Message Transcript

WHOSE KINGDOM ARE YOU LIVING FOR? | THE KINGDOM REVEALED
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Well, it's so good to be with everyone today. You guys doing good? Fall break looks good on you guys. You're back fresh, ready to go.

I'm anticipating that God has another word for us today from our passage out of Mark, chapter 12. So, if you have a Bible, and I hope you brought one, go ahead and meet me there.

And if you are relatively new to our church, what you need to know is that we've been spending the vast majority of this year just working our way through the gospel of Mark, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. We've just got a few more weeks left in it. We'll finish it up by the end of November.
The whole series we've been calling The Urgent Kingdom because that's what Mark has been doing. He is writing with great urgency to let us know that the Kingdom of God is advancing toward us. And today we wrap up Part 5 of the series. And we've just been calling Part 5 The Kingdom Confronts. And that's what we've seen Jesus do over the last several weeks together out of the text. What I want you to know as we come to Mark, chapter 12—we're going to walk through verses 13 to 34—things are getting hotter and hotter in the kitchen, so to speak, leading up to Jesus' arrest and subsequent crucifixion here in just a few short weeks.

And if you were here last week as we jumped into chapter 12, you might recall that we left off where Jesus had a toe to toe confrontation with the religious leaders in which they challenged Him at the end of chapter 11, "Jesus, who do You think You are? By what authority do You do these things?" And He launches into a parable that really exposes their motives. And it was the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

And we talked together about how Jesus has a vineyard. All of life is a vineyard. All of life is a stewardship. They were mismanaging it. And Jesus doesn't say these words, but this is the spirit which He brings, "Hey, guys. I am not here to take part; I am here to take over."

And Jesus' adversaries are getting more and more combative and confrontational at that. And by the time we get to verse 13 of chapter 12, it's building to a fever pitch. And they are getting more and more desperate. And we're going to see in our text that they throw everything but the kitchen sink at Him.

So, let's look at the text together. I just want to read it straight through before we unpack it together. Mark, chapter 12, starting in verse 13 going through verse 34. These are the words that Mark writes, inspired by God:

"And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, 'Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?'

"But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, 'Why put me to the test?' Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.' And they brought one. And he said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' They said to him, 'Caesar's.' Jesus said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at him.
Verse 18:

"And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, 'Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the manmust take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died he left no offspring. And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.'

"Jesus said to them, 'Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.'"

I'm trying to do my best to read this without any commentary, but that is awesome. Alright? I'm going to unpack that in a minute.

Verse 28:
"And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, 'Which commandment is the most important of all?' Jesus answered, 'The most important is, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is no other commandment greater than these.'

"And the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions." (ESV)

I bet. Let's pray together.

Father, we come to You in this moment and we just want to take a few minutes to take a deep breath and to lean in and to acknowledge that You are here and that we are listening. We're dealing with a lot right now. And I don't know what people brought in here with them. I don't know what concerns them, what worries they have, but I bet You that they've got something, probably a long list of somethings.

And I know that we've got things to do today. We've got a lunch meeting to go to or a game to watch or a week to prepare for, but I pray that we could manage for the next few moments or so to put those things at arm's length and to lean in for the word that You might have for us, because it isn't just about understanding what You have said, it is about experiencing Your power. And that's what we need, that's what we want.

And so we ask that today, as I've worked hard to prepare this, that if there is anything that I've prepared that You don't want said, that I cut it. And if there is anything You want said that I haven't prepared for, I pray that You would bring it to mind and You'd give me the courage to say it.
So, Father, we're listening. Would You please speak? We ask this in Jesus' name and everybody says: Amen.

I am not proud to admit this, but I spent way too much time in the 1980s to 90s, growing up as a kid, playing a video game on the original Nintendo system called Mike Tyson's Punch Out. Anybody with me? If you were born after the year 2,000 you have no idea what I'm talking about. But that's okay. You can google it later.

I played a lot of Mike Tyson's Punch Out. I also watched a lot of Jean-Claude Van Damne action movies. And the premise of both were really similar. In the game, you played a character by the name of Little Mack who was an undersized, underdog of a boxer working his way up through the World Video Boxing Circuit, which isn't a real thing by the way. And he would take on a parade of opponents working his way to fight Mike Tyson. So, opponents like King Hippo and Soda Pop Ginskey and Bald Bull. It was the 1980s, man. It was a weird time. Alright?

And the Van Damme movies had a very similar premise to that where Jean-Claude Van Damme, in just about all of his movies, would find himself in a foreign setting surrounded by imposing foes in a sketchy, underground fight to the death style tournament as the underdog.

Now, the reason why I bring that up is because when I read our passage it kind of reminds me of what is going on here. Jesus is facing a parade of opponents one after the other. Except one big difference, He's no underdog.
And He faces this barrage of opponents all lining up—I just want you to get this visual in your mind. Jesus is standing there and He's teaching and you've got the Pharisees and the Herodians and the Sadducees and the Scribes—I don't know if they are lined up next to each other or in a line—ready to give it their best shot to try to take Jesus out.

Mark specifically says that they are trying to trap Him. That's the word. It's a hunting term. And this is a last ditch effort to discredit Him and to get rid of Him. So, they are throwing everything they have got in them. And it would be important for you to know where these arguments are coming from. So, the first of Jesus' opponents, Mark says, are:

The Pharisees
We've heard a lot about them. The Pharisees are Jesus' primary and most frequent foes in the gospels and the book of Mark. They were the religious elite fundamentalists who resented Roman occupation and they felt like they were assigned to keep everybody accountable to the law of Moses.

The Herodians
And then you have the Herodians who actually are kind of buddied up with Pharisees, which is really interesting. I'll get to that in a minute. We don't hear a lot about the Herodians. In fact, this is the first time that Mark ever mentions them. And they are the Jewish political operatives who are pro Rome. They are big fans of Herod. And you hear it in the name Herodians. They ultimately were just trying to get paid and they were clamoring for more power.

Now, here's the interesting thing about the Pharisees and the Herodians. They agreed on almost nothing. The Pharisees were anti Rome. The Herodians were pro Rome. The Pharisees were Israel's religious party. The Herodians were Israel's political party. They didn't agree on anything. So, the fact that they come together in verse 13 shows how badly they want Jesus gone. As the old saying goes: The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Those are the Pharisees and the Herodians.

The Sadducees
Next up. In verse 18, the next opponent would be the Sadducees. And they were the wealthy aristocrats. And they are different from the Pharisees in that they only acknowledged and accepted the first five books of the Bible—Genesis through Deuteronomy, otherwise known as the Pentateuch. And, honestly, they held to that pretty loosely, only when it was convenient or only when it worked for them.

So, what the Sadducees attempted to do, they were trying to trim God down to what was plausible. They denied anything supernatural, "We're fine with the idea of God, but we don't believe in anything that has to do with the supernatural or angels or the afterlife or the resurrection, which would explain the ridiculous, sarcastic question that they posed to Jesus in verses 19 to 23, which we'll unpack more here in just a bit.

The Scribes
The fourth and the last group mentioned here in our passage is the scribes. In fact, Mark just says it's a single scribe that comes up to Jesus. But, he was part of the group that were kind of known as the lawyers. And oftentimes you would see scribes working really closely with the Pharisees.

So, if the Pharisees' job was to help people apply the law, a scribe's job was to help people interpret the law. And as we'll see in the text, this scribe turns out to be, as near as we can tell, a pretty good guy. And he's got good motives, which Jesus commends. And that doesn't happen very often.

Now, what I want you to see is that each group as they approach Jesus they've all got a different vision for a kingdom. Did you know that you are living for a kingdom right now? It's either yours or it's God's. And each of us have a kingdom. Each of us have a vision for life, whatever that may be, however you might describe what you think a successful, productive, peaceful life might be. That's kind of your vision for a kingdom.

And each of these groups had one as well. And these visions for their kingdom: politically, socially, economically, and spiritually clashed with each other and they clashed, most significantly, with Jesus' vision for His Kingdom. And His Kingdom is the only one that really matters.

That's what is happening here in the text. Now, to help you break this down... I don't know if any of you deal with this in your home. Probably not. I'm probably the only one. But in our household, I don't know, a couple of times a month, two or three times a month, we will face something as a family.

We're like, "Hey, let's just have an easy evening. Instead of making a meal, let's just order take out." So, somebody will text the family text chain and say, "We're going to order food here in another hour. What would everyone like?" And that's when it begins.

So, somebody will say, "What about Italian?" "Well, we had Italian last week. I'm not feeling like Italian." So, "What about sushi?" "Well, I'm not really in a sushi mood" "Well, what about Mexican?" "Oh, you know it's just that we do that an awful lot."

And inevitably somebody will say, "What about Canes?" They've got crack in that chicken, man. There is something about that. I don't know what it is. I've got to be honest, it's good stuff.

Now, usually what ends up happening, because all six of us can't agree on all of it, what ends up happening is we create a traffic jam of Door Dash drivers in our driveway. That's what ends up happening. What is that? Each of us have a different vision of what we'd like for dinner.

Now, at the risk of sounding overly simplistic, that's what is going on here. This picture that Mark is painting of all of these different groups—they've got a vision for the way they think life should work and the way that the kingdom should work. And he is describing this urgent Kingdom of Heaven, which is ultimate reality. Remember last week, the whole thing is God's vineyard and there are these opposing visionary views of this kingdom.

It reminds me of something Jesus said in Matthew, chapter 11 where He says this:

"The Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing,"
Remember His prayer to the disciples? Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Listen, the Kingdom of Heaven isn't just a thing that we go to when we die, the Kingdom of Heaven is advancing upon us right now. And Jesus said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is forcefully advancing in this world." And by the way, our Vision Statement, if you wonder where we got that, it was inspired by this verse: Taking Ground for the Kingdom Across Indy and Beyond.
And Jesus says:

"and violent people are attacking it. Matthew 11:12 (NLT)

Mark, chapter 12, 13 to 34 is the illustration of that description. That's what is going down. These groups are violently attacking this Kingdom of Jesus that is being rolled out. And these clashing views about that Kingdom still exist today. There is your view of the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of Heaven. Now, if you are not a believer, if you're not a Christian, obviously you would be living for the kingdom of this world, so to speak. But you know what is a real tragedy? When we say we follow Jesus but we are more defined by the kingdom of this world and its pursuit than His.

It can happen easily. It can happen without us even knowing it. It's a blind spot for many of us. One of my prayers going into this weekend is, "God, would You maybe expose that blind spot in some of our lives?" We say that we are living for that Kingdom, but in reality our checkbook, the way we spend our time, our thought life, what we do with our bodies says otherwise. We're living for this one.

See, the kingdom of this world ends up kind of breaking down. The invitation of the kingdom of this world, at a very high level, breaks down into one of two categories. The first one, especially if you are saying you're following Jesus, would be the way of religion. And we talked about that last week. I don't want to be religious: Religion seeks to take from God rather than receive from Him

Which is why religion is so empty. To put it another way:
Religion is a negotiation with God rather than a full surrender to Him
Guys, it is not a negotiation. It is full surrender called repentance. Religion is, "God, if I do, then You should." It's, "God, You do Your part, I'll do mine." Or how about this one, "God, I did my part, why don't You do Yours?" Does that sound familiar to anybody? That's religion.

Jesus' first words in His ministry were what? Repent, which is not feel bad, not feel sorry, or not feel convicted. Repent is, "I'm going to stop and actually do an about face and head in a different direction from where I was heading." He says, "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." Do those words sound like somebody who came to negotiate?
For so much of my Christian life I have been bartering with God instead of full surrender. Any of you ever do that? Barter with God based on behavior. So, "God, I'll do this behavior if You'll come through with this." Any of you prayed this prayer? "God, if You can just get me out of this, here's what I'll do."

"God, if You'll help me pass this test that I didn't study for, I'll volunteer in the Kids Ministry." "God, if You can just get me a date with that guy," or that girl, "then I'll go on a mission trip." "God, if You can help me win the lottery so I can pay my bills, I promise You I'll tithe off of the winnings, after taxes of course." Of course. All of that is negotiation. And that's religion.

The other way, the other invitation of the kingdom of the world, is when that doesn't work, and, by the way, it's not going to work, we end up going in rebellion toward it. It's either religion or rebellion. And we give up. We walk away. We say, "You know what? I'm going to make my own way." This is where the phrase, "I'm going to follow my heart," comes from. This is where, "I'll make my own truth comes from."

See, those are the two invitations of the world's kingdom. It is either religion or rebellion and they both ultimately end in isolation toward God and toward others.

The invitation to Jesus and His Kingdom coming is fundamentally different. It is an invitation of full surrender. And I don't know how that hits you. That maybe makes you a little bit nervous because full surrender means a lack of control—giving up control. But here's the thing. It's full surrender to a good Father who loves you.

The Bible says that He is righteous. Do you know what that means? He will always do what is right and He will make things right. And full surrender to a God who can be trusted is a good thing. It's full surrender and it's grace.

What's the opposite of full surrender? You're strapping everything on yourself and trying to carry the weight yourself. And that is a responsibility and a weight that you can never bear. And Jesus has ultimately borne it for you on a cross. Jesus would say, "Take up your cross and then follow Me." It doesn't say, "Make your own way or choose your own path."

And then He says, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." And He offers us, in exchange for full surrender, grace. And grace is receiving what you can never achieve and what you do not deserve. And that is a gift that leads to true freedom and transformation.

So, these groups come to Jesus with their clashing views of the kingdom to challenge Him. And what I want you to see in the text that we already read is that there were three coordinated traps designed to force Jesus into a position that would either cost Him His following or His life. And they would have preferred both.

And the first comes from the Pharisees and the Herodians in verses 13 to 17. Remember these guys had nothing in common. They didn't agree on anything. They had wildly different political views, but they are willing to set those aside for a hot minute so they can attempt to drag Jesus, get this, into a political debate about a question about taxes. What could go wrong?

Listen. The trap is designed that regardless of how Jesus answers their either/or question, it's going to get Him into trouble with somebody. It's going to get Him canceled by somebody. Aren't you glad times have really changed?

Now, last week, if you were here, you remember they went full frontal assault on Jesus at the end of chapter 11. They were like, "Jesus, by whose authority do You do these things? Jesus, who do You think You are?" And that didn't work. Jesus dresses them down pretty good.

So, here they've learned their lesson. This week they take a different approach. They try a little flattery. Look at verse 14 again. They say:

"... 'Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God." Now, how do you know that's not sincere? Because Mark already told us they are trying to set a trap for Him. So, what is this? This is a negotiation tactic. This is inauthenticity. This is them trying to pay Jesus a compliment so He lets His guard down." Any of you ever been there before? Any of you ever received a compliment from somebody and you are like, "I don't think that is genuine. I think they want something."

For a brief second I coached a girl's high school soccer team—I can't even say that without laughing—when I was in college. Now you are like, "How in the world did you do that?" Well, I was dating Lindsay at the time. Her little sister was a senior in high school. Se was a soccer player. The soccer coach quit at the beginning of her senior year. And she knew I played soccer when I was in high school. So, she begged me to coach the team so that way she could play soccer her senior year.

And so me, being the kind, compassionate future brother-in-law that I would be said, "Okay. I'll do it." It was awful. It was horrible for a couple of different reasons. Number one: We didn't win a single game. It was horrible. Two: I learned very quickly—I don't know if you know this—high school girls can be quite mean. Right? I'm just sort of saying that. They can also be very sweet, too. But they can be quite mean.

And then I just learned this. Lots of times I would pull up to the soccer field when they didn't want to do something or they didn't want to practice. And I always knew it because they were overly nice. And they were paying me compliments and telling me how great my hair was and all that kind of nonsense because they wanted something.

That's what is happening here. They pay Jesus a compliment, but they are setting Him up for this question right here in verse 14:
"' Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?'"

And I just want you to notice the either/or way this question is framed. They are saying, "Jesus, is it okay to pay a corrupt foreign ruler wrong, or is it not?"
Now, here's the bind that He is in. If He answers yes then the Jewish crowd and the Pharisees can go online and they can stir it up and they can say He's for Rome, making Him a traitor to the Israelite people.

If He says no then the Pharisees and the Herodians can do the same thing. They can go to Rome and say, "Hey, man. Did you notice this guy is trying to start an uprising by giving people permission to not pay their taxes? He's encouraging that." And it wouldn't have taken much for Rome just to have that person killed.
So, Jesus is a really tough spot, but His response is brilliant. And He says, "Bring me a denarius. And a denarius was a Roman minted coin worth a day's wage.
And He asked this question, "Well, whose likeness and inscription is on it?"
Now, the likeness, the image on this coin was Tiberius Caesar who was the emperor of Rome at the time. And right above his head would have been this inscription, "Son of the Divine." If you flip the coin over, it would have said, "Pontus Maxim," which meant high priest.

Now, I just want you to think about this for just a minute—the irony of this. You had Jesus, the King of kings, and Lord of lords—Hebrews says He is our great High Priest—and He's standing there holding a coin with somebody else's face on it that says, "Son of the Divine," And that he is a high priest. And Jesus is the One who created him.

In Mark, chapter 12, verse 17, here's how Jesus responds:
"… 'Render to Caesar,'" holding the coin, "'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's…'"

Now notice this. He adds this. They didn't ask this next part. But He adds it. They didn't ask anything at all what they should give to God. But Jesus adds it. He says:

"'and to God the things that are God's.'"
And the key word here is render. He didn't say simply to give, He said render. It's a different word. Render is this idea of giving back what is rightfully owed. It's kind of like the word tithe. Listen. Tithe does not mean to give. A tithe is a returning of something that is already God's. And render is the same thing.

And then Jesus extends it and He says, "Well, I don't have any problem with you giving to Caesar what is Caesar's. After all his image is on it. But you give to God what is God's. Jesus, what He is doing here is He doesn't stop at the government, but acknowledges the higher authority over the government, which is who? God. Four of you said that. That is awesome. Makes me feel great.

The question is: What things are God's? And if you were here last week as we walked through the parable of the tenants you remember—everything. You can't separate it and subdivide it. That's called Lordship.

It's this idea that if your life is a pie chart, you can't separate it into categories and keep them separate. If your life is a dresser drawer, you can't separate it like you do your undergarments and your socks. Lordship means Jesus is the dresser and all of the drawers fit into. You can't separate and segment your life. So, Jesus says, "Everything belongs to God." Get this—including Caesar and his government. So, a couple of passages to reinforce this:

Deuteronomy 10:14 says:
"Look, the highest heavens and the earth and everything in it all belong to the Lord your God." (NLT)

1 Chronicles 29:11:
"Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things." (NLT)

Colossians 1:15:
"He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation." (NLT)

We could go on and on.

Now some want to interpret Jesus' words here to mean, "Well, render to Caesar what is his and then all of the other spiritual stuff you can just kind of keep that over here: your political views and your view of God should never meet.
But that's not what Jesus is saying. What Jesus is doing here is drawing a real distinction between legitimate civil obligation, as Christ followers living as salt and light in this world with His Kingdom coming, and ultimate allegiance. Those are different things. And they coincide.

So, Romans chapter 13, verse 1—stay with me, I know I'm saying a lot, Romans 13:1 says this:

"Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God." (NLT)

So, what Romans is saying is that God has instituted three things for the good of society. One: He instituted the family, Genesis, chapter 1. He has instituted the church, Acts, chapter 2. And He's instituted government and governing authorities, Romans 13.

And Daniel foretells us God is—this should be really good news for us as we just watch everything going down in the world right now—God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and He gives them to whomever He chooses.

Do you know what that means? That means that God rules with His feet up. It means He's not wringing His fingers looking at social media. He's never doing scrolls. Right? I thought that was pretty good. Nobody else. He never gets all bent out of shape whenever He's watching the news.

God has instituted the government and governing authorities to do what? To yield the sword making sure that bad people don't do bad things, to protect civilization and to provide services and responsibilities, i.e. build roads, bridges and provide infrastructures. So, as Christians living as salt and light in this world, as representatives of God's Kingdom, we pray for and submit to governing authorities, which is what that means: render unto Caesar.

And you may say, "Is there any exception to that?" Biblically: yes. When God's Word commands something the government condemns or the government commands something directly contrary to the commands of God, that means civil disobedience.

Exodus 1: When the midwives refused to obey the king's order. In Daniel, Shadrach, Mishak, and Abednego told, "Eat pavement and worship Nebuchadnezzar," say, "No thank you. We'll go to the furnace." Acts 5:29. Peter and the apostles, "We must obey God rather than any human authority.
So, Jesus here, in Mark 12, is going, "Hey, guys. I'm fine with you paying tax." But then He challenges the Pharisees and the Herodians and you and me to take much more seriously this important truth:

If the coin bears Caesar's image, then you bear God's image
If Caesar's image is on the coin, whose image is on you? God's. And if God's image is on you, that means that you belong to God, all of you. And there are times when we are like, "Well, as Christians can we maybe be involved in any sort of politics?" Well, yes. Not as our ultimate hope, but we stay engaged in it. And sometimes people stay out of politics and I would say, "Well, as long as politics stays out of Jesus' vineyard."

See, the problem isn't that the church becomes more political, it's when politics become more spiritual and to not address certain things would be to advocate my responsible to teach the whole counsel of God.

The question is: Whose image is stamped on you? Four claps. Awesome. I get it. I get it. That's a tough subject. Can I say this? Have you just noticed this in your own life, especially if you are younger? We are trying to figure out the question: Who am I? It's a great question.

And can I just encourage you that you will never figure out who you are until you know I Am. We spend so much time trying to figure out who I am without realizing that that will never come until we discover who the Great I Am is. You've got to realize who you are, man. You've got to realize the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of Heaven. You've got to realize that there are ideas behind the things we vote for. You've got to realize what you were created for. You were created in the image of God.

God was never like, "Hey, compartmentalize your life into different sub-categories." God created you in His image. And He has gone to great lengths to rescue and redeem you, whether you believe in Him or not. And I just want you to look right at me right now. God did not come to get you; He came to get you back. You are His. You are His.

So, that's the first opponent. The second, they tag the Sadducees in verse 18. This is the only time the Sadducees appear in Mark. Now, I know this may sound corny to some of you, and it is, but you'll remember it. One of the ways in which I learned to distinguish who the Sadducees were is that they were very sad, you see? I know, super corny, but you'll remember. It's corny. Stop. It's good. Alright? Whoever groaned, keep it to yourself. You'll remember it.

And here's why they were sad, because they didn't believe in an afterlife. They thought that when your body died, your soul died with it. And so they only accepted the first five books of Moses as authoritative Scripture, which meant they rejected resurrection outright.

So, they come to Jesus with this ridiculous, sarcastic question about resurrection, which they didn't believe in. This is not a sincere, theological question. It is designed to make the afterlife look logically ridiculous.

And so, what they do is, they are referencing something here called levirate marriage, it's mentioned in Deuteronomy 25. What happens is, in the first century if a man was married to his wife and he died and they didn't have kids, if he had a brother, his brother was obligated to marry his widow and have kids with her to preserve the family line. That was levirate marriage.

So, in this absurd hypothetical they come up to Jesus like okay, "Say, Jesus. You've got seven brothers and one of them is married and he dies. And so the next one steps up and he marries her and before they can have kids, he dies. And then the third one and then the fourth one and then the fifth one.

At this time you've got to ask yourself, "Okay, what's going on with this lady. She's killing off all of these dudes." Then he says at the end she dies. And here's the ridiculous question, "Hey, Jesus. If resurrection is real, who is she going to be married to?" And they are trying to make it look stupid.

And as we've seen a lot in Mark, Jesus always answers questions with another question. Right? But not here. Not here, man. He just looks right at them, I would imagine with ice in His veins, and He says, "You are wrong. And the reason why you are wrong is because you don't know the Scriptures or the power of God." What an indictment. Now, before you enjoy that too much, could you turn that question upon yourself? Do you know the Scriptures? And some of you are like, "Well, yes. I do a Bible Reading plan every day." Awesome. Do you know the power of God? Because you can read the Scriptures without the power of God. Actually, you can go to church and sit through sermon after sermon after sermon and never engage with the power of God, which is why we pray all of the time that we would have an encounter with the Living God. That's what come ready means, guys. It means you come ready, leaned in so that there might be an encounter with the Living God here.

Do you know how often our culture says, "I think." Just pay attention to that even in your own life. Just monitor it in your own life. Just pay attention to how many times you say, "I think." "Well, I think this." I mean, everybody has got an opinion. Everybody wants to comment in the comment section.

People say things like this, "Well, the God I believe in would..." "I can't believe in a God who..." What are we trying to do? We are trying to create God in our own image and likeness rather than to be conformed into His image and likeness. Guys, can I say this very gently but very plainly? The only place that I can go to find out who God is, and what this world is, and who I am, and what went wrong, and what God has done to redeem it, and what He'll do to make it right is in this book [the Bible]. Anything else is just an opinion and quite frankly a terrible one. This book is the authority on who God is and what He is like and what He has done.

And you don't go to the Bible, as cliché as it may sound, to try to just read it. You go to the Bible so it can dissect you. You don't sit over this. You sit under it. And there is great power, there is no other power than what this living word has. Romans, chapter 1 verse 16 says, "I am not ashamed of the Good News and the power of God at work."

Which is why, if you've noticed, as I've come back from sabbatical, that I just read the whole passage straight through, no commentary, because if nothing else, if the rest of the sermon stinks, at least you heard that.

This book has the power to break chains. It has the power to break you out of bondage. It has the power to break and heal generational sin. It has the power to break you out of addictions and to bring healing. Jesus says, "Your question is ridiculous because you don't know this book and you don't know the power of our God."

Their question, snarky as it is, does bring up something really interesting that maybe you might have wondered about in verse 25. Maybe you've never wondered about it until we actually came across it. But Jesus responds to their question with this. He goes:

"For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."

So, here's what Jesus is saying. He appears to be saying that marriage, the institution of marriage as we know it here on earth won't be in heaven. So that means that those of you who are married here on earth, when we get to heaven, and the new Kingdom and the new earth, that we won't be married in the same way that we are married here.

Now, I don't know how that hits you. Some of you maybe that makes you really, really sad. Or, maybe not. Hopefully, you didn't, under your breath go, "Yes!" I hope you didn't do that. Alright? If so, we've got counseling for you.

Seriously, marriage is an earthly institution designed for a few things that hold true here on earth but not necessarily in heaven. So, it's designed for human flourishing, reproduction—be fruitful and multiply—the good of civilization. It is designed, primarily, to reflect Christ's relationship with His church, which will be fulfilled at His second coming. And so, it won't be necessary anymore, the illustration of it. This is why at every wedding that I officiate I say, "Till death do you part."

Now, I had a long Alistair Begg quote. Guys in the back, I'm not going to read it for the sake of time, because for whatever reason I'm being longwinded. So, you can thank me later.

What I do want to say is this: Resurrection life is not just merely a continuation of earthy life but a life made new through the power of God, 1 Corinthians, chapter 15. So, in other words, the afterlife isn't simply going to be a form of resuscitation but of complete transformation.

So, Jesus says... This isn't to say that you're not going to recognize your spouse in heaven. I think you'll recognize your spouse in heaven. What it means is something better. Actually, it can't be less true in heaven. The goodness of life and the gifts on earth can't be any less in heaven.

So, what that means is that it's even better news. That, actually, that thing that maybe kind of bugs you about your spouse, that won't be in heaven. That thing about your best friend or your kid, that fallen nature of your relationships due to sin and the brokenness of this world, is made new in heaven. That's really, really good news.

Now, it's important to understand this. Jesus doesn't say we become angels in heaven. He says we become like angels in heaven. Meaning that angels aren't married. We won't be either.

And I think this is pretty amazing, to do all of this Jesus argues from the first five books of the Bible in verses 26 and 27 to make that point. And that's brilliant because this is the only Scripture that the Sadducees accepted. And He pulls from the books of the Bible that they affirm to prove them wrong about the thing that they don't believe in. That is some serious Jesus jiu jitsu right there. And He sites Exodus, chapter 3, verse 6 when God appears to Moses at the burning bush, He says, "I Am the God of..." He doesn't say, "I was the God of..." He says, "I Am," present tense, which means God has been sovereign over all of time, both past, present and our future glory.

Any of you looking for assurance right now? The answer would be yes because life is really unstable. Maybe we're looking for assurance of our faith. And I want you to know where your assurance can be found:

The ground of our assurance is not the depth of our conviction, but the reliability of the one who has made the promise

The very last question that is posed to Jesus is in verse 28, and I'm going to speed this up here a little bit for the sake of time. This is the question of what is the greatest commandment? The scribe comes to Jesus and he seems to have a genuine heart and he seems to have a genuine nature. And Jesus responds to him... He really wants to know, "Hey, Jesus. Out of all of the commandments," hey, by the way there are more than 10, there are over 600, and he says, "Out of all of the 600, Jesus, which are the two greatest?"

And Jesus summarizes the entire Old Testament law into two things, "You love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and with all of your soul, and your mind, and your strength. And the second is like it, you love your neighbor as yourself."

And you cannot divorce those two. What that means is that you can come in here and you can raise your hands and you can close your eyes and you can sing and you can worship God, but then the way that you treat people outside of here whether in person or online totally negates your worship. The Bible calls it a resounding gong.

Or, the other way around. You can go and love on people and you can affirm all of their behaviors and you can serve them without acknowledging that He is King of kings and Lord of lords and that He is just, and holy, and right, and that He has a created order, and that just turns into empty activism.
What we need is Lordship. It is a recognition that it is His Kingdom and He is King. And so that means is that all negotiations on our part need to stop and we need to go, instead of "What about this, Jesus? We do this, "I surrender." And that should not be a fearful thing because He's a good, heavenly Father who wants the best for you. And He did not come to get you; He came to get you back.

So, here's how I want to close our time together. We've been doing altar calls every single week. In fact, last week was super powerful if you missed it. I just had everybody get on their knees. And across all of our locations people did. All over the room at every location. Campus pastors were sending me pictures and text messages at their campuses people on their knees at our locations all over the city. It was a beautiful thing.

Right now... I don't even know how to fully put this into words, but it feels that there is a real heaviness upon my life right now. Even last week I was talking to my wife and I just used this word crucible. I feel like I'm in a crucible right now. I feel like there is a pressing and a crushing... I can't even quite fully put my finger on it, but it's almost like the spiritual realm is spinning up and there is a resistance right now to the things of God.

And the only hope is for us to stop negotiating and start repenting. It's a humility on our part to shake us out of our indifference or to shake us out of our worries and concerns, where we might be distracted over there when God needs us to see and experience some things over here.

So, here's what I want to ask us to do. At all of our locations would you stand to your feet? We're going to do an altar call, but I want to get really specific. I'm going to ask you right now not to leave early, because this is an important time where we would lean in asking God to meet us in this space and in this place. And I'm just going to ask you to close your eyes and bow your head, because we don't need to be looking around. This is something between you and God and I'm going to call something out.

And if it's your thing, if it's the thing that has pressed upon you, maybe it's the thing in your life that you've been holding back, maybe it's that one thing where you are like, "I don't want to submit to His Kingdom because I'm trying to live out the values of mine," or maybe it's an area of your life that you've been concealing or hiding or holding on to too closely, I'm going to call it out and if it's the thing that you need to stop negotiating and surrendering it in repentance to King Jesus, would you be willing to have the courage and the boldness to step out where you are and come down to the altar, get on your knees and lay it before Him?

We've gotten response every hour. Now, I'm going to be quite honest with you. Not the response that I would expect because all of us have got something. I've got something. I've got multiple things that I'm still negotiating with God on. And I'm never going to experience true freedom until I let them go.
Here's the truth about me. It's that it is the Pharisees and the Herodians and the Sadducees and the scribes... You know what? I'm in line too, contending for my own kingdom. And King Jesus says, "Will you fully surrender to Me to step into what I died for you to have?

So, here it is. I'm just going to call it out as we build into worship and sing together. Right now I'm just wondering if there is somebody and you've got an anger issue in your life that's actually burning down the relationships in your life and you need to surrender that to God, would you come? You just step out where you are and you just come down front.

Maybe it's a pride thing and you're just a little bit too puffed up and you just refuse to let other people have control. You're a control freak and you just have to have all the boxes checked; you've got to have your list. Maybe that's the thing that you need to stop negotiating with God about.

There are people walking down even from the back down the aisles. I want to just bless you for your courage, man. Bless you for your boldness. Do you want to be set free or do you want to continue to live in bondage?

Some of us, maybe we realize that what we thought was providing responsibly for our family really is just plain old greed. And we're selfish and we need to let that go to God. Maybe for some of us it's a lack of forgiveness. We don't want to forgive that person. Maybe they don't want to be forgiven. Maybe they are no longer here. And it's only destroying you and you need to let that go.
Maybe it's a form of compromise in your life. Maybe it's overwhelming anxiety and it has riddled you to this place where you just can't function anymore. You've been holding onto it too tightly.

Bless you guys for being courageous enough to come. Some of us it's fear. Some of us are watching way too much news, scrolling way too much on social media, it has gotten us spun off to where we've taken our eyes off of the King of kings who is sovereign over the kingdom of men.

For some of you it's an addiction of some kind and you've tried everything. You've tried covenant eyes, you've tried accountability, you've tried counseling but none of it is working and you need to stop negotiating and be in full surrender to God.

Some of you, you've been contemplating taking your own life. You've not told anybody that yet. And you are teetering right now. You need to come and you need to let that go before God.

Some of you are seeking approval for the wrong things. Some of you I haven't hit your thing, but you know what your thing is and you need to let that go and bring it to the altar and come before the Lord.

Right now, I want all of us whether you are standing at your seat or you've come down to the altar to lean in and to ask the Holy Spirit to do what only He can by taking full control of our lives.

King Jesus we stand before You today and we do not want to be in the place of the contenders who tried to take you out in our text today. God, we want to have a heart like the scribe who comes to you with genuineness and authenticity and we want to be people who step into your Kingdom coming. So, Father, would You please meet us in all of these rooms that we may be gathered in? Would Your Spirit please move right now as we lift up our voices to live for Your Kingdom and Your Kingdom alone? We ask this in the power of Jesus' name. And everybody said: Amen and Amen.