



THURSDAY 03.18.10

Mark 12:38-44

In our reading on Tuesday we heard Jesus' strong words of condemnation for the religious leaders who had abused their authority and taken advantage of God's people. As the twelfth chapter concludes and Jesus prepares to leave the Temple area, he identifies for his disciples a poor widow who exhibits the faith and devotion that Jesus found lacking in the religious leaders.

- James Bryan Smith writes that "God can be trusted because the God Jesus reveals would never do anything to harm us." Do you believe that God would never do anything to harm you? How has your answer to that question impacted your ability to trust God like the poor widow in this story?
- If you had to identify one area of your life in which you struggle to trust God fully, what would it be?



FRIDAY 03.19.10

Mark 13:1-2

The Temple Mount was one of the most spectacular displays of architecture in the ancient world. After sparring with the teachers of the law, Jesus' own disciples leave the Temple area mesmerized by the size of the stones rather than the authority by which Jesus has challenged the religious leaders. Like the religious leaders, Jesus' own disciples do not fully understand the magnitude of the events that are about to occur.

- If you have ever walked into a wall, you've learned that our eyes play a major part in determining our direction. As you think about your walk with Christ, what practices have helped you stay focused on Christ? In what areas do you need to grow to stay on the right path?
- Jesus' disciples were distracted by the magnificence of the Temple architecture. What tends to distract you?



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A RESOURCE FOR DISCIPLES SEEKING TO LOVE GOD, LOVE OTHERS & SERVE THE WORLD ...

Series: *24 Hours That Changed the World*
Sermon: *The Trial of Jesus*
Scripture: **Matthew 26:57-75**

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:



Introduction

Over the course of only six days, Jesus went from being hailed and celebrated as a triumphant king to a man arrested and standing trial before the Jewish ruling council. How did it all come crashing down so fast?

In the early part of Jesus' ministry, he spent time teaching in the synagogues which were supervised by a group called the Pharisees. For this to occur, Jesus would have been invited by these local overseers. Near the end of his life, these same leaders would join the conspiracy to have Jesus killed. During our reading this week we will seek to understand how those, who were in many ways so close to Jesus, ultimately turned their backs on him.

At the heart of our reading will be a simple phrase that Jesus shares with one of these men when he says, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." In the end, those who participated in Jesus' arrest and trial were not evil men with a thirst for violence, but religious leaders who were blind to the real truth. As you look at their struggle, may this prayer guide you:

Holy and loving God, we confess that we sometimes have a hard time understanding you. In the course of our daily living, we often misunderstand your presence in our lives. Give us humility, God, to wholeheartedly seek your truth and the trust that you will never abandon us along the way.



TUESDAY 03.16.10

Mark 12:1-12

Today we see what is at the heart of the tension between Jesus and the religious leadership. Prior to this teaching, the chief priests and teachers of the law have challenged Jesus to explain the source of his authority [11:27-33]. He responds with this parable which places these religious leaders in the role of the tenant farmers who have abused the trust given to them by the owner of the vineyard.

- God had given to these men the task of leading the people of Israel and had equipped them for this task. What has God entrusted to you in your life?
- The scriptures remind us that we are accountable to God for the gifts God has given to us. Today, take some time to evaluate how you are managing the gifts and responsibilities God has entrusted to you.



MONDAY 03.15.10

Mark 11:15-19

In the expansive area known as the Temple Mount, pilgrims exchanged the coinage of the empire which bore the face of Caesar for the Temple coins. Jewish law prohibited the use of Roman coins as a violation of the Second Commandment. In the course of this monetary exchange, the wealthy chief priests were driving the poor into deeper poverty.

- Mark tells us that, at this moment, the chief priests and teachers of the law "begin looking for a way to kill him [Jesus]." What does this reveal about their characters?
- James writes, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows." Why does God place such a high value on these two groups? In what ways does this text challenge you to care for the least, the last and the lost?



WEDNESDAY 03.17.10

Mark 12:28-34

In the midst of the tension being played out in the twelfth chapter of Mark, we find this brief exchange. The answer that Jesus provides is affirmed by his examiner, and Jesus is equally taken with the wisdom of this man's response.

- This text reminds us that not all of the religious leaders were totally opposed to Jesus. Even near the end, some opposed the movement against Jesus. From what we have read so far this week, why do you think the religious leadership finally decided to try to arrest and condemn Jesus?
- The response that this teacher of the law supplies leads Jesus to say, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." If loving God, loving others and serving the world are the marks of the Christian life, how close would you describe yourself to God's kingdom?
