



Bible Study
2014-2015

Heart of a Servant

The Gospel of Mark

LESSON 12

There have been jokes made for centuries about the various kinds of denominations and religious practices people engage in every day. A light-hearted one was told to me the other day.

“A man arrives at the gates of heaven. St. Peter asks, “Denomination?” The man says, “Methodist.” St. Peter looks down his list, and says, “Go to room 24, but be very quiet as you pass room 8.

Another man arrives at the gates of heaven. “Denomination?”

“Lutheran.”

“Go to room 18, but be very quiet as you pass room 8.”

A third man arrives at the gates. “Denomination?”

“Presbyterian.”

“Go to room 11, but be very quiet as you pass room 8.”

The man says, “I can understand there being different rooms for different denominations, but why must I be quiet when I pass room 8?”

St. Peter tells him, “Well the Baptists are in room 8, and they think they’re the only ones here.”

Hopefully, we can laugh at ourselves with all of our idiosyncracies and pet peeves, but there were particular beliefs and styles of worship that Jesus did not call a joke. They involved lines of division that had faulty foundations and misapplied truths which were detrimental to people’s eternity and understanding of God. As Warren Wiersbe commented, “How tragic it is when religious people cling to their traditions and reject the living truth when it is so evident before their very eyes.”

As you begin your lesson, fulfill the ritualistic tradition that has been established through our past studies: take your heart to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to prepare you to receive His word. Not all traditions are dangerous!

“Both tradition and truth inform your conscience. There are times where the conscience (due to tradition) can be needlessly condemning in areas where there is no biblical issue. In fact, it can try to hold you to the very thing the Lord is trying to release you from!”

~ John MacArthur

Read Mark 12:1-12 and Isaiah 5:1-7

1. Fill in the blanks from Mark 12:1 that highlight all of the actions taken by this man in Jesus' parable.

“A man _____ a vineyard and _____ a
_____ around it, _____ a place for the wine vat
and _____ a tower. And he _____ it
to vinedressers and went into a _____.”

2. Focusing on these key words, God the Father likens Himself to the man in the parable and reveals His loving preparation, provision, protection and purpose in His planting: profitable productivity. It may be a mouthful to say, but it's the fulness of the Father's heart being displayed. Every thing that could be done to bring about a valuable and fruitful harvest was performed. A vineyard that could produce fruit that would be a blessing for the man, his vinedressers, and countless others for years to come.

a. Likewise, what does 2 Peter 1:3 say that God has done for US?

b. God has assured us that we have no lack of preparation, provision, protection and power for any thing that happens in our lives and for our Christian walk. This divine power is given because of the intimate relationship and fellowship we have with Jesus. Read the next verse (2 Peter 1:4) and write down another gracious gift we have been given that changes us inwardly.

c. Summarize each of the following verses in your own words:

1) “planted” Jeremiah 17:(7)8 -

2) “hedge” Psalm 139:5 -

3) “dug” Isaiah 51:1 -

4) “built (a tower)” Proverbs 18:10 -

d. Using one or more of the four words above, describe how the Lord has done this in your own life.

- e. There are many precious promises that God has given to us. If you have another special one you would like to share with others, write it here. But take a moment to thank the Lord for what He has done for you, promised to be to you, and ask Him to prepare the soil of your heart for the planting of His Word.

***“The commission to work in His vineyard is a gracious command from the King.
To disobey is more to the servant’s peril than will ever be realized this side of eternity.
To labor for Him is to reap a heavenly bounty, to secure a place
at the King’s feast and to sip heavenly joy while counting
all things of earth incomparable to the glory of eternity.”
~ Anonymous***

3. The parable of Mark 12:2-8 reflects not only Israel’s history, but brings to light their hidden thoughts of darkness. Love hopes all things. And it is the love of God to warn men (sometimes through prophecy) in order that they might have the opportunity to repent and not fulfill their sinful heart’s desire.
- a. Look at verse 6 as an example of this. What did the man say after sending his beloved son to the wicked vinedressers?
- b. It had not happened yet, but you can see God’s divine hope and almost hear His voice reflecting how obvious it is that the men should revere the son. Yet, just as man has been given a free will, these men chose to fulfill Psalm 118:22-23. Can you think of a time where the Lord has warned you, through a sermon, a friend, His word, or some other way, that what you were doing was wrong or you were heading in a wrong direction? Recount a time of warning and your response here.

4. As we have looked at before, stewardship implies responsibility and requires faithfulness. Notice that Jesus said the vinedressers KNEW who the son was, but sin drove them to get rid of him so they could have what he had. Instead, they lost everything. All of our sinful choices are a mistake. Sometimes, we justify our sinful choices or minimize our offenses. Pray first and ask if any of these statements below (or situations similar) have been true of you.

- Slight dishonesty with your taxes or reporting finances inaccurately.
- Speaking (or acting) contrary to your spouse (when there is not a sin issue) in front of others and thereby making yourself look better or “right” in your response.
- Speaking negatively against ANYONE in order to justify yourself in some area. If you could not repeat your words about them, to them, then this could be a warning.
- Being disobedient to your parent’s wishes. Believing that they would not understand or you cannot speak to them, so your actions are justified.
- Telling people what they want to hear rather than the truth? (Including your children.)

a. If any of these things have been true of you and you have NOT repented of them before, take responsibility for your sin to your gracious Savior then read 1 John 1:5-10. Write verse 9 here.

b. Rehearse the sober warning from Psalm 66:18 and Proverbs 15:29 which speaks of what can happen to our prayer life without repentance over our sin?

Read Mark 12:13-17

5. In comparing this passage with Matthew 22:16, we see that the Pharisees who came were actually the self-righteous, zealous, young disciples of theirs, while Luke 20:20 describes the Herodians as “spies.” Both groups desired “to catch Him in His words;” or trap, ensnare, mislead or manipulate Him so they could have Him arrested.

Webster’s dictionary defines a manipulator as one who attempts “to control or play upon (another) by skillful, unfair, devious or insidious means to one’s own advantage. To change another by artful or unfair means so as to serve one’s purpose.” God calls it sin.

a. Despite people’s words or actions, what does verse 15 tell you about Jesus?

b. What does Psalm 7:9 and 44:21 say that God examines and searches out?

c. What does Job say in Job 27:8-9?

It is important to remember that honesty and transparency, in our words and actions, in our thoughts and motivations, is what delights the Lord. Manipulating other people for our own purposes is never right and it is deceitful.

“The moment a person tries to remove your ability to make a free choice, or threatens you with negative consequences, is the moment they stop showing love to you. Love is always freeing. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”
~ ***Gayle Erwin***

6. Sometimes we can be ignorant that our relationships have become infected with the sin of manipulation. It may be that in our own heart, we want to change someone else’s actions, decisions, or thoughts, so we try and influence them towards our desires. The same can be said of us being manipulated by someone else.

a. Have you ever had a friendship or relationship where the other person made you feel guilty, condemned, or like you were doing something wrong when you differed with them or did something they did not agree with and it was NOT a sin issue? If so, briefly explain a time and how you were made to feel.

b. Have you ever been in a relationship where the other person made you personally afraid, anxious, or fearful of the consequences if you did not do what they wanted you to do, say or think? If so, briefly explain.

- c. There are many ways that another person can influence the way we think, speak or act. It will either be for the good, righteousness, and for the Lord, or for sin, unrighteousness, and drive you further from the Lord. But when a person is being manipulated or manipulating another, it will be marked by the removal of the freedom to choose or it will come with a price tag. The beauty of the Lord's love is seen in that He gave us a free will, of which C. S. Lewis once said, "Though it makes evil possible, it is also the only thing that makes possible any true love, goodness or joy worth having."

Selah moment: Ask the Lord to search your heart if you have any tendency towards manipulation of others: for example, making others feel guilty or punishing them with dirty looks or silent treatments or cutting them down if they disagree or act contrary to your wishes. Do you ever make people feel like they are walking on "thin ice" or is there some kind of consequences others pay when they don't do what you want them to do?

Likewise, are you in a relationship where others use different forms of manipulation to influence your actions, thoughts or decisions: for example, fear, threats, or painful consequences if you do not conform to their will?

Please note, all forms of manipulation are either an act of the flesh and sin or even demonic. If you manipulate others, repent and get your heart right before the Lord. If you are being manipulated, depending upon the type of relationship it is, the response will differ. You may need to seek godly counsel about this further. Every situation is unique and cannot be put into a "one size fits all" category or solution.

But to wash your mind with the water of the word, write out the rest of 2 Corinthians 3:17...

"Now the Lord is that Spirit:

- d. Further cleanse your view of what Jesus will call you to be, as well as the relationship that is marked by Him, by writing out Isaiah 61:1.

- e. Look up 2 Timothy 1:7. The Lord is not a dispenser of fear and neither should His people be. What three things will the Holy Spirit bring to a person?

7. If you have been on the recipient end of another person's painful manipulation or deceitful control in the past, hurt may still linger in your thoughts or memories. You may carry past wounds into your present relationships that hinder the fullness of blessing the Lord intends for you in them. But do not despair. With God, all things are possible and He is able to restore and heal the damage of the past in your heart. Isaiah 53 is a powerfully prophetic yet healing chapter about all that Jesus went through for you and I. Read verses 3-5.

a. What is the first sentence (part a) of Isaiah 53:3?

b. In this verse the word "sorrow" in Hebrew is "physical pain of the body or mental suffering." The word "grief" means "sickness, illness or disease." And when the Bible says that He is acquainted with all of these, the literal rendering means that He knows them by experience. He was despised and rejected, afflicted and wounded, for us (like sheep) who went astray. What does this mean to you personally?

c. In verse 5, Jesus was wounded or "pierced through" for yours and my sin. He was bruised or literally "crushed" for our rebellion. And just so we could have peace with God possible, by His stripes or (Hebrew) "blows that cut in", we are able to be healed.

Stop and ask Jesus to appropriate what He did for you on the cross. Since He took on the consequences of the sin that has caused you pain, pray that you might be freed from it rather than be imprisoned any longer. Then write out His promise to you from Psalm 147:3.

***"A person who continually threatens others, whether their children, spouse, employees or friends, just proves their lack of true authority, God-given character and inability to love like Jesus.
Unconditional love, liberty and life is what Jesus offers."
P. Joyner and unknown***

Read Mark 12:18-27

8. Exit the Pharisees and Herodians, enter the Sadducees. Despite the near tag team of enemies that try and push Jesus to the point that He says or does something worthy of arrest, they do not realize that “in Him all the fulness (of the Godhead) should dwell.” In Him is “hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 1:9 and 2:3) and their questions are no match for Him.
- a. In verse 19, the Sadducees quoted the truth of scripture, but then drew out a long illustration to try and substantiate their disbelief in the resurrection. What TWO problems did Jesus say their reasoning held in verse 24? (Note the cross-reference of Deuteronomy 25:5 for their premise.)

 - b. So it is possible to know scripture yet wrongly apply it or take it out of context. What is a familiar exhortation for all of us, not just pastors, scholars and Bible teachers, from 2 Timothy 2:15?

 - c. There is only the power of God when the Word of God is rightly applied. What does it say Jesus did when the Word of God was given to others correctly in Mark 16:20 and Acts 14:3?

 - d. The Bible is likened to a hammer in Jeremiah 23:29. It is also like a surgical instrument in Hebrews 4:12. What is it likened to in Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17?
 - 1) As the Scriptures are a powerful weapon, the Christian needs just as much (if not more) training in how to use the Word correctly, just as a person would need training that owned a gun or other weapon. Combine this concept with the words of Isaiah 49:2 and reflect on what you would like the Lord to do in your life.

- e. The inappropriate use of the Word can also stunt our growth and maturity as a Christian.
Summarize the warning and encouragement given from Hebrews 5:12-14 in your own words.

9. Another important principle that we have lightly covered in a previous lesson is taken from Jesus' words "you do not know the Scriptures."

- a. Jesus IS the Word of God. Read Jesus' strong prophetic words in Matthew 7:21-23. His love is warning of what possibility in verse 23?

- b. In the intimate prayer we have recorded for us in John 17, what does Jesus say all of life now and for eternity is about in verse 3?

- c. This is more than a head knowledge. Jesus says the only way to know the Scriptures is to have an intimate relationship with the Word of God...Himself. Then, relationship will beget growth and increasing skill in the use of God's word. Finally, read Mark 12:27. Further emphasis on this relationship that continues into eternity, not only for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, comes from the criminal's request that Jesus would remember him from Luke 23:42-43. What did Jesus say in verse 43?

- d. Describe the contrast between the people in Matthew 7:21-23 (a) and the thief on the cross in Luke 23:43 (c).

- e. According to 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:3, why is it that the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees and others did not understand or they misused the Word of God?

“What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we have in life? To know God. What is the eternal life that Jesus gives? To know God. What is the best thing in life? To know God. What in humans gives God most pleasure? Knowledge of himself.”
~ J. I. Packer

Read Mark 12:28-34

Now we come to the self-proclaimed experts of the scriptures; the scribes. The ones who meticulously copied the words with the strictest adherence to certain methods in order to preserve them. They ask Jesus to proclaim which commandment is the most important of all.

10. As Jesus rehearses what the Jews call “the Shema” from Deuteronomy 6:4-5, He reveals something very interesting about our capacity to love God and others. The Shema was to be recited by the Jews in the morning and evening as an affirmation of their Judaism, but also in their declaration of faith in the One True God.

- a. Jesus points out that above all other commands, God is to be loved with...(Mark 12:30)
Fill in the blanks.

Love the Lord your God with ALL of your _____

With ALL your _____

With ALL your _____

With ALL your _____

- b. Have you ever thought about the fact that you have four different areas of your life you can show love towards God? We normally only think about our hearts. But the Lord asks for an entire life of devotion that is supreme above all others, and out of the well-spring of our love, comes a demonstration of it.

How can you show the Lord that you love Him **practically with each of these individual areas?** (Use these scriptures if you need a reference, but make it practical to your daily living: 1 John 5:2, Matthew 26:39, Romans 8:6, Colossians 3:17, Hebrews 10:16, 1 Peter 1:22.)

c. Notice Jesus' words to this significant beginning of saving faith in Mark 12:34, but also note that Jesus said he was near, not in. The law was a schoolmaster to show him his sin, but what does Romans 3:20 say?

d. What does Romans 5:1 say is the key to opening the doorway to heaven and our justification before God?

11. Alexander MacClaren asked a penetrating question in regards to Jesus' words to the scribe, "How many of us have right truths and right convictions, yet never fully surrender to it? We hold on to half-beliefs and weak faith instead of striving to enter into the fullness of the word and the abundant life Christ came to give us!" Jesus repeated the word "all" because the scribe was near but not in. Is there any area of love for God that you have not fully surrendered to and entered in? Briefly explain.

Read Mark 12:35-40

12. Not all of the scribes were bad, but Jesus identified the ones that the "common people" and those with ears to hear, were to avoid. They did not have to know the heart of the scribes, but only judge outward actions that gave off warning signs.

a. There were five total attributes of these scribes that marked them for greater judgement and punishment by God. The first were those scribes who wore noticeably embellished clothing to be seen of men (Matthew 23:5). There are several applications you can practically make by noticing those who like to use their clothing to promote themselves.

Secondly, there were the scribes that especially liked their title being acknowledged in public places where many people would be present. Look at Matthew 23:7-8, then write down the contrast you see of Jesus in Philippians 2:7-8.

- b. We have already covered aspects of ambition and desiring a position or spiritual authority for the wrong motives. Mark 12:39 lists the third attribute and says that there were some scribes who wanted (according to modern-day vernacular) the best places to sit in the church as well as the retreats, conferences, baptism picnics or potlucks. Contrary to this, summarize what Jesus says in Luke 14:7-11.

Read Mark 12:41-44

- 13. Finally, the fourth and fifth attributes include the way some scribes would take advantage of widows helpless conditions in order to take their possessions or finances and they would use “long prayers” to give a spiritual appearance of such holiness that would cover their greed and covetousness. These particular scribes were more experts at manipulation than integrity.
 - a. But the timing of the Lord and the divine orchestration of life presented a visual illustration of this spiritual principle right in front of the disciple’s eyes. It also is a proper application of how this widow showed that she loved God in the way He had stated in Mark 12:30. Recall what she did from verse 44,

 - b. In 2 Samuel 24:18-25 David has gone to a Jebusite named Araunah to buy his threshing floor and build an altar to the Lord. The prophet Gad had told David to take it free of charge. But what was David’s response that reflected the attitude of his heart?

- c. God notices our love, gifts and service that we give that will never be missed by us and He likewise observes what is a costly sacrifice to us. If there is little to no love for God, you will either see half-hearted gifts, leftover devotion, and scrap heaps of service, or it will be a heavily resented burden to give anything at all. When there is love, there are costly but burden-free gifts, incomparable devotion, and sacrificial but joyful service.

As an end to your lesson, write out an honest prayer of reflection and desire concerning the things talked about from Mark 12. Flip through your lesson again to refresh your memory before doing so.

*“The cross is the greatest example of humility, love and devotion that mankind has ever been given.
Jesus put the desire of the Father before His own.
He put the needs of every person before His own.
And He placed the value of others lives more valuable than His own.
In this is full surrender and sacrificial love.”
~ Anonymous*