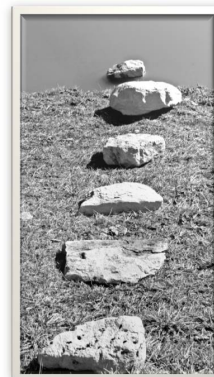


Take The Next Step

Mark 11-12



"You are not far from the kingdom of God." Mark 12:34b NIV

*"You're almost there, right on the border of God's kingdom."
Mark 12:34b The Message*

Truth to Stand On

God's kingdom authority does not depend on people's acceptance of it, and His law of love transcends human law and tradition.

Opening Prayer

Dear God, Strengthen us to love you with our whole hearts and minds and souls and strength. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Getting in Step With Your Group

Introduce yourselves if there are any new group members. Share what you picture our relationships will be like in heaven.

Step by Step Through Mark 11-12

In Mark 11-12, Jesus enters Jerusalem at the beginning of what will be the last week before His death. He comes in to praises, but the tide will quickly turn. Read through Mark 11-12 together, noting these steps along the way:

- o Step 1: The crowds recognize Jesus as King when He enters Jerusalem – Mark 11:1-11
- o Step 2: Jesus asserts His authority and teaches the power of prayer – Mark 11:12-26
- o Step 3: Jesus' authority is questioned as the tide begins to turn – Mark 11:18, 27-33
- o Step 4: The kingdom will be taken from those who reject Jesus as King – Mark 12:1-12
- o Step 5: Love of God and neighbor trump all human laws and traditions – Mark 12:13-34
- o Step 6: Things are not always how they seem...
 - ...David's Son is also his Lord – Mark 12:35-37
 - ...outward appearances don't always show what's truly inside – Mark 12:38-40
 - ... the smallest offering may actually be the greatest – Mark 12:41-44

Mark 11:9 quotes from Psalm 118. This Psalm was one of the hymns sung at Passover each year. Why is a Passover hymn especially appropriate for Jesus at the beginning of the week before His death?

Jesus encounter with the fig tree is difficult to understand. (11:12-14, 20-21) Jesus never used His power on a whim or to serve His own needs, so there must be some other reason He cursed this fig tree. What possible object lessons might He be giving with the tree? What teaching does He share when Peter is surprised by the withered tree? (11:22-25)

Why did Jesus clear out the temple in 11:15-17? The place the money changers were operating was the court of the Gentiles, the only place in the temple where non-Jews were allowed. Who did Jesus say His house was for? (11:17) How did the religious leaders react to what Jesus had said and done?

Why do you think Jesus refused to give the religious leaders a straight answer in 11:27-33?

In the parable at the beginning of chapter 12, who does the vineyard owner represent? The renters? The servants who were beaten and killed by the renters? The son of the owner? What does Jesus mean when He says the vineyard will be given to others?

What is the motivation of the Pharisees and the Herodians when they ask Jesus about paying taxes? (12:13) What answer does He give that amazes them?

How do the Sadducees miss the point in their question about marriage and the resurrection in 12:18-27? How does Jesus cleverly refute their denial of the resurrection of the dead?

How do the two greatest commandments that Jesus gives relate to the Ten Commandments that God gave Moses?

Stepping into Our World

Apply the words of these chapters in today's world by answering the questions below in your group as time permits:

- When have you been part of a large crowd praising Jesus? Describe the experience.
- What are some ways that we might misuse or disrespect God's house? Although there are no money changers in our church, we do sometimes come to church more as consumers than worshipers. What is the difference between these? How can we avoid the consumer trap?
- What mountain do you need to move by prayer? Is there anyone you are holding something against that you need to forgive?
- What is God's vineyard today and who are the servants He sends into it? How do we sometimes "beat up" these servants?
- How did you feel about paying your taxes this year? How can Jesus' words improve our attitude towards paying our taxes?
- The Sadducees lacked an eternal perspective. How can an eternal perspective change your earthly life?
- What does it look like to love the Lord "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"? The Message paraphrases this verse to say "with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy."
- The Message says that the poor widow "gave her all" while everyone else "gave what they'll never miss." Think about where your giving falls between these two.

Taking the Next Step

Take today's study of Mark 11-12 into the week ahead by choosing one of the following challenges:

- Pray for a heart of worship and come to church next Sunday ready to give, not just receive.
- Think of someone you are holding something against and pray to forgive them.
- Follow Jesus' second greatest commandment and show love to a "neighbor" this week.
- Apply an eternal perspective to a problem that you are facing today – and see the difference it makes!
- Find someone who is giving their "two cents" in quiet, faithful service and encourage them in the greatness of their gift.

Closing Prayer

Give group members an opportunity to share prayer requests for the coming week.