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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Suggested Starter Question

- What connection—if any—do you think there is between money and the end of the world?

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Observation—*What do I see?*

- In one sentence, what key idea do each of the following passages teach about money?

Matthew 6:24-34 _____

Matthew 13:3-9 & 18-22 _____

Mark 10:24b-25 _____

Mark 12:41-44 _____

Luke 12:13-15 _____

Luke 12:32-34 _____

Luke 16:10-11 _____

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- Choose one of the above passages and list everything we can conclude about God, us, money and eternity.
- Look up important words (even the ones you think you know!) at <WebstersDictionary1828.com>. What do you learn?
- Now, boil down what you've learned into generalizable principles of action ("Always/Never..." or "God says that..." or "In light of eternity, it is important to..." or "The world says...but God says..." etc.).

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- In which of those principles do you think you've made positive progress—and why?
- In which of those principles do you most need to make positive progress—and why?
- Pair up with someone in the group who is weak where you're strong. Pray for them this week.

Sermon Summary Mark 12:41–13:13

We're in a verse by verse study of the Gospel of Mark. In our study we have come to the final week of Jesus' life. He and his disciples are in Jerusalem attending the Feast of Passover. While in Jerusalem, Jesus is confronted by the temple authorities, who, in an attempt to entrap him, bombard him with a series of questions. In the end, they are so amazed by the wisdom of his answers that they dared not interrogate him further. With their questioning done, Jesus begins to ask them some questions, which they are unable to answer (v. 38-40). God hates hypocrisy! He despises showy, superficial religion. He especially hates it when, in the name of Christ, religious leaders rip off vulnerable people. This is a common problem where health and wealth theology is promulgated. Health and wealth preachers tend to prey on the poor. The preacher looks into the television cameras and says, "If you want that miracle, that healing, whatever it is that you have been praying for, make a seed gift to my ministry for \$100, \$500, \$1000, whatever your faith allows. The greater the gift, the greater your faith. God honors faith. So sit down and plant a seed of faith and write that check. The sooner you write it, the sooner that seed will grow into that miracle you need!" But why don't health and wealth teachers practice what they preach? Why don't **they** plant a seed of faith for their new jet by writing **you** a check? Why don't **they** pay for that surgery **you** need? Why don't they do that? Where is **their** faith? Think about it: when **they** want something, they ask **you** to write a check to them. But when **you** want something, they ask **you** to write a check to them. Always collecting checks, never writing them. That's curious.

Jesus is not condemning those who give generously to the kingdom of God, but he is condemning those who seek to enrich themselves on the backs of the vulnerable. Our giving should come from the heart, without trickery and without coercion. We don't give in order to get something back from God in return. But God does commend generosity (v. 41-44). Jesus was sitting in the Temple, observing people's giving. That is interesting, isn't it? He's still observing our giving today. As he sat there, some wealthy people put in large sums, but what grabbed his attention was a poor widow who gave two small copper coins. The coin was called a lepton, which literally means "a thin one". They were the smallest and least valuable of all coins. In today's money it would buy you a cup of coffee. Yet Jesus said that her tiny contribution was greater than all the others. They had given what they could easily spare, while the widow gave all that she had. We learn that our giving should be sacrificial. God is not impressed by the size of the gift, but by the sacrifice required. Real generosity costs us something. It requires us to give up something that we could otherwise spend on ourselves. So—what about us? Does our charitable giving involve sacrifice? Does it impact our lifestyle, even a little bit? Are there some things our families have chosen to go without in order to more fully fund ministry here at TCC? Is God impressed with your generosity, or would he say, "You're just giving out of your surplus. There is no real sacrifice going on there." I don't know what God would say about you. But he would say something. He does have an opinion.

Furthermore, our giving should flow out of our trust in, and commitment to, God. This woman's giving had a certain recklessness about it. Jesus said that she gave all that she had. I'm not judging the wisdom of such giving, but it **does** tell us something about her faith and values. By giving all that she had she was flinging herself on God's mercy to continue to provide for her. I am quite confident that he blessed her generosity. Paul commended similar generosity in Macedonian churches (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Their generosity flowed from their commitment to God. They first gave themselves to the Lord, and then, in generosity, to the church at Jerusalem. Their giving was an overflow and expression of their devotion to God. Finally, note that it is a lovely thing that the person whom the New Testament epitomizes as the supreme example of generosity was someone who gave a gift of such small monetary value. We may feel that we have so little to offer God in terms of material gifts, but if we put all that we have at his disposal, he can do things we would never imagine.

This brings us to chapter 13, where Jesus' disciples commented on the stunning opulence of the Temple (v. 1-2). Jesus commented that it would be destroyed, and they were eager to know when the Temple would be destroyed, and what would be the signs that it was about to take place (v. 4). Matthew's gospel adds the detail that they wished to know about the timing of his second coming and the end of this present age (24:3). The disciples assumed that the destruction of the temple would coincide with the end of the age and Jesus' coming as King—one big event (see Zechariah 14:1-11). From our vantage point, we know the answer to the first question. The Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. But of course, this event was yet 37 years in the future for the disciples.

How about their second question—"What will be the sign when all these things are going to be fulfilled?" Matthew's gospel reveals that the fulfillment of "all these things" is a broad reference to the timing of Jesus' coming as Israel's conquering King and the timing of the end of the present age. The disciples saw all of this as happening together, really soon—probably in their lifetime. Although Jesus has told them he is going to die, and he has told them he was going to be raised from the dead, they are still not putting it all together. They are understandably confused about what the future holds. The disciples knew that the Old Testament Scriptures talked about a time in the future when God would intervene in human history—a time when Israel would experience all the promises God had made to her.

This tumultuous time period was referred to in the Old Testament as the "the Day of the Lord" (see Amos 5:16-18; Isaiah 13:6, 9-10, 13 and Joel 2:1-2; 30-31). This will be a time of terror and trouble when the world will be shaken to its foundations and judgment will come. All of this will be followed by a new world and a new age and with new glory. They were excited and confused all at the same time! But Jesus talked about delays—not about signs. Jesus comes right out and says that the things in v. 5-13 (false messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famines, religious persecution and related family betrayal) aren't signs of his return. He said, "See to it that no one misleads you." These events that Jesus mentions are not signs of the end of the age—they're the beginning of birth pangs. This suggests an extended period of time that will precede "the end."

So, if we're not to be studying a checklist of signs, what should we be doing now? We should: [1] Determine to give sacrificially to God's work. [2] Don't buy into health and wealth theology. [3] Yearn for Jesus' return, but don't be deceived by false signs. [4] Pray for our brothers and sisters around the world who are experiencing persecution because of their faith. [5] Pray for continued religious freedom in our own country, knowing that God desires all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [6] If in the future you find yourself persecuted for your faith, trust that God the Holy Spirit will give you courage and wisdom in what to say.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

Jesus said that no one knows the day or time of his return (Matthew 24:36). So, how can we profitably use however much time God gives us until he returns?

Monday— Read 1 Peter 1:3-5.

Tuesday— Read 1 Peter 1:6-9.

Wednesday— Read 1 Peter 1:10-12.

Thursday— Read 1 Peter 1:13-19.

Friday— Read 1 Peter 1:22-25.

Saturday— Read 1 Peter 2:1-3.

Want to learn more about godly living?

For free, confidential help, write to:
BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]