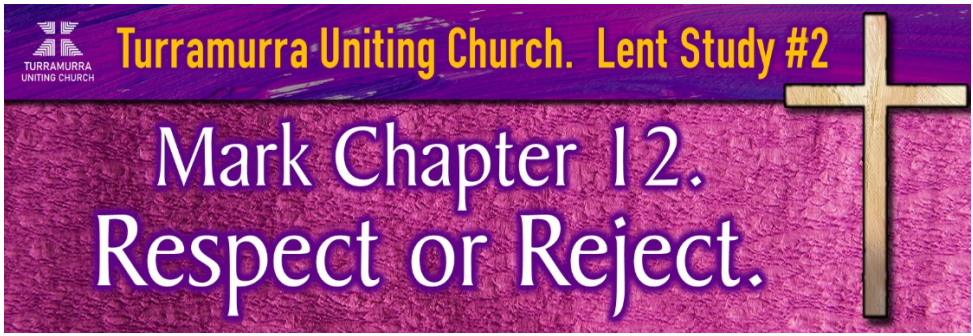


Warm Up

- Who is someone you respect? Why?

Mark 12 – Jesus vs the Religious Authorities

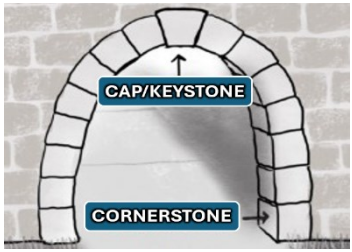
In Mark 11 - Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem, entered cheered on by an adoring crowd and turned over the tables in the temple. The religious authorities (the chief priests, Pharisees, and the teachers of the law) we all angry at what Jesus was doing and saying and wanted to kill Jesus. On the Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus returns to the temple for a showdown with the religious authorities.

Read Mark 12:1-12

Reflection Questions

a) In the Sunday Sermon we were presented with a number of perspectives in how people could hear and interpret this passage (legal – the owners were rightfully asking for what was owed to them; the workers were standing against a corrupt economic system; the link with Isaiah 5:1-7; and/or the servants represent the prophets that a patient and gracious God sends to us to call us back). Was there any that resonated with you or any that challenged you?

b) Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22 to refer to himself as the cornerstone (someone to build your life on) or capstone/keystone (someone who holds everything in your life together/add strength). Are these analogies helpful when reflecting on your own relationship with Jesus?



Read Mark 12:13-17

Reflection Questions

c) Who were the people who asked Jesus the "taxes" question? (v13) What do you know about these two groups? Do you think it would be unusual for them to ask a question together? In the light of this, what to do make of Jesus' answer?

d) In v16 Jesus asked "whose image is this"? This is the same word that is used in Genesis 1:27 – made in the image of God. In last Sunday's sermon, it was suggested that rather verse 17 being an "AND" (give to Caesar AND give to God) that it could also be an "OR". Maybe when Jesus was highlighting the image of Ceasar on the denarius, he was challenging people to choose which image they were living under – living under the Ceaser and all that brings or living in the Kingdom of God. Thoughts?

The Greatest Commandment…

Read Mark 12:28-34. The Greatest Commandment

Around the table … what is your reflection on this passage?
Or ponder together the following questions:

1. *In v28 - What do you think was the teacher of the law's motivation for asking this question. Do you think he was trying to trap Jesus similar to the previous passage, or do you think it was a genuine question?*
2. *Why do you think Jesus gave two commandments in his answer instead of giving one?*
3. *Jesus answer reference the Jewish Shema – a very common prayer – but added an extra phrase. Jesus encourages us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. How do you think about these terms? Why do you think Jesus added in the word "mind" (which differs from the Sharma)?*

The Shema

Hear, O Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai in One! Blessed is God's name; His glorious kingdom is for ever and ever! And you shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

Love is shown through Actions

Jesus' answers the question "What is the greatest commandment" but first quoting a very common Jewish prayer – the Shama – "Love the LORD your God with all you heart, with all your soul and with all your strength". But then Jesus joins it together with the command from Leviticus 19:18 love your neighbour as yourself". What is the importance of combining these two commands into one great command?

Watch – Bible Project Shema (edited)
https://youtu.be/W1oO7XFQpJg

***Reflection Question** – What did you like about the video? Was there anything new that you learnt from the video?*

1. The video made the following statement, "Love is shown through actions. If I don't do these things then I don't love God. My love for God is shown in the way I treat my people". Do you agree?
2. How do the following passages speak to this concept?
    a. Amos 5:21-24
    b. Micah 6:6-8
    c. Luke 18:9-14
    d. 1 John 3:16-18

A time to be silent

Take a moment for silent reflection. Ponder – how am I loving God with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my mind and with all my strength. And how am I showing love to my neighbour?

(If you would like a piece of music to listen to while you do this, here is a good reflective song - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGz6IvNaTzo)

Which side are you on?

Watch – The Word made Flesh Podcast (edited)

https://youtu.be/ZNPSfl9XvfQ

It is not clear whether Jesus was quoting Hillel or whether it was written later that Hillel said those words … either way, it is an interesting to reflect on these two dominant theological frameworks of how we can love God.

Shammai would say that we show love through obedience to what God calls us to do – to live in a way that shows honour and respect to God. Hallel would say that we show love to God by showing love to those around us, especially those in need - the way we show respect and love "to the least of these" is how we honour God. The challenge is … which side are you on?

Read Mark 12:35-43. Criticism of the religious leaders and the Widow's offering.

1. Consider the two examples of "actions" – the flowing robes and long prayers of the teachers of the law and the giving of the two coins by the widow – how do they speak of the way that we show respect and honour to God? How do they speak of love?

Prayer

God, we have learnt about you and your love.
Help us, Lord, as we leave this place to be people of your love.

Help us to continue to ask questions of our faith,
Help us to share riches like the poor.
Help us to love you with all that we have
Help us to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

As you look a risk in creating us,
Help us to take the risk to love you and others
compassionately, genuinely, inclusively, completely.

Continue to call us to new priorities.
Open our eyes to experience your wonder around us.
Draw us closer to you.
We pray in Jesus name, Amen.