



# THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

*Week 36: How To Miss Amazing Grace*

## Read Mark 11:27-12:17

In last week's text Jesus had rebuked the Jews in the temple for allowing their worship of God to disintegrate. This would have caused a major stir. Some would have been convicted, while others would have been furious. In today's text Jesus and his disciples head back to the temple and are confronted by the religious leaders, who attempt to trap Jesus into answering a question that would get him killed.

### 1. People Who Miss Amazing Grace Don't Like Authority

- Read Mark 1:27-28

The religious leaders did not believe in Jesus because of his authoritative teachings or because of the miracles he had performed. They wanted some more proof that he was in fact sent from God. They did not like being told what to do and they were not going to take any commands about temple practices or anything else for that matter. It's easy to judge them for being foolish and arrogant but we often have the same attitude to Christ's authority in certain areas of our own lives. Every single area of our lives should be under the authority of Christ, and when we are challenged by others in areas where we are prone to independence or sin, we tend to get defensive. We do not like to be told that certain areas of our lives are offensive to God, and in our reluctance to accept/own our sin, we reveal our disdain for Christ's authority in our lives. We love the concept of grace but we so often forget that grace is continually given to us because we continually offend God.

### 2. People Who Miss Amazing Grace Care More About What People Think Of Them Than They Do About Glorifying God

- Read Mark 11:29-33

Though they were there to question his authority, Jesus was able to ask the religious leaders a difficult question that would expose their hypocrisy. But in doing so, it would also provide them an opportunity to realise that they were wrong, and to turn to him for forgiveness. They refused to believe that John the Baptist had been sent by God, because it would mean that his teachings about the coming messiah would point to Jesus, and they would then have to admit that Jesus was in fact the promised and awaited king, which they did not believe. But in publically acknowledging that, they knew that many of the local people would turn away from them. So they were stuck. Knowing that they had no way to answer Jesus without getting themselves into some form of trouble, they gave up, but they did not repent. Their fear of man was more important to them than their faith in God and their willingness to submit to his authority. Many of us are just the same. We fear what people may think about us if we admit to our sin and our struggles, and so we pretend to be better than we are, and then we don't repent and change. We rarely take radical stands in our life for Christ because we fear what people will think of us.

- ❖ Q: Why do you think it was so difficult for the religious leaders to accept that John the Baptist had been a prophet sent by God?
- ❖ Q: Why do you think the religious leaders were afraid of letting the people know that they doubted the fact that John the Baptist had been a prophet?
- ❖ Q: Having seen the miracles and heard his authoritative teachings, why do you think it was so hard for the religious leaders to believe that Jesus was the long awaited messiah?  
Though our contexts are different, our hearts are not too different to the religious leaders who resented God's real authority in their lives.
- ❖ Q: In what ways do we resist God's authority in our lives?
- ❖ Q: When people point out your sin or independence from God in certain areas of your life, what is your reaction?
  - Are you open and willing to hear it?
  - Do you repent quickly and are you grateful for the process?
  - Or are you immediately defensive in your heart, protecting your sin and independence, being quick to shift blame or justify your actions/ attitudes/ behaviours?
- ❖ Q: Are you more concerned about what others think of you or are you more concerned with how God views your sin?
- ❖ Q: In what area of your life has God provoked you to submit to his authority?
  - What has been your reluctance to do that up until this point?
  - How are you going to make sure that you follow through with the process of submitting this to God?





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### 3. People Who Miss Amazing Grace Ignore The Continual, Gracious Warnings Of God

- Read Mark 12:1-12 & Hebrews 11:37-38

The Jews listening to the parable would have understood that the vineyard represented them, the covenant people of God. In the first part of the parable Jesus reminded them of how God had chosen, blessed, protected and loved them as a nation. But then he moved on to remind them of how God had lovingly sent many prophets to remind them of their covenant, to remind them of his love and to warn them of the judgement they would face if they continued in rebellion against him. He reminded them that instead of heeding the prophets' warnings, their forefathers rejected and even killed the prophets. Then in verse 10 when Jesus quoted the well-known messianic Psalm (118:22-23), the religious leaders knew that he was teaching the parable about them, and how they would be the very ones to reject the messiah.

We are not always that different in our heart attitude towards God's message. We do the same thing when we ignore what is preached, when we resist Christian friendships, when we disregard what the scriptures say about certain aspects of our lives and when we resist the Holy Spirit's convictions.

- ❖ Q: In what ways are you guilty of disregarding God's message?
- ❖ Q: What are some disciplines that we can put in place to help us to take responsibility for and accountability of God's message in our lives?
  - How can we make sure that our time doing these notes each week is not just part of something we do as a religious activity, but that it becomes something that we take seriously, by putting it into action and making significant changes in our beliefs/ attitudes/ behaviours?
  - How do we as a community play a role in helping one another in our obedience to Christ?

### 4. People Who Miss The Grace Of God Live With Constant Hypocrisy And Always Seek To Do As Little As Possible

- Read Mark 12:13-17 & Romans 12:1-2

The next attempt to trap Jesus through questioning was by the Pharisees and Herodians. Instead of another religious question, this one was politically sensitive<sup>1</sup>. They knew that Jesus would be in trouble whichever way he responded. If he answered that as Jews they should not pay their taxes, then Jesus would probably be put to death by the Romans. But if Jesus said that they should pay their taxes, the people would have been furious because they were being exploited by the Roman government. If Jesus lost the support of the people, it would have made it much easier for the Jewish religious authorities to arrest him. So either way, they were expecting him to fall into their trap.

But in anticipating their evils motives again, Jesus diverted the question and pointed to a coin. While looking at the picture of Caesar on the coin and teaching that they should pay their taxes to their government, his main point was not about taxes, but that their very lives should be given to God.

- ❖ Q: In what ways are we like the Pharisees who want to keep the rules but don't want to give our lives in true worship to God?

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<sup>1</sup> Commentary on Mark's Gospel by St Helen's Bishopsgate, London.

