JESUS ANSWERS "GOTCHA" QUESTIONS

Mark 11:27-33

Mark 12:13-27

Awareness

Before listening, reflect:

- How do you react when your way of life, your opinions, your beliefs, or your job is threatened?
- Have you ever tried to play games with God? Maybe find a loophole? What was the experience like? How did it turn out?

As Jesus Christ approached his arrest and crucifixion, he encountered backlash from his skeptics, primarily the religious authorities of his day. They did not acknowledge his authority and were threatened by his reputation among the people. His teaching and claims regularly contradicted their own, putting their status and authority at stake. Consequently, the religious authorities focused their efforts on discrediting him. During Holy Week, each group of authorities approached him with questions designed to trap Jesus by either making the public angry with him or creating legal trouble with Rome. But Jesus knew their game and identified their hypocrisy. He evaded their traps with significant teaching that confronted and corrected their hypocrisy while imparting valuable wisdom and truth for his followers.

Listen:*Jesus Answers “Gotcha” Questions*

Reflection

After listening, consider:

- In his commentary on Luke from the Concordia Commentary series, Arthur A. Just Jr. reflects on Luke 20:1-8 (a parallel passage to Mark 11:27-33) and makes this observation about how the chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders respond to Jesus’ counter question: “*They choose what is natural for them: ignorance, an expression of their hypocrisy. By refusing to confess the truth, they confess a lie. Hypocrisy comes from fear of confessing unpopular truth, truth that will demand a change in their whole way of living”* (p. 757). What is your reaction to his observation? Have you ever chosen ignorance over confessing an unpopular truth? What led to you to make that decision and what happened as a result?
- In segment 2, host Dave Bast observes that through Jesus’ answer about giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and giving to God what is God’s, Jesus invites us as his followers to ponder and debate within and among ourselves what things are acceptable to submit to our governments and what things belong to God alone. How have you and your faith community wrestled with this question? What about when people of faith come to differing conclusions? How can we live out our faith with individual and communal integrity?
- When Jesus replies to the Sadducees’ question about marriage after the resurrection, he demonstrates his thorough knowledge of scripture, leaving his questioners in awe. Likewise, we see his great knowledge and deep understanding of scripture reflected throughout his ministry. Host Scott Hoezee reminds us that Jesus is God’s word made flesh and thus the authorized interpreter of scripture. How

can Jesus' knowledge and ability to interpret scripture both encourage and challenge us in our own spiritual life? Similarly, what lessons or cautions can we infer from the actions and teachings of the religious leaders in these stories as we work to interpret and apply scripture in our lives and culture today?

- In Jesus' answer to the last "gotcha" question, we are reminded again that God is the God of the living. In the People's Bible Commentary on Mark, author Harold E. Wicke writes, *"Since God is the God of the living, that also involves the resurrection of the body at the end of time. God does not permit death to destroy his covenant. This would be proven in a very special way less than a week later when our Lord Jesus would rise from the dead"* (p. 171). How and why does this reality and promise provide you comfort?

Related Passages

- **Matthew 21:23-27**
  The Authority of Jesus Questioned
- **Luke 20:1-8**
  The Authority of Jesus Questioned
- **James 4:17**
- **Matthew 22:15-33**
  Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar/Marriage at the Resurrection
- **Luke 20:20-40**
  Paying Taxes to Caesar/The Resurrection and Marriage
- **1 Corinthians 15:35-58**
- **John 11:21-27**

Conclusion

Spend some time thinking about each of the three stories from Mark 11:27-33 and Mark 12:13-27. Write down your answers to the following questions: What does each encounter show us about our human tendencies? What do we learn about the character of God or Jesus? What do we learn about the Kingdom of God? What do these encounters teach us about what it means to live faithfully? Share your observations with someone and together pray for God to open your minds and give you receptive hearts to his truths and teaching.

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