

Jesus can handle it

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn to that part of the Bible that we were looking at before in Mark 12. We're going to think about that passage together. We're in this series in Mark's Gospel.

We're in the fourth part of that series. You can see how Mark's Gospel's waited, because the last quarter is one week of his life.

Whereas all the rest is leading up to that. So we're in that part of Mark's Gospel. I'm going to pray for us, and then we'll look at those few verses together and think about what it means.

Just a reminder, it's on page 1017. It's always handy to have that open as we go through, because we're referring to it as we go through. But let me pray for us, and then we'll look at it together.

Almighty God, we thank you again for your word, the Bible. We thank you, and we pray that you would speak to us now through it. We ask that you'd help us to concentrate our minds and our hearts on what you want to say.

[1 : 03] Give us open hearts to receive the word that you have for us. We pray that you'd mould and fashion us to be more like Jesus. Help us to concentrate.

And so where we've erred or made mistakes, correct us and teach us, train us, so that we might be fit to do your work in this world.

We ask for this in the name of Christ. Amen. Question this morning, as we start. How much can someone handle?

How much can someone handle or take on board before they break? Before they snap? Now I know we were talking about building just now.

I don't know very much about construction or building materials. But one thing I do know is that every material used, whether it's concrete or the different woods that are used, before it is sold, it has to go under stress testing.

[2 : 01] You've heard of that? In the stress test, the manufacturer, what they do is they get the material and they put it under increasing pressure, strain, and under tension to see how much pressure, how much strain it can take.

And there is a point, they keep going, there is a point when the pressure, the weight, the tension becomes too great and the material that is used, whether it's metal or concrete, whatever it is, it will buckle.

It will give way. And then it can be decided from what that is, what the maximum load that it can take, what it's suitable for, or if it needs to be improved.

The point in the stress test is to work out how much stress, how much pressure that material can handle before it breaks, before it buckles or gives way.

As people, we're a little bit like that, aren't we? How much can we handle? How much stress and pressure can we take before we buckle, before we snap?

[3 : 12] Jesus is in the final week of his life and he knows it. He knows it. He knows that the religious elite, you might say, the Jewish leaders, he knows that they're after him.

There's quite a lot to have on your mind, I think, to know that that's what's coming. And naturally, perhaps you might ask anyone, particularly when we know that that's what is going on in Jesus' mind and his life, how much can one man handle?

How much can this man handle Jesus Christ? Will he snap and explode? Will there be a moment when the pressure just gets too much for him?

Is there going to be a final straw when he just loses it and says, I've had it with you guys? When he's just overwhelmed and frustrated?

This passage, what we read, there's three groups of people who come to Jesus. They all have different mindsets, opinions of him, and they come to him with different agendas. We see three

groups.

[4 : 20] We see those who oppose Jesus. We see those who are deceived by the world and what they think. And then the third group, the third man, I suppose, is someone who is genuinely inquisitive.

He generally wants to know. What I want us to notice this morning is Jesus' character. Jesus, what we see, amazing, with everything that you picture what's going on in his mind, what he knows what's coming is the cross at the end of the week.

You know when you've got something, a big thing that's going on in your life, and it's the little thing that gets you? The smashed glass or the spilling of the milk.

That's the thing that, like, or somebody says something to you, and you think, how dare you?

Wouldn't you think, with everything that Jesus has got going on in his life, that it's when somebody comes to him and says something to him, and he's going to live there?

But we don't see that. He doesn't get overwhelmed. He doesn't flip out. He doesn't buckle. Jesus has the wisdom and the authority to handle anything and anyone who comes to him.

[5 : 30] Jesus has the wisdom and the authority to handle anything and anyone who comes to him, regardless of their intention. So three things. Jesus can handle the deceitful.

Jesus can handle the deceived. And Jesus can handle the inquisitive. The deceitful, the deceived, and the inquisitive. We're going to take the deceitful. Jesus can handle the deceitful.

The religious elite have said they're apt to catch Jesus. Their first tactic, you might say, they want to trip him up with his own words. They are devious. Verse 14, you'll notice, they try flattery, butter him up.

Verse 14. Teacher, we know. We know. You're a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others. Because you pay no attention to who they are. But you teach the word of God in accordance with the truth.

Butter him up. It's quite ironic, isn't it? That what they say about him is true, yet they themselves are insincere. They set Jesus up, thinking they'll trip him up. It's like placing a banana skin in his path that he's going to walk right into.

[6 : 32] And what do they say? Is it right? Is it right to pay the poor tax, the imperial tax to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we? Bit of background to their question.

You think we're back in first century Rome. Paying taxes to the Roman Empire, they've taken over everywhere. Paying taxes to Rome was not popular. The people of Israel did not want to support the Roman Empire.

They wanted to be God's people in God's land, ruled by God alone. This question sets up a problem for Jesus. Or so they think. Because if Jesus answers yes, pay the tax to the Romans, that's really going to annoy everyone.

Because the people of Israel. Because they're going to think, well, we don't want to support the Roman Empire. Why are you telling us to do that? It will suggest that he supports Rome himself. So if that's not the right answer, perhaps Jesus would just say, no, don't pay it.

Well, he can't do that either. Because if he answers no, the people would love him. But that would cause a problem with the authorities over him. It's the Romans. So it could cause, the Romans saw that if you were suggesting don't do what the Romans say, it could cause a revolt amongst the people.

[7 : 43] There could be an uprising. No one might pay taxes. And therefore that could be punishable by death. So whether Jesus answers yes or no, he's caused a problem.

The trap is set. The banana skin is in place. Will Jesus fall for it? Verse 15. Why are you trying to trap me? He asked. Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.

They brought the coin and he asked them, whose image is this and whose inscription? Caesar's, they replied. Then Jesus said to them, give back to Caesar what's Caesar's. And to God what is God's.

Those listening are amazed. We've got to break down what Jesus says. Because he is genius, but we need to know what he's talking about. Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. First part of his answer. The Pharisee, what he's saying is, the Pharisees, the guys who are speaking to him, they're happy to carry the coins. They're happy to sit under the economy and benefit from the system.

[8 : 42] They use Roman money in everyday life. They're part of the system. Jesus' argument, if you're happy to carry the coins and benefit by sitting under the Roman economy, you've got to

abide by the rules.

The coin bears Caesar's image. And therefore, under God, these coins do belong to Caesar. You can see his image. It's on the back. So that's the first part. Give to Caesar what it says.

Then he says, second part of his answer. Give to God what is God's. And here's where the genius of the agony comes. So the coin bears the image of Caesar. If the image of Caesar goes to Caesar, then the image of God must go back to God as well.

What is it that bears God's image? They do. They bear God's image. People. When God made man, Genesis 1, first chapter of the Bible, what do we read?

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God who created it. It is people. They themselves. Every person made in the image of God. Jesus' point, you must give to Caesar his coins.

[9:49] You must give to God yourself. His image belongs to him. If a painter does a self-portrait, that image of themselves that they've painted, it belongs to them, doesn't it?

They alone can do with what they want of the image they've made of themselves because it belongs to them. God is our creator. He's displayed something of himself in every person.

We, people, different to the rest of creation, are unique because we display, we image God in a particular way that nothing else in the created world does. We belong to him.

There is a fingerprint of God in a special way in every human, which means we belong to him. He's saying, if you're going to argue like that, you give to God, you give to Caesar what he says, but you must give to God, your whole self.

That is true of all people. Everyone should give all of themselves to him, devote every part of their life to him because he made you to do it for him. That's true in the most ordinary part of your day to the most extravagant because he made you.

[11:06] It's done to please him for him because everything you have comes from him and you are his. That's how he answers the deceitful.

He turns it on their head and shows them. He's not overwhelmed. And notice the grace. He doesn't give them the silent treatment, but he answers them in a way that shows their error. It's loving to tell them that because they've made a mistake.

In their deceit, he shows them the right way. Okay, so that's the deceitful. Second, he gets the deceived. Jesus can handle the deceived. Next up with questions for Jesus, we have the Sadducees.

They're not deceitful in the same kind of way. They are deceived. They do tell their question, it seems kind of, it seems like there is a bit of a hidden agenda still.

The issue that the Sadducees has is they have an issue with resurrection. Basically, they said there isn't one. People don't rise from the dead. That's what they thought. Many people today would think that too.

[12:12] So in verse 18, what they're hoping is that when they come to Jesus, they're hoping as they question Jesus that Jesus' answer will confirm what they already think is true.

They think he's going to confirm that resurrection is false. I'm not going to go through the whole question again. To summarise it, this is the nub of what, how their question goes.

If a woman marries and her husband dies and she gets remarried again and then that husband dies and she keeps doing that and it's, so she ends up where she's been married seven times.

If she gets resurrected, if she's resurrected and goes to heaven, which husband of the seven will she be married to? Will be the most important? That's the question. Jesus' response, verse 24, I am not in error.

That word for error, it can be translated as deceived or led astray. And he gives two reasons why they're deceived. He gives one, see what he says? He says because, the first reason that he gives is because they don't know, they don't understand the Bible, the scriptures.

[13:19] They don't know or understand. That's the first reason he says that they're in error. The second reason, not only do they not understand or know the Bible, the scriptures, they don't know the power of God. They don't know the power of God.

We're going to take the second one first just because of the way it comes as we're reading it. First one is the power of God. You don't know the power of God. Verse 25, when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage.

They will be like the angels in heaven. He says the power of God, this is what he's saying, Jesus is saying, he's saying the power of God is seen in rising people from the dead, giving them bodies that are not of this earth.

Resurrection bodies like angels in heaven. He's not saying they become angels in heaven. He said their bodies are different to the physical ones they have on this earth. They're like. What does he mean by that?

It means that they have bodies that are no longer affected by the effects of sin. They no longer sin or are affected by sin. That is what their bodies in heaven are like.

[14:18] Which means that if they're different, they won't sin either. Which means as well that if there's no sin, it means relationships in heaven will be free of sin.

It means they'll be in relationships. Think about what this means in a relationship. There'll be no fallouts. No fallouts. There'll be no stubbornness or pride.

There'll be no miscommunication or anxiety. There'll be no jealousy. None of that in a relationship in heaven. There won't be a choice about which relationship is the most intimate and the most important because all relationships will be more intimate, not less, because they won't be mad and damaged by sin.

Instead, they'll be full of the light and the glory and the grace of God in perfect peace and harmony. There will be resurrection relationships. The question that they ask is a non-question.

Relationships won't be less, there'll be more. But they'll be more intimate. That answer that Jesus gives cannot be comprehended if you don't know the power of God.

[15:39] It can't be understood. You have to have understood and tasted and experienced the power of God in your own life to understand what Jesus is talking about. If you haven't experienced the power of God in your life, what I've just said you won't get.

If you have, you'll know. That's the truth. That was the truth. That's what he's saying to them. Without knowing the power of God that raises people from death to life yourself, you won't know the power of God.

So that's the first thing, you don't know the power of God. Second thing, they don't know or understand the Bible. Verse 26, that's what he says. He says, now about the dead rising.

Have you not read in the book of Moses in the account of the burning bush how God said to him, I'm the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He's not the God of the dead but of the living.

They've not understood the Bible either. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, just to give you a plotted timeline of the history and dealing with God's people.

[16:45] They died a long time before Moses. And yet when God speaks to Moses, he talks about those three men as if they're still alive. He doesn't say, I was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob back then.

He says, I am. I'm still. He still is because they're alive with him. He is the God of the living not the dead. The Sadducees are deceived because they don't know the power of God, they've not experienced it and they don't understand what the Bible says.

And the reason behind that is because they don't have a relationship with God themselves.

Resurrection is foolish to them because they've never experienced life that comes from having a true relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

If they had that, they would know. They would know. Trying to wonder, that's still true today.

Trying to understand the Bible, trying to understand it at all without Jesus is like, it's like trying to drive without your headlights on. Have you ever tried to drive without your headlights on?

[18:01] Accidentally, I have. On our car, like the headlights, there's an auto setting so that when you turn it on in the dark, they just come on. But the kids had been fiddling with the setting and knocked it so just like, you can have it normal.

I just turned it on and was like, just driving around, keep getting, eventually somebody flashed me and was like, what are you doing? Like, you can't, it's ridiculous, isn't it? You can't see where you're going, you can't drive as well, you can't read the road.

Jesus Christ illuminates. He illuminates. He puts headlights on the Bible and says, this is what it means. I'm here, this is a living word, I'm alive and there's power in what I say, in me.

Like light, headlights, the light of the road, he shines his light on his word so that we can know what he means because you have a relationship with it. And that relationship with him means that the

life-giving power of him is working in your life.

Knowing the power and the truth of God comes from having a relationship with Jesus so you can see reality, so you can know him, so you can understand what you read and you need him to light it up like headlights.

[19 : 17] If you don't have a relationship with Jesus, it means you'll never truly grasp what he's talking about. you'll never understand. Jesus can handle those who've been deceived.

He does it by telling them the truth. Finally, we've got the, we've had the, the deceitful, the deceived and lastly we've got the inquisitive.

The inquisitive. No, a group this time just one man, final man, he approaches Jesus this time with a genuine question, genuine spiritual desire, intrigue.

This bloke, he's a teacher of the law, he's overheard the conversations that have been happening in the background. He comes to Jesus end of verse 28 and he asks Jesus of all the commandments which is the most important.

Verse 29, Jesus replied, the most important one, answer Jesus, is this. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

[20 : 20] The second is this, love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. The man agrees with Jesus, well said teacher, but know it's with me in his response, in his response to Jesus he tags something on at the end.

Do you see that? Verse 32, you're right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him and he says, to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, to love your neighbour as yourself.

And then here it is, you see what he says? Something added on that Jesus didn't say. He said, to see that it's more important what you've just said than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

That's what he adds on. We need to pause briefly and dig down what this bloke means by saying that it's more important. Burnt offerings and sacrifices, what are they?

That was at the heart of worshipping God in the Jewish temple. Right at the heart of it. It was how God had set and told them to worship him. Sacrifices were made for lots of different reasons.

[21 : 23] People's sacrifices was to say thanks to God, to show devotion and love to him. They were a way to a point that we needed sacrifice to pay for our sin. All of that was at the heart of worshipping in the temple.

This inquisitive bloke understands something really key. Key actually of what it means to belong to one of God's people that to love God and to love people is more important than all those burnt offerings and sacrifices.

It's more important in many ways than everything that's happening inside the temple. Worshipping God, here it is, worshipping God, worshipping Jesus, is fundamentally about what is going on in your heart, in your soul.

True worship is loving God and loving people. And that's not one day a week, but all day every day. You might say that true worship is a lifestyle.

It's the posture of your heart towards God that informs the choices that you make all the time. The choices that you make day in, day out to put God first even in the mundane moments.

[22 : 36] Not to be self-centered but to think of others more important than yourself. Having that self-sacrificial heart towards God and others in everyday life. Not just when people are at the temple when everyone's watching, but all of life when no one's watching but the only person that can see you is the living God.

That's true worship. And we don't worship by sacrificing animals. Jesus, we say, has fulfilled the law. He's the one that all these sacrifices pointed to. He's the one who sacrificed himself to save us from our sin.

And now God's people, the church, are the living temple of God with him at the centre. And yet worshipping God is still an all-of-life posture for us. Yes, we're worshipping God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we meet on a Sunday, we call it a service of worship. But it is possible, isn't it? Is it? It's possible. It's possible for me. It's possible for anyone to come on a Sunday and look the path, stand and sing, do the right things.

But the living God cares about the worship to him in your heart that you love him and love his people, not just on a Sunday, but you have that attitude towards him all the time.

[23 : 51] But worshipping the living God is a lifestyle. It is the air you breathe and governs every decision you make. The question, before anything, any choice, is this loving God and loving to others?

Is this loving to God and loving others? This man gets it. He gets it. Verse 44, Jesus says that he's answered wisely, thinks highly of him.

And his answer to him is not to have a goal. It comes across, I think, when you read it, like he's having a goal. But it's there as an encouragement, actually, to say you're on the right path. You see what he says in verse 4?

He says to him, you're not far from the kingdom of God. You're close. He's saying, keep going with that mindset. You're not far off. There's the finish line that you have to cross still.

The finish line that he doesn't have is he doesn't have faith in Jesus. He knows what to do, but is he doing it in his faith? He must love God and love his neighbour. And if he keeps on, if he keeps on going, meditating, pursuing, that he will realise that he can't do that perfectly.

[24 : 58] And therefore, he needs faith in Jesus to be saved from all the times he doesn't do it. Yes, it's important that he doesn't just show up as a tick box exercise. He doesn't just think, I've done my bit, I'm covered.

But equally, he can't do enough on his own either. When it comes to doing those commands, like this man here, we know that we don't do it perfectly.

We know that we can't love God on God or never to the standard that Jesus sets us. Every one of us, every one of us, we've all made mistakes, we've all fallen short.

He still needs the sacrifice because he needs faith in Jesus. He needs faith in Jesus, faith in the living God, that a relationship to know him on a personal level, where he can go to the temple watching the sacrifice and plead that for all the times he's not loved that his sin would be covered. Jesus is encouraging that he's on a journey. Keep pursuing, keep going down that path. Don't stop, you're close. I've never run a marathon, but we've seen it on the telly where they get to the end, the streets are lined with people and they're clapping, giving him encouragement, saying keep going.

[26 : 13] It's just round the corner, you're going to get there. Those people, it's important, isn't it? Those encouragements that they get. There's just one more corner to go.

There's one more obstacle and you're there. There is one obstacle that every person inquiring, looking into the Christian faith, must get over to reach Jesus. You must put your faith in him.

You must trust him. Knowing true things about him is a good start. It's a great start, knowing true things about Jesus, going the right way about it, trusting what he says and who he has to be.

And it's good, isn't it? It's good and fine to be like this man, to be inquisitive, to have genuine questions. If you have genuine questions, if you're inquisitive about Jesus and Christianity, can I encourage you to air them?

I'd encourage you to air them to someone, another Christian you know, but air them to Jesus yourself. If you've got questions for Jesus, ask him. Keep going with your inquisitive mind.

[27 : 22] You may be closer to a transformed life than you think. You can ask Jesus to give you faith. You can ask Jesus for that. And so, Jesus under stress, how much can he handle?

We started off by saying, is he going to snap? He doesn't snap. Each answer we see, he doesn't snap, he's not overwhelmed, has a treasure of wisdom and authority. He handles the deceitful with a review, he handles the deceived with the truth, and he handles the inquisitive with encouragement. Now, I don't know where you sit, where everyone sits with Jesus today. Whether you want to oust him, where you want to sing him out and have a go, whether you think he's misguided and got it wrong, or whether you have genuine questions that you want him to answer for you.

But if Jesus responds to people the same way as he responds to these three, he can handle your questions. He can handle anything you speak to him about.

He's not surprised by anything. He wants you to go to him with all the things that are on your mind to speak about and what's going on in your head and he can handle it. He might rebuke you.

[28 : 35] He might give you an answer you don't want to hear, but he won't be overwhelmed by what you've got to say. You won't stress him out and he won't snap. And he will show you if you go and if you seek him, if you have a genuine desire to know if what Jesus says is to know if he is the way and the truth and the life, if you want to experience and know that life that he offers is real and

true, he can show you part of it.

He will give you himself and he will give you faith in him. He will become your king and he will lead you for all of your days.

His offer is there to everyone to follow him. Let me pray. Amen. Almighty God, Lord, I thank you and I praise you that you don't get overwhelmed or stressed out or you don't snap or buckle when we come to you.

There's nothing that you're surprised about. There's nothing that you get alarmed about. Lord, we're so different when we compare ourselves to what you're like.

We're totally the opposite. We do have pressure points. It feels like there is times when we know in our own lives perhaps there's one thing that's happened and we buckle and we haven't been able to handle life.

[30 : 11] And sometimes we've tried to figure stuff out on our own. We've tried to figure it out in our own strength. We had questions and we've had no one to turn to. We've turned to the wrong places for help.

Lord, I thank you that you're the best place that we can turn to when we can't handle things, when we've got questions about what's going on. We can't handle it but you can.

And so I pray, living God, that you'd give us that increased desire to keep turning to you with our questions, that you'd keep us inquisitive, that you'd encourage us.

Lord, where we have been deceitful, where we have been deceived, would you correct us and rebuke us where we've been deceived? Would you teach us the truth?

Would you give us a relationship with you so that we know the power of God and we understand what you're saying? Would you shine a headlight onto the Bible so that we get it, so that it's not like we're driving around in the dark?

[31 : 13] And so I pray that you'd give us faith in your name once again. Would you grow us and bless us? And so we praise you, that you've spoken this morning. In Jesus' name, Amen.