Gems From The Master

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Date: 19 May 2013

Preacher: Derek Lamont

[0:00] Now we're looking in our morning worship for the penultimate week, I God willing, at Mark's Gospel, and we're looking at Mark's Gospel chapter 12 today. And what I want to do today is I've asked Tom, if he'll just read from his pew today, and we'll read a section at a time, and I'm going to look then at each section individually and break down the chapter that way. So if Tom, Tom, do you want to read the first section? It's on page 1,017 of the Pew Bible, and it's the parable of the tenets. We'll be looking at chapter 12 this week and then chapter 13 next week, and we're finishing with that because we looked at the other chapters over Easter. So next week is the last week of our study in Mark's Gospel. So Mark chapter 12, Tom's going to read the first section through to verse 12. He then began to speak to them in parables. A man planted a vineyard, he put a wall around it, dug a pit for the wine press and built a watch tower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenets to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard, but they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty handed. Then he sent another servant to them. They struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others, some of them they beat, others they killed. He had one left to send a son whom he loved. He sent him last of all saying, they will respect my son. But the tenets said to one another, this is the air. Come, let's kill him and the inheritance will be ours. So they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenets and give the vineyard to others. Haven't you read this scripture? The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone. The Lord has done this and it is marvelous in our eyes. Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowds, so they left him and went away.

Okay, that's the first section of this chapter. We're going to go through these sections. I'm just going to pick out one or two things that I hope we can all take from these sections for ourselves today. But what's interesting in this passage, not just in this passage, but in the whole of the record that we're given of Jesus from Mark, is that Jesus speaks, all the time Jesus speaks, he speaks the truth and he speaks the truth into the context into which he's living. He speaks the truth into a context. It's not just kind of a ethereal truth. He's speaking to real people and he's speaking to people that come from a real culture and he's speaking with this knowledge and religious knowledge and understanding that they have of the Old Testament. And so he, it's Jewish speak very often with an Old Testament flavour because that's who he's speaking to. But it's still the truth and it's hugely significant for us to understand not just the truth that he speaks, but also the context into which he speaks. It helps us to understand his emphasis and it also models how we should speak into our society and how we should share the Gospel by knowing the society we live in also. Now it's very different and theologically the situation is different. I know that and I know that he was, he was, he was his own answer as it were to prophecy. He was fulfilling prophecy. So I know there's a difference between the two situations but nonetheless he still speaks into the people that he is around and we need to have that ability also as we share the truth, as we, as Christians relate our truth.

It's no, it's no good really, I don't think, just blurting out into a vacuum. I was in Belfast on Friday with Joe and had a bit of time in the town at one point and it was a beautiful afternoon lunchtime and there was this lovely lady in the town in a pedestrian precinct with a microphone and a loudspeaker and she was preaching her heart out and then she would sing a Gospel song. Nobody was paying a blind bit of attention. Some were passing by and laughing. Now I'm not saying that what she was doing was wrong. I'm not saying what she was doing was a waste of time but it seemed to me that she wasn't speaking into the culture of that day and of that moment as nobody was standing

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around. It wasn't a kind of place where people stopped to listen to various ideas and debate with her. They were shopping, they were moving on. Nobody was listening. We know God is sovereign, I mean no God can use that but it seemed to me it was culturally insensitive and we need to think about how we share the Gospel and we need to think about living our lives in such a way that will have its greatest effect for the Gospel anyway. That's in a sign. In this section Jesus is looking back to the past and it is looking back to the Old Testament and to the way the
Old Testament had panned out and he does it with the story of the tenants who have got a vineyard and who want to take the fruit of that vineyard and who kill everyone that the owner of the vineyard sends to get the fruit. Eventually they kill his son. Now it's a picture of the way that the people, particularly the leaders in the Old Testament, rejected God's message, rejected God's messengers and ultimately it was prophetic, rejected Jesus as God's son. They knew that. They knew verse 12, they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken a parable against them. He was saying, you have rejected me as religious leaders. The religious power brokers rejected the prophets all through the Old Testament and now they're going to reject Jesus. Jesus is saying, I know that.
I know that's always been the way and I know it's going to be the way with me but the reality is the amazing truth is that through that rejection Jesus redeems. Isn't that amazing?
[6:43] The rejection was ordained, he knew of it, it was understood it wasn't something out with his control and out with his knowledge and yet through that rejection he becomes the Savior. Through his crucifixion he becomes the redeemer. Isn't that amazing? Because you know we usually think, you would think Jesus would come as the Savior and everyone would go, oh brilliant, here's a Savior. I'm dying, I'm sinful, I'm lost and here's a redeemer.

That's great, we'll worship him and adore him but it was like that, was it? When God came in his perfection, humanity rejected him. They didn't want him, they didn't want a Savior and yet through that rejection is redemption because it's through his rejection across crucifixion and sacrifice that he becomes the one and only redeemer between God and man. Isn't that amazing? The reality and Jesus is saying here, I know that and this is the way and you will reject me, there's no surprises he's saying, no surprises. But as Jesus speaks that into and challenges his, the people around him, we mustn't just leave it there but we must also look at the parable and ask the same question, well do we treat God in the same way like an absentee landlord? Is that how you treat God? Is that how we treat God? And Jesus Christ ultimately who, they rejected the Son you see, do we rubbish him, ridicule him, reject him? Do we think him sending his beloved Son is nothing much really? And we reject that salvation? Jesus says please don't do that, please don't treat me like an absentee landlord. The God who winds up the universe and leaves it to go and we can just treat it any way we like and think that we will not be held accountable with Jesus is saying one day he will return in judgment and we will face him just as Hebrews chapter 9 verse 27 says just as man is destined to die once and after that to face judgment.
And either we face the judgment of God knowing that Jesus has faced that judgment in our place and died for our sins or we face it alone. He's no absentee landlord. He's a sovereign God who is allowing this world to carry on in his patience so that they will come to him. Don't treat God like an absentee landlord in your life. And as Christians we need to consider that also. But then Jesus goes on in the next section. Verse 13.
Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said teacher we know you're a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by men because you pay no attention to who they are but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we? But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. Why are you trying to trap me? He asked. Bring me a denarius and let me look at it. They brought the coin and he asked them whose portrait is this and whose inscription. Caesar's they replied. Then Jesus said to them give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. And they were amazed at him.
I really want you to grasp the importance of these readings. Please read with them. Think about them as we're reading them. I don't want to have to go through it all over again.
[10:27] I repeat it because time's so short. But here's and you won't ask the question why is this next to what has just happened and why is it there and what's so significant and important about it. Well it's just Jesus moved from the past and the Old Testament was into the present and he's dealt, he's dealing with the same attitude of the leaders, the Pharisees and the Herodians who want to

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catch him out. It's entrapment. They're trying to trap Jesus here and catch him out on the matter of taxes. And they're hoping that if he says one thing that he will be regarded as a rebel and will lose a whole lot of popularity.

He says another thing they're hoping he'll be regarded as a traitor and he will be rejected by another group. So they're concerned about trying to make Jesus unpopular, trying to trap him out with some kind of smart alec thinking. And here we find Jesus in the present dealing with them as well and not answering them in the way that they expected but rather reminding them he rises above all and reminds them of accountability. He reminds them that everyone is living under authority in the culture that they live in and the Jewish people no less they were living under the authority of Rome and yet they were willing to trade with Rome and they were willing to have denarius coins and deal with Rome and so he says look if you live under that authority you need to recognise that and pay the taxes of being citizens of this earthly kingdom whether it's just or moral and right or not. And he's reminding them of a human responsibility that we have as Christians as believers in the same way to have respect and a submission to the authorities that we live under because they're placed there by God but he also says something far more important really he says you have a higher submission you have a higher submission to God give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. We looked at a coin and they saw a denarius coin Caesar's image was on it and give it back to Caesar taxes if that's the system economic system we live under but he says look at your life look at yourself in the mirror you're making God's image you're making God's image recognise the responsibility of being an image bearer of God he has made you you're to submit to his lordship you're to recognise his grace with your whole being submit to the Lord Jesus Christ give to God what is God's your life is God's your breath is God's your ability to be here today is God's he loves you and he is you're made broken though we are still in his image and that image can only be restored and renewed and life bearing when we come to Jesus Christ for salvation we're not our own we've been as Christians bought with a price that is a beautiful and solemn reality for us to consider because he's not just this absentee landlord he's not just this miserable
God that has wound up the universe and leaves it to its own destruction render to God what is God's what's your life been like this week what's mine be like as Christians are we giving him his lordship and if you're not a Christian have you considered his grace and his love and the extent to which this absentee landlord sends his son even though he's rejected and refused and denied to be a redeemer next section from verse 18 then the Sadducees who say there's no resurrection came to him with a question teacher they said Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother now there were seven brothers the first one married and died without leaving any children the second one married the widow but he also died leaving no child it was the same with the third in fact none of the seven left any children last of all the woman died too at the resurrection whose wife will she be since the seven were married to her Jesus replied are you not in error because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God when the dead rise they will neither marry nor be given in marriage they will be like the angels in heaven now about the dead rising have you not read in the book of Moses in the account of the bush how God said to him I am the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob he's not the God of the dead but of the living you're badly mistaken so all these questions are being thrown at Jesus about the past and about the present and about politics and about tax and they're trying to trip them up all the time and they're trying to deflect him from his truth and what he's saying and here another group you know there's all these pressure groups that come to Jesus with their various idiosyncratic thinking and so the Sadducees now come up and they don't believe in the resurrection so they invent this utterly ludicrous situation claiming this Old Testament leave it outlaw for someone dies that they need to be then marry the brother and keep the family inheritance going and they give this preposterous example of what might happen and what will it be like in heaven because they're going on the a sub one they don't believe in that resurrection and in heaven but two they don't understand what heaven's like as I was saying to the children earlier on they were kind of religious clever clogs just trying to trip up Jesus with hypothetical scenarios they were shut you could see them can't you can't you just see them sort of just delighted with this scenario and this all really tripped Jesus up this all show them what a ridiculous idea the resurrection is and you know you see we see it so often that we think we can flummox God you know with our own deep seated and philosophical ideas and that will really get

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God that's really confusing we might confuse his people and you'll find it very easy to confuse me but Jesus is just declarative and strong in what he says here when he is confronted with the scenario he says look you're wrong you're wrong you don't know the Bible and you don't know the power of God you don't know the truth see we can be we can we can even genuinely be really sincere but we absolutely wrong and we need to be willing to let Jesus say to us look you're absolutely wrong and you're thinking and in your beliefs you're going the wrong way and you're not listening to or being molded by scripture and you don't
understand what God has come to do and we need to understand that the power of the resurrection on this resurrection morning is the power of God and is the power that transforms us internally and enables us to have the hope of eternal life Paul says that clearly doesn't he if we have if we have only hope for the gospel in this life we are to be pitied more than anyone and so however difficult heaven is to believe in however mysterious it is we believe in it not because it's a fairy story not because it's pleasant thinking but because because it's home that is what Jesus has gone to prepare for us he sees as the God of the living he says I'm not he doesn't say I was the God of Abraham the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob I am I am their God they are with me in glory they've died and moved on and they are with me I am their God he's the God of the living he's always the God of the living so we talk about dead people in the past but we recognise that spiritually as believers if they're believers in Christ they have gone to be with Jesus and live with him in glory but the question is who do you trust do we trust our own kind of figment and imaginations about what might happen after death I was listening to a program on the radio in the car this week about near a post death experiences but it was all just based on experiences I'm not denying the reality or otherwise of these experiences but they don't necessarily equate with heaven but Jesus says heaven is the place where I have risen to and where those who believe in me are going to be is not the God of the dead but of the living you're badly mistaken who are we going to trust if I go to New York want to know about New York I'm going to speak to Scott my son she lives there he knows what it's like I'm not going to speak to somewhere random who's never been further than you come Nick someone who's been to New
York who lives in New York will speak with more authority about that place and I can trust him Jesus Christ has come from glory she knows about eternity and eternal life do we question do we trust him or do we simply ignore him and have our own fanciful thinking I am the way the truth in life one last section we're not going to have time to go there or three one last section I want to look at the greatest commandment one of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer he asked him of all the commandments which is the most important the most important one answer Jesus is this here oh Israel the Lord your God the Lord is one 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 love your neighbor as yourself there's no commandment greater than these well said teacher the man replied you're right in saying that God is one and there's no other but him to love him with all your heart with all your understanding with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices when Jesus saw that he had answered wisely he said to him you're not far from the kingdom of God from then on no one dared ask him any more questions okay so now it's Jesus turn in many ways to turn on its head and remind him as lead as audience and particularly ourselves of the greatest command again he's been questioned this time it seems to be a more sincere question from one of the religious leaders that has been debating with him see there's this interaction he's not just speaking into avoid he's not just using a microphone allows for everyone's passing by interacting with their questions and what they are thinking all you need is love it's a great kind of anthem and chorus a guess of many people and it's so very near but it's also so far away in many respects because it needs to be a right love and it needs to be Christ's love not just Christ's love to us but Christ's love in us because that is the gospel and that is the law and that is what we will be judged for on the day of judgment and all of us fall short which is why all of us need a redeemer because he says you are to love me with all your heart and your soul and your mind and your strength that's the great command you know that's what he really wants from us wholehearted devotional entire love of who we are of that we have that we can give to God the code of our being from our hearts from internally our soul or our very being loving God our mind with our decisions and with our will our strength with the capabilities and gifts is God is Jesus we have seen just the whole of your being everything your thoughts and your your life and your mind is to love God the greatest thing of all is to love God the greatest sin of all is not loving God and you look at that I look at that and I say I fall on my knees

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and say Lord I can't even begin to go down that road I have not that desire and love for you it condemns us it's not the legalistic judgmental laws that condemn us it's this law of love that condemns us which subsumes
[24:06] all others but the gift of grace is that Jesus Christ has loved that way you're looking for someone who loves that way as a human being loving God Jesus is the perfect example because he was doing it in a place and yet he died receiving our sins so this is this great transference of guilt to Jesus Christ and transference of righteousness and love and grace into her he transforms our heart so it's our right love for God that Jesus can give us in salvation but also our right love of self and that's very significant I think very important love your neighbour as yourself and we talk about a lot of hating self and hating our sinful self and everything that goes with it which is right but we need to work out the balance about loving ourselves because there's a right love of self because we're image bearers of God and it's absolutely right and natural to love ourselves but love ourselves through the prism of the cross love ourselves with the honesty that says I'm lost

I'm a failure I've let God down but he's redeemed me he's forgiven me and now he's transforming me he loves me so much that he's transforming me into his image so it's our right love because we're being made new creations from inside out it's our right love because we're honest about our failure and we're honest about our idolatry but we're at peace because we can come to him for renewal and forgiveness that is very very important that you love yourself as a Christian through the prism of the and through the eyes and through the perspective of Jesus it's not good self-flagulation thinking you're the worst reality in the universe because if you hate yourself you will never accept Christ and if you hate yourself you will never love other people this hugely significant reality in Christ is that we love ourselves in a Christ glorifying way in a Christ perspective therefore we can love other people in the right way but if you hate yourself you will hate other people and if you hate yourself you will be self-righteous because you'll be covering up what you are with good acts to try and impress and if you hate yourself you will gather around you the wrong type of people and if you simply love yourself without any kind of spiritual dimension if you just think you're the greatest thing since sliced bread if you think you're archie and that your life is just great because of who you are simply in and of yourself without any reference to your sin and your lostness and your need then you will only ever gather people around you who will make you feel better about yourself or who think like you the same type of people around you grace freezes from that because it is honest about ourselves it is honest about our need for forgiveness it's honest about redemption and also it fills us with a grace from Him that says I can be gracious to others and forgiving and compassionate and patient and sacrificial and we love people with the kind of love that Jesus has for us love that's messy love that's time consuming love that's not manipulative love that's not only to gain and to receive love that goes the extra mile love that forgives loves accepting when we're wronged that we move forward and we progress it's a right love of others that's the commandments of God that's how we respect God and it's impossible isn't it it's utterly impossible which is why we need a savior if you're here today and you have managed to be a Christian in your own strength for the last 30 years then can I say that you have completely misunderstood the gospel if we think we can be Christians without falling in our knees and saying Lord I can't do this I can't meet your standard I can't be perfect in the way you want me to be I can't love you with all my heart so and I certainly can't love my neighbour as myself because all the love is focused on me I need you forgive me renew me make me a new creation that is the gospel and we as it were we relive that gospel moment every day we look to independence on him saying I need you I need you I need you I've fallen short of your glory I need you and to know that grace and that love and that peace that passes all understanding that my friends is the definition of a Christian that we're given in this passage and in the last two sections Jesus just goes on to nail that about his lordship about who he is he has no time for those who are religious and who want pride and position because of religion he says he is Lord he is God listen to him then he finishes with this brilliant example of the widow the poor widow who gives all this probably if we could think about it in our language terminology and it's I'm showing my age here and everything else it would be a half penny you know that useless miserable copper coin that just used to hold in your pocket it was half a penny what we used to do anything I don't think it's even legal tender anymore but it's like this poor widow gave half a penny the lowest most miserable coin that there is and gave it into the temple to God fraction of a penny it was all she had everything she had and Jesus commends it and it's a beautiful irony with which to finish of Jesus wonderfully fresh and nobody in society you know even for the Jewish

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people that were hearing him to hear of a poor widow
I mean that's the lowest of the low widows were poor anyway but to describe her as a poor widow since she was the poorest of the poor and nobody in that society all the opposite of the pomp and ceremony that he was castigating in the previous verses and that she gives her all absolutely everything he says she's sacrificial she's loving she's profligate she's unmeasured she's excessive she gives everything because she understands that she is a glorious inheritance and she is rich beyond understanding in her relationship with God because of her understanding of his righteousness that's what Jesus is trying to get across she's a nobody in society but she is a legend in heaven she's a legend in heaven and Christ is saying I'm looking I'm seeing I'm examining I have my light is piercing into your hearts he says I know your motives nobody else knows motives he said but I know your motives and he says I'm looking for this in response to my salvation and my love and my commitment and in the midst of going into enemy territory when I wasn't even accepted it through that rejection through that nailing on the cross I became your redeemer in response to that great love I'm looking for you falling on your knees and giving everything in return sacrificial unmeasured excessive crazy by this world standards commitment to Jesus Christ bonkers the world says but we give it because we believe by faith and we understand and
God has enabled us to see that this is the way to heaven and this is the way to our relationship with him now and to forgiveness and to hope and to a future and the challenge for me from this passage as it finishes the whole chapter is am I playing safe am I respectable have become miserably tame miserly mean lukewarm the worst kind of categorization that Jesus gives in the Bible is that we're lukewarm we're neither nutcases who are hot lunatics who are cold we're just lukewarm and he says it's so despicable I just it turns my stomach and I want to spear you out have we become that have I become that what a challenge comes from God's word has it become that for us a challenge a living word that will and can and does changes may the Holy Spirit apply the passage of scripture to us his truth to our lives and may we seek to be legends in heaven not because of ourselves and what we've done but simply because of what Jesus has done for us and because we are willing to give him all because we know we have received an inheritance that cannot perish spoiler fade in heaven eternally we were the richest of all people are we sharing that and living that with our dear fellow human beings our neighbors and our families and our friends
[34:21] I mean our heads briefly in prayer Lord God we thank you for the gospel we thank you for its wonder for its majesty for its grace forgive us when we are blind to it forgive us when we are far more excited and attracted by this world and by its temptations and sins and even its legitimate pleasures but when these legitimate pleasures swamp the loveliness of Jesus and the power and the truth that he reveals to us and we know that it is deceptive and wrong so Lord help us to see take away the scales of our eyes take away our blindness we ask give us passion for you desire for you and longing for you fill us with your grace we can't work it up we can't manufacture it we can't pretend we have it if we don't help us simply to be dependent and be like that poor widow as she is described who is immeasurably rich in her understanding and in her sacrifice and may we live like that and give all of our beings to this wonderful and glorious saviour for Jesus sake amen.

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