

Questions? Questions?

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[0 : 00] And if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's guidance, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the gospel according to Mark in chapter 12.

Mark chapter 12, and if we take as our text, we're going to look at the whole passage, but if we look at the words of verse 34. Mark 12 at verse 34.

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.

You are not far from the kingdom of God. And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions. When you live in a house with a three-year-old boy and a four-year-old boy, you not only have to deal with a lot of noise, a lot of mess, and a lot of fighting, but you also have to deal with a lot of questions.

Because those little men in the house, they have little minds that are full of little questions. Why? What for?

[1 : 27] How come? Do I have to? It was him. And all these things. And in only a 24-hour period, you can be bombarded with lots and lots of different questions.

But that's not to say that asking questions is a bad thing. In fact, it's the opposite. Asking questions is a good thing. Because it's the only way, just like these little men in our house, it's the only way that we'll learn and grow and increase in our knowledge.

And so it's good to ask questions. Because life, life raises a lot of questions. And it's good to ask questions about life. It's good to ask the big questions of life.

And I'm quite sure that we've all asked the big questions of life at some point in our life. Whether it's, why are we here? What's it all about? Is God real? Which religion is right?

Is what I'm doing right? We've asked the big questions. Because life and the things which take place in our lives, they raise a lot of questions. And sometimes it's these questions which maybe hold us back from committing our life to following Jesus Christ.

[2 : 41] But I just want to say, and I'll say it one more time and then I'll leave it until the end of the year. If you have questions, if you have big questions about life, Christianity, Christians or God, whatever it is.

Then come along to the Christianity Explored Bible Study. Come along. It's informal. It's warm, hopefully, and friendly.

But it gives the opportunity to ask questions. To ask questions or just to sit and listen. Because it's good to ask questions. But it's only good to ask questions for all the right reasons.

It's not so good to ask questions for the wrong reasons. And that's what we see in this section of Mark's Gospel. We see that there were three different groups of people coming to Jesus to ask him lots and lots of questions.

Because the Pharisees and the Herodians came to ask Jesus questions. And then the Sadducees came to ask Jesus questions. And then a scribe came to ask Jesus questions.

[3 : 47] And the questions they were asking, they were big questions. But some of the questions which they were asking, they were asking them for all the wrong reasons. In fact, the reason the Pharisees and the Herodians and the Sadducees and the scribes, the reason they were coming to Jesus to ask all these questions, was because they had been sent to do it.

They had been sent to ask Jesus all these questions. They had been sent by the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. Because the chief priests, the scribes and the elders, they were desperate to trip Jesus up so that they could arrest him, put him on trial and have him executed.

And this was all because they believed that Jesus was undermining God's authority. And, of course, in one sense in their mind, they thought that Jesus was undermining their authority.

But when Jesus addressed the chief priests, the scribes and the elders, he did so by telling them a parable. The parable of the wicked tenants.

And that parable is recorded for us at the beginning of chapter 12. And Jesus told this parable to them because he knew that the desire of the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, he knew that their desire was to get rid of him.

[5 : 08] Jesus knew the hatred that was in their heart and that they were planning on putting him to death. But what's interesting is that the chief priests, the scribes and the elders, they knew that Jesus was speaking to them.

And he was speaking the parable against them. That's what we're told in verse 12. And they were seeking to arrest him. That's the chief priests, the scribes and the elders.

But feared the people, for they perceived that he, that is Jesus, told the parable against them. So they left him and went away. They left Jesus and went away.

But instead of coming back to Jesus, they sent others on their behalf to question Jesus. And I'd like us to consider the questions that these three other groups put to Jesus.

That's what I'd like us to do this morning. And I'd like us to describe these groups using three words. Hypocrisy, hypothetical, and hopeful.

[6 : 13] Hypocrisy, hypothetical, and hopeful. So if we look firstly at group one. Group one that came to Jesus called hypocrisy.

Look at verse 13. 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?

And so we read here that the first group which the chief priest, the scribes and the elders, the first group that they sent to Jesus was the Pharisees and the Herodians. And their mission which they'd been sent to do was to catch out Jesus and prove that he is a false teacher.

But what was remarkable about this first group who came to Jesus was that it was a group of hypocrisy. Not only because of what they said to Jesus but also because of what they actually believed.

[7 : 24] Because when it came to the Pharisees and the Herodians you had two groups who were on opposite ends of the religious spectrum. Because the Pharisees, well, they were deeply religious and they were obsessed with all the outward forms of religion.

They loved pomp and ceremony and all the outward appearances before man. But the Herodians, well, they didn't care about religion. They didn't care about pomp or ceremony.

They were only interested in politics. They were actually Israel's politicians. That's who the Herodians were. And at that time, Israel was under the Roman Empire.

So all these Herodians, they're working for the Roman Empire. And they're under the authority of Caesar. And so in stark contrast contrast to the religious Pharisees are the Herodians.

The Herodians who are men of the world and only interested in worldly things. They despised all religion. They didn't care about God or church or his people.

[8 : 31] In fact, Herodians, they would probably be modern day atheists who were interested more in pleasing self and increasing their wealth rather than pleasing God.

And yet when these two opposites, the religious Pharisees and the secular Herodians, when they come together to form this coalition, what unites them is their hatred of Jesus.

If you had put them on any other platform and on any other occasion, they would never see eye to eye. They hated one another. They hated one another because the Herodians, they worked for Rome.

The Pharisees couldn't stand the Romans. The Romans had invaded their country. They'd taken over. And so the sides of this coalition had very little sympathy for one another.

And yet they had one thing in common. And it's the one thing which often brings people together who have different opinions and different worldviews on life.

[9 : 37] And the common ground they share is one of opposition and animosity towards Jesus. And that was certainly the case with Herod and Pilate.

You remember in the trial of Jesus, what brought Herod and Pilate, Herod the Jew, Pilate the Roman, what brought them together and made them become best of friends, we're told that before

that they were enemies.

They hated each other. But what brought them together was the trial of Jesus and the desire to get rid of Jesus. And there's the hypocrisy.

And it's the hypocrisy which we also see here with the Pharisees and the Herodians where they put their differences aside for a moment in order to come to Jesus with a subtle question that will try and catch them out.

But before the coalition poses their question to Jesus, we read that they try and butter Him up by flattering.

[10:44] Because they say in verse 14, Teacher, we know that you're true and you don't care about anyone's opinion because you're not swayed by appearances but truly teach the way of God.

So they've buttered Him up and then they fire the question. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay them or should we not? And you know, this question in their minds, it was so well thought out that it wouldn't matter what Jesus said to them.

He was either going to be in trouble from Rome or He was going to be in trouble from Herod.

Because if Jesus said that they were to pay taxes, the Pharisees would have accused Him before the chief priests as one who submitted to the authority of Rome.

But if Jesus said, well, you don't need to pay taxes because you're Jews, then the Herodians would accuse Him as a rebel against the Roman government. And so whatever way Jesus would have answered the question, the Pharisees and the Herodians thought they had Him.

They thought, well, this is going to be easy. But what we see is that in their subtle question, the Pharisees and the Herodians were only revealing more and more of their hypocrisy.

[12:00] Because Mark tells us in verse 15, 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. So Jesus requests that this coalition, that they bring Him a denarius, which was only a day's wages and it was the value of tax required to pay Rome.

And because the inscription upon the coin was Caesar's, Jesus says to them, Render to Caesar what is Caesar's. But then He says, And to God what is God's.

And Jesus' answer, it baffles the Pharisees and the Herodians because their question sought to separate the church from the state.

Because that's the way they believe things should be run. That church and state, well, they're separate. But Jesus' answer, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's, Jesus' answer doesn't separate church and state.

[13:14] It actually affirms that God is sovereign over both. God is head over both. Yes, Jesus affirms that everyone should submit to the laws of the land, the government of the land, live under the law, live under their authority, render to that government what is due to them, render to Caesar what is Caesar's.

Because if the inscription is Caesar's, then the coin belongs to Caesar. But the wisdom of Jesus was that he affirmed that everyone must render to God what belongs to God.

And this is what the Pharisees and the Herodians marveled at. That when Jesus called for the coin to prove that it bears the image of Caesar, he was also drawing attention to the fact that every human being bears the image of God.

Because the word image which Jesus uses here, it's the same word which was used in Genesis 1. When God created man at the creation and God said, let us make man in our own image and after our own likeness.

And so when Jesus holds up this coin in front of the coalition and he says, whose image and likeness? Whose image and likeness is this? And they say, Caesar.

[14:42] Then render to Caesar what is Caesar's? And in the same way Jesus asks the Pharisees and the Herodians, look at yourself. Look at yourself and answer the question, whose image and likeness are you?

Whose image and likeness are you? And they marvel because Jesus is affirming to them that they are made in the image and likeness of God.

Therefore, says Jesus, render to God the things that are God's. And with this, Jesus demolishes all their hypocrisy and he reminds this coalition that God has an authority which is greater than any government.

And that even Caesar, bears the image of God and he too must render to God the things that are God's. Which means that whether we are like the religious Pharisee or the worldly Herodian, we are made in the image of God.

Whoever we are, we are made in the image of God. We were singing that in Psalm 24 that because we're made in the image of God, the earth belongs unto the Lord and all that it contains.

[16:06] And therefore, we are answerable to God. If we're made in God's image, we are answerable to him. We have been made in his image and in his likeness.

We have been created for his glory and to give him all the praise. That's our chief end. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

which means that it's not about us. It's not about satisfying self. It's not about our entertainment and seeing how much we can get out of life. It's not about praising all the Caesars of this world.

It's about him. It's about rendering to him what belongs to him. But what are we to render to the Lord?

Well, our opening item of praise called us to render thanks unto the Lord. It is a comely thing. And to thy name, O thou most high, do praise aloud to sing.

[17:09] We are to render to the Lord all the praise and all the glory for his great gift to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

And we are to surrender to the Lord our pride, our self-righteousness, our will. We are to surrender our heart to the Lord and commit our life to following him.

Render to God the things that are God's. Because anything else says Jesus is hypocrisy. So that's group one.

Group one called hypocrisy. But then there's group two and they're called hypothetical. Group two hypothetical. Look at verse 18.

And Sadducees came to him who say 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 man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

[18:19] And so the second group to be sent by the chief priests and the scribes and the elders, the second group to be sent was called the Sadducees. And as Mark has highlighted, the Sadducees were defined by what they didn't believe.

They were a group who were defined not by what they were for but they were defined by what they were against. And as we read, the Sadducees were against the doctrine of the resurrection.

They say there is no resurrection. They didn't believe in the resurrection at the last day when God will open every grave and the dead will rise and they will stand to be judged.

Instead, the Sadducees believed that when you died, you died. That was it. At death, the soul perished along with the body which meant that there is no heaven and there is no hell.

But the reason the Sadducees didn't believe in the doctrine of the resurrection was because they confined all their theology to the Torah. And the Torah is just the first five books of the Bible.

[19:25] Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And that was their Bible. And they believed that any doctrine was based outside of the Torah, outside of their little Bible, any doctrine from outside of that was heresy and it was to be rejected.

And so, as you can expect, there was a great divergence of opinion between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. We often think of the Pharisees as the hardliner.

But even the Pharisees viewed the Sadducees as ultra-conservative in their theology. Because the Sadducees refused to believe. They refused to believe in the existence of the soul.

They refused to believe in life after death, resurrection, the final judgment, angels, or demons. They didn't believe in any of these things. But more than that, the Sadducees were this wealthy group who considered themselves to be like the religious aristocrats of Judaism.

And they were proud people. They were proud of their theology. They were proud of what they didn't believe in. They were proud of all their self-righteous acts.

[20:39] And as a result, they looked down on everyone else. And you know, there's a danger in being a Sadducee. There's a danger in being defined by what you don't believe instead of what you do believe.

There's a danger in always making known what you're against instead of what you're for. There's a danger in looking down on others because, well, they don't do what you do. They don't do church the way you do church.

And our theology should never make us proud or view ourselves as better than anyone else. Because it's not our theology that should define us. It's our love for Jesus and our desire to follow him and live for his glory.

That's what should define us. That's what should define us. But what we see here is that this second group called hypothetical. They came to Jesus with a very hypothetical question. And what's interesting is that the Sadducees based their hypothetical question upon what the Bible says. Now look at verse 19. They say, Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but leaves no child, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.

[22 : 00] And the section of scripture that the Sadducees are referring to was the book of Deuteronomy and a section about marriage. Because the law on marriage taught that when a husband dies without a son, his widow, who would immediately become homeless and poverty stricken, she was to marry her husband's brother in order to preserve the family name of her deceased husband and in order to protect the property of her husband and ultimately protect her from homelessness.

And this action of marrying a brother's widow, it was regarded as an act of redemption. Where the near kinsman marries the brother's widow in order to protect her.

And when the brother marries the widow, he is performing the duty of the kinsman redeemer. And this is what we see when we read the book of Ruth.

It's a lovely book. Beautiful love story. The love story between Ruth and Boaz. And Boaz acts as Ruth's kinsman redeemer in which he marries a widow in order to protect her and Ruth's mother-in-law Naomi.

And what we should see is that the duty of the kinsman redeemer, it's all to do with love and protection. That's why we always call Jesus our redeemer.

[23 : 27] He not only pays the price for our release from slavery to sin by his blood, but he is also the one who loves us and wants to protect us in his care.

But what was so sad was that the Sadducees made a mockery of God's law by posing their hypothetical question to Jesus. And this is what they pose.

They say, well, there are seven brothers. The first took a wife and when he died 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 died. Then they ask, well, in the resurrection when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife.

And the first thing we ought to notice about their question is that the question they asked was a complete contradiction. Because as a group, the Sadducees prided themselves in the fact they didn't believe in the resurrection.

[24 : 30] And in their minds, the idea of this woman in heaven who had been married to seven different brothers, in their mind, it ought to render the whole concept of the resurrection as completely ridiculous.

Christians. And by posing such a hypothetical question, the Sadducees are actually mocking God and mocking his word. Because they're taking a portion of scripture out of context and they're making a mockery of it.

And you know, my friend, there are many people who try to do the same. They take portions of scripture, they either twist it to ease their own conscience, or they take it out of context in order to disprove its authenticity, or, well, they just deny what it says in order to undermine its authority, or they just make the sweeping claim about scripture.

Well, it contradicts itself, therefore, it cannot be trusted. But with many people who deny the authority of scripture and the genuineness of Christianity, they're like the Sadducees, who are either only willing to read parts of the Bible and reject the other parts that they don't like, or they're just unwilling to read the Bible at all.

And yet, it's a Bible which they're ready to deny without having read it. And this is why Jesus says to the Sadducees in verse 24, he says to them, is this not the reason you're wrong?

[26 : 06] Because you neither know the scriptures, nor the power of God. And what Jesus says to them, and to all those who deny the authority of scripture, he says, you're ignorant.

And you're ignorant not only of the Bible, but also of the power of God. And it was a bold statement to make, but it was true.

It was a true statement. And my favourite commentator, J.C. Ryle, he stressed in his commentary about this point, and he said that the reason there are so many people who question the Bible and deny its authority is because they're ignorant of it.

And he says that error can be easily traced to ignorance of the Bible. And he says, churches which are flourishing today are churches which honour the Bible.

Nations which enjoy most moral light are nations in which the Bible is most known. Parishes where there is most true Christianity is in those which the Bible is most studied.

[27 : 20] Godliest families are Bible reading families. The holiest men and women are Bible reading people, he says. These are simple facts which cannot be denied.

Therefore, he says, let us not be ignorant of the Bible lest we fall into some deadly error. And that's what happened to the Sadducees. Their ignorance of God's word caused them to think that well, they're above God's word.

They're above it all and they're more intelligent than God and they have the authority to mock the truth. if and when they please. And that's what the Sadducees were doing.

And that's what many other people do when it comes to God's word. Because on the very issue that the Sadducees thought they were experts and authority on, Jesus says, you don't have a clue.

You don't have a clue. He says to them, is this not the reason you are wrong? because you neither know the scriptures nor the power of God.

[28 : 27] 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's not the God of the dead but of the living. You're quite wrong. wrong. You're quite wrong. And in his statement, Jesus affirms the truth of the resurrection.

He affirms the truth of severing the ties of marriage at death. And he even affirms the existence of angels, which is everything that the Sadducees didn't believe in.

But Jesus' greatest concern was not marriage and who would be married to who. Jesus' greatest concern was to prove that the power of the resurrection belongs to God.

And he does that by quoting from Exodus chapter 3, a portion of scripture that the Sadducees believed in and adhered to. And Jesus reminded them of what God said to Moses from the burning bush.

[29 : 38] You remember the account when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush. And the first thing God said to Moses was, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.

And what Jesus was highlighting is that God didn't say, I was the God of Abraham and I was the God of Isaac and I was the God of Jacob.

He didn't speak in the past tense as though he was no longer their God because they had died. No, what Jesus was stressing to the Sadducees was that God is not the God of the dead.

He is the God of the living. He is still the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. And he remains there God because they will be resurrected at the last day.

They will be resurrected at the last day. And you know the Apostle Paul, he reminds us that when we are all resurrected at the last day, he says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

[30 : 48] To give an account of the things done in the body, the resurrected body. What we did on earth, our resurrected bodies will appear and we will give an account whether good or bad.

And we will appear on the day of judgment in those resurrected bodies. And my friend, the day of judgment will take place when all the graves are opened, the dead will rise, and everyone is called to appear before the bar of God's judgment.

But you know, what was going to prove the resurrection to the Sadducees or anyone who denies the authority of scripture, what was going to prove it wasn't going to be Jesus' answer or his authority.

What was going to prove the resurrection and that bodies will rise is the life of Jesus? Because the empty tomb of Jesus ought to verify all his teaching about the resurrection.

But what's remarkable is that Jesus not only announces the resurrection, he not only stands over death and over the grave, but he also says in the Bible that he is the resurrection.

[32 : 06] He says to us in the gospel, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And he who lives and believes in me shall never die.

And it was then that Jesus, when he made that remarkable announcement, he asked the all-important question, do you believe this?

Do you believe this? That's what he asked Martha when he made the announcement. And my friend, you may come to church with many questions, many questions about life or what's going on in your experience.

But Jesus is asking you this one question. Do you believe that he is the resurrection and the life? Do you believe that he is the resurrection and the life?

And if the answer is yes, then follow him. follow him. And so we've considered the first two groups. [33 : 16] Group one called hypocrisy. Group two called hypothetical. But the third group, which comes to Jesus, is a group called hopeful.

Group three, hopeful. We're told in 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?

And this third group who came to Jesus, it wasn't actually a group at all, but just one of the scribes. And what we ought to notice is that he came to Jesus alone.

He didn't come to Jesus with the assurance and comfort of others around him. He didn't hide behind the facade of what other people thought. He didn't pretend that he was part of this like-minded group.

No, he came to Jesus on his own, with his own questions, because he could see that Jesus was able to answer his questions. Maybe on his way to Jesus, the scribe was thinking, well, I'm going to trap Jesus, and I'm going to do as the scribes have asked me to do.

[34 : 28] But when the scribe heard how Jesus spoke with such wisdom and authority, it seems that there was a change in this man's heart, that he was being drawn to Jesus when he was listening to him.

But he didn't know how or what was actually going on in his heart. And so he proceeds to ask his question which he had prepared, a question which sought to find out from Jesus if Jesus knew the one command which supersedes all commandments.

He wanted to know if Jesus knew the greatest commandment. And in verse 29, Jesus answers his question. He says, 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, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

And Jesus, he quotes what you call the Shema, which is the Jewish confession of faith. That's something that the Jews would recite each morning and evening.

[35 : 41] Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength. But then Jesus quotes words from Leviticus 19 and he emphasises the need to love our neighbour.

But he says in verse 31, the second is this, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. And by his answer, by Jesus' answer, we ought to see that Jesus made love.

Love is the most important thing in life. That's what he said. Because God is love and love is from God. And what defines a disciple of Jesus ought to be their love for God and their love for others. As Jesus says in John 15, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. And so Jesus explains to this scribe who already knew the answer to his question, that the most important thing in life is to love.

Because if we love God with all our heart, with all our mind, our soul, our strength, love, and if we love God in that way, then we will experience his love in our lives.

[36 : 58] And when we experience the love of God in our heart, it will be expressed in love towards our neighbour and towards others. And the point which Jesus was making to this scribe was that Christianity is not all about rules and regulations.

It's not about commandments and ceremonies. it's about a loving relationship with God. A loving relationship with God which enables us to have a loving relationship with others.

And that's what Christianity and being a Christian is all about. It's not about a harsh God who slavishly presses upon us all these rules and regulations and weighs us down with a burden that we cannot bear, that if we so much a step out of line, he'll condemn us to hell.

For all of eternity. That's not the God of the Bible. No, the God of the Bible, he's described to us, as Jesus says, as our heavenly father.

A loving father who is gracious and merciful. And that he was so loving that he was willing to deal with our sin by lovingly providing his own son, Jesus Christ.

[38 : 16] a son who was willing and loving to take our sin, to bear our sin, to die our death, to experience our hell so that we could be a child of the heavenly father.

And you know, Paul put it so beautifully about what Jesus did for us. He loved us and he gave himself for us. therefore, Christianity, it's not about rules and regulations.

It's about a loving relationship with God through Jesus Christ. It's about having God as our heavenly father. And because we love him, we live in obedience to him.

Not because we're terrified of the judgment and the judgment day, but because out of love, we want to obey him. Christianity is about a loving relationship with God which enables us to have a loving relationship with others.

And I believe that it was this emphasis upon God's love and God's forgiveness that drew this scribe closer and closer to the Lord. Because as the narrative unfolds, the question of this scribe, it's not like the other questions.

[39 : 38] It's not a question full of hypocrisy like the first group. It's not a question that was hypothetical like the second group. But it was a hopeful question.

A hopeful question which was being asked in all sincerity and in search of a genuine answer. The scribe wants to know more.

And when he hears Jesus' answer, the scribe can't say anything but agree with what Jesus has said. The others, the hypocrites and those who ask the hypothetical question, they didn't comment on Jesus' answer.

They either ignored him or just walked away. But this man, he agrees with everything Jesus said.

And by agreeing with Jesus, he was separating himself from all the other groups.

But when you read these verses, when you read about this man, you can almost see that he wanted to ask more questions. He wanted to learn more from Jesus.

[40 : 46] But he couldn't bring himself to do it. He had an interest in Jesus and a desire to hear more of what Jesus had to say to him. He had an interest in the gospel.

He had an interest in the things of Christianity. But he couldn't bring himself to do anything about it. He wanted more and he had a desire for more, but he wasn't sure what to do next.

But you know, this is what I love about the last verse here, in verse 34. Jesus, who knew his heart, gave to this hopeful man the greatest words of encouragement.

encouragement, you are not far from the kingdom of God. You are not far from the kingdom of God.

And what Jesus was saying to him was, your desire to learn, your desire to ask questions, your desire to hear my word, it's a good thing.

It's a good thing. And your desire for the things of God, it has left you not far from the kingdom of God. And you know, I look at some of you, I look at some of you, I see you all the time, and all I can see is this man.

[42 : 08] You are this man. You're so like him. You have an interest in Jesus. You have a desire to hear more.

A desire to ask questions. You're interested in the gospel. You're interested in the things of Christianity, the things of Christ. You want to have what other Christians have in their life.

You have a desire to be in church. But like this man, you can't bring yourself to do anything about it. You can't bring yourself to committing your life to following Jesus Christ.

Christ. And I look at you, and I think, you are so close. You're so close to the kingdom of God. So close.

And it's good to be close to the kingdom of God. But being close to the kingdom is not close enough. Being close to the kingdom is not close enough.

[43 : 16] You have to enter the kingdom of God. You have to make that commitment. You have to take that step of faith. You have to let go of whatever it is that's holding you back and commit your life to loving and following Jesus Christ.

That's what you have to do. And what I find so amazing about this scribe is that he wasn't part of a group. He wasn't part of the group called hypocrisy. He wasn't part of the group called hypothetical. But on his own, on his own, in his own person, with his own personal questions for Jesus, he was part of the group called hopeful. Hopeful.

He was hopeful to enter the kingdom of God. My friend, which group are you part of? Which group are you part of? The group called hypocrisy.

The group called hypothetical. Or the group called hopeful. I hope you're part of the group called hopeful. And if you are, Jesus is saying to you today, you are not far from the kingdom of God.

[44 : 26] You are not far from the kingdom of God. But being close to the kingdom is not close enough.

because you must enter the kingdom of God. You must enter the kingdom of God. Jesus said, except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

So the only way to enter the kingdom of God is by committing your life to following Jesus' cast. God bless you.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, that we would see how close the kingdom is to us.

That we could almost touch it ourselves. Help us, we pray thee, to make that last step. To enter the kingdom of God. That we might be, as the psalmist described those of old.

[45 : 28] That they shall be brought with gladness great, and mirth on every side, into the palace of the king, and there they shall abide. That we, O Lord, would enter, enter with that great joy, knowing that in the kingdom there is the hope of eternal life.

There is true bliss. There is forgiveness of sin. And there is Jesus Christ. O Lord, bless us, we pray. Bless thy truth to our hearts, Lord.

We ask that thou wouldst keep us. Bless this day to us. A day that is set aside for us to worship and to enjoy thee. Go before us, we ask. Take us to our homes in safety.

For Jesus' sake. Amen. We shall conclude by singing in Psalm 118.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Psalm 118. The Scottish Psalter, page 399.

[46 : 41] Psalm 118 from verse 19. O set ye open unto me the gates of righteousness, then will I enter into them, and I the Lord will bless. This is the gate of God, by it the just shall enter in.

Thee will I praise, for thou may hurtst, and hast my safety be. That stone is made head cornerstone, which builders did despise. This is the doing of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes.

Down to the verse, Mark 25, of Psalm 118. To God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[47 : 39] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. The judge shall enter in.

We will thy grace for love me earth. God has my safety been.

The stone is made head cornerstone. Which filters tithy skies.

This is the doing of the Lord. And wondrous set arise.

[48 : 51] This is the day God made in it. Will joy triumph at thee.

Save now who I pray thee. Lord I pray. Send now prosperity.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The love of God the Father. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all. Now and forevermore.

Amen.