jesus.

You think of the things that we have. The commodities that we possess. I know we try to structure three Ts to help you remember. Our time, our talents, our treasure.

Our time, our talents, our treasure. the challenge for us is to look at the way that we use those three things, our time, our talents our treasure and how do we see this woman, the godliness the love that she has and not give for some other reason but give because we love God, because we love Jesus Christ, the challenge is for us to see this widow's love for God for giving everything she had and ask the question, how could we grow in giving our time, our talents and our treasures to God just because we love him just because we love Jesus and we love his kingdom you know that the only way that we can do that is if we know the thing that we started with that Jesus Christ sits at God's right hand, that he is the Messiah, the anointed king as if we know that his kingdom is the greatest we know that his kingdom is the greatest and ultimately as we just draw in for a close what are we seeing when we see this woman we're seeing Christ in her aren't we?

we're seeing Christ in her because she gives everything she has and what does Christ do? he gives everything he has for us the supreme act of giving comes when Jesus gives up his life for me she models him it's Christ in her that is doing that it's Christ in her that knows that she she can give everything and still be loved and cared for and protected by the living God respond let's let's consider what it would look like in our lives to consider responding in the same way imitating this woman because if you're imitating this woman you're imitating Jesus if you're imitating this woman you're imitating Jesus watch out for those who don't live that way watch out for who don't who don't do that and turn in faith to live a life that honours Christ let me pray for us almighty God it's such a challenge to hear to see this woman and we recognise that there's so many areas of our lives that we would that you've touched and that you've changed and that we we remember the days when we were we didn't follow you and we didn't have a care for spiritual matters but I thank you that you've changed our hearts and I pray that you'd equip and help us um out just out of love for you to give what we can with our time that precious commodity that we all have the same of our talents the gifts that you've blessed us with to serve others to give of our time our talents and our treasure the money every penny that we have is given to us by you and we want to think that through as we give and sacrifice all these things for your name and so we and we do that by looking at your son who has given everything for us his own life so that we could be redeemed and so we praise you and we thank you in Jesus name

Amen and