

**“Ignorance Exposed”**  
**The Gospel According to Mark 12:35-40**  
October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018

*What do people believe about God, Jesus Christ, sin, and eternity?* Earlier this month Ligonier Ministry released the results of its 2018 State of Theology survey. Every two years, Ligonier takes the theological temperature of the United States to help Christians better understand today’s culture and equip the church with better insights for discipleship.

This year’s survey brought some unexpected results. *What do Americans—and people in the pew—really believe?* Recorded in Seattle, watch as Lee Webb asks people about their religious beliefs:

And, thus, our ignorance of God’s Word as a culture is exposed.

Today is Reformation Sunday, the Sunday closest to October 31<sup>st</sup>, when in 1517, an Augustinian monk by the name of Martin Luther sparked the Protestant Reformation by posting 95 theses (statements) on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg, Germany.

The Latin phrase “*post tenebras lux*” translated in English means, “after darkness, light.” It became a rallying cry of Protestant Reformers, and it refers to the rediscovery of biblical truth in a time of spiritual darkness.

The time of Jesus’ last week of earthly ministry, which we’ve been studying the past several Sunday mornings in Mark’s gospel account, was certainly a time of spiritual darkness. That is, until Jesus, the Light of the World, came to earth more than 2,000 years ago. In the passage of Scripture before us this morning (**Mark 12:35-40**), we see Jesus exposing the ignorance of the Jewish religious professionals. With the answers to the questions asked of Him in this chapter, He effectively shut down the religious elite. They couldn’t stump Him, and they evidently realized they looked foolish trying to do so.

**The Gospel According to Mark 12:35-40:**

<sup>35</sup> Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, “How *is it* that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? <sup>36</sup> For David himself said by the Holy Spirit:

‘The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand,  
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’

<sup>37</sup> Therefore David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; how is He *then* his Son?’ And the common people heard Him gladly.

<sup>38</sup> Then He said to them in His teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, *love* greetings in the marketplaces,<sup>39</sup> the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, <sup>40</sup> who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”

Contrary to the other sections of this 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark’s gospel account, this time, Jesus is the One posing a question to the religious leaders. And, though he refers to the scribes in the third person, His question addresses them in verse 35 – “How *is it* that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David?” (It fascinates me that today’s worship bulletin contains this same reference

“Son of David” on its cover!) **Mark 10:48**, quoted there, is the only other instance in the Gospel According to Mark that the term, “Son of David” is used.

The scribes were correct to say that the Messiah (the Christ) would be the son of David. But Jesus asks them to consider what David said about the Christ. Jesus quotes from **Psalm 110**, a Messianic Psalm, in verse 36 – ‘The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ Notice the first use of ‘LORD’ in that 36<sup>th</sup> verse is in all capital letters. And the second use of ‘Lord’ in verse 36 is standard format. David makes a distinction between the two; the first refers to ‘Yahweh/Jehovah’ and the second is ‘Adonai.’ It would be as if it said, “Yahweh said to Adonai, ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”

Jesus then asks (verse 37), “David himself calls Him ‘Lord’; how is He *then* his Son?” The implication is that David’s son could only be his Lord if he existed before him and *after* him. David’s Lord was the eternal Son of God; David’s Lord became his ‘son’ when he was conceived in the womb of Mary and was born in Bethlehem, also known as the City of David. As such, Jesus exposes the fact that even the experts don’t really understand who the Messiah is.

In quoting **Psalm 110**, Jesus shows us the value of the Old Testament Scriptures. We must be careful not to undervalue, or even despise, the Old Testament. It is just as valuable as the New Testament, after all, God inspired godly men to produce them! “There are deep things about Jesus in the (Old Testament), which many walk over like hidden gold mines, and (do not know) the treasures beneath their feet. Let us revere all the Bible. All is given by inspiration, and all is profitable. One part throws light upon another, and no part can ever be neglected without loss and damage to our souls.” (Ryle, 267)

It is my pulpit practice, as it is for many biblically reformed pastors, to move back and forth between books of the Old and New Testaments. We don’t limit our Bible study to only one testament or the other, and we typically work through entire books of Scripture, which requires we look to the whole counsel of God. We’ve been in Mark, a New Testament book, since last fall. *Do you remember what book we studied before that?* Genesis, an Old Testament book. I’ve begun wrestling with where God would have us go next after we finish our study of Mark, and we could study the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Stay tuned; I reserve the right to be wrong, and I don’t wish to lock God in a box!

We come now to **verses 38-40 of Mark Chapter 12**. From an attack upon the teaching of the scribes, Jesus now proceeds to an attack upon their practice. “Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, *love* greetings in the marketplaces,<sup>39</sup> the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts,<sup>40</sup> who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”

The scribes loved the attention of others. This is why they wore long robes that stood out from those of others; and why they craved seats of prominence at public banquets and functions. The scribes were more concerned with what other people thought of them, than what God thought of them. For instance, we’ve seen as we studied **Mark Chapter 12** that they have been reluctant to answer Jesus’ questions so as not to lose face before the people gathered. They were all show, and no substance.

I often hear people who don't attend worship say they stay away from the Church because it is full of hypocrites. I would add that the church is full of other kinds of sinners, too – idolaters, cheaters, liars, adulterers, coveters, murderers, and drunkards among others. Many of them have been saved from those sinful, unbiblical lifestyles. Yes, it is true each of us is a hypocrite at one time or another. The person who levels the charge of hypocrisy against others is not sin-less; there are struggles in his/her life that they're not being fully honest about. As such, they are in actuality what they condemn in others; hypocrites!

Bishop JC Ryle notes in his commentary on Mark, "It is bad enough to be led away captive by open sin, and to serve (various) lusts and pleasures. But it is even worse to pretend to have a religion, while in reality we serve the world." (Ryle, 268)

The #metoo movement has uncovered a great deal of hypocrisy among high profile men. You've been living in a cave if you've missed it; it's a phenomenon that has flooded the media. The movement has emboldened victims to speak out about the abuse they've suffered, and the abusers who've hurt them. Sadly, we've heard reported in the news that the Church (generally) is not exempt from such devastation of lives within her own membership.

Over the course of the last couple years, this topic has consumed much of my time and ministry. It was emphasized during a biblical counseling training conference I attended with three other members of Trinity Church in February. In June, I attended domestic abuse forums at our denomination's General Assembly in Atlanta, Georgia. Then, earlier this month, the executive director of GROW Ministries in Cambridge, Illinois met with our elders. GROW is an acronym - Godly Restoration Outreach to Women. The ministry offers counseling and support to women in crisis; many have suffered abuse by the men in their lives. Such abuse takes various forms - physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, and spiritual.

Of course, men also suffer abuse. Yet, the significant majority of incidents affect females. A disturbing reality is that often abusers are effective in hiding their abusive tendencies from others. Many abusers are clean-cut, upstanding members of society and even the Church. They seem to have their lives all together, when in reality they are the primary cause of much heartache for those closest to them. Over time, they wear down the target of their abuse, and they reap more and more control over their victims. The targets of their abuse lose hope, they withdraw from others, and without the love and persistence of others, they will tell very few of their private hell.

When it comes to all sin, we must confess it, and not caress it. **Proverbs 28:13** instructs, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy." Confession brings the sin out in the open; exposing it to God's mercy in forgiving sin. **Ephesians 5:11-13** commands us not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to expose *them*. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. <sup>13</sup>But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

"Whatever we do in religion, let us never wear a cloak. Let us be real, honest, thorough, and sincere in our Christianity. We cannot deceive an all-seeing God. He is not mocked." (Ryle, 268)

Two major questions of application arise from our study of this text. First, what place does God's Word have in your life? If it is primary, then you should know significant parts of the

Bible; you should be able to find the books without much difficulty. You should know something about what each major book addresses. Let's take a short, pop quiz:

- 1 – The book of Obadiah – is it in the Old Testament or the New Testament? (Old)
- 2 – Who said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?” (Joshua – **Joshua 24:15**)
- 3 – In what two books can you find the Lord's Prayer? (**Matthew 6** and **Luke 11**)
- 4 - Who prayed and sang praises along with Paul in a prison? (Silas – **Acts 16:25**)
- 5 – In what book would you find the Fruit of the Spirit? (**Galatians 5:22-23**)

There is great power in applying the Scriptures to life. *But, what good are they if you don't know them?*

The second question this text should cause us to ponder is this – what are the reasons why you serve God? *Do you want the adoration of other people, or is God the focus of your service? Whose applause boosts you – those you can see, or the One who commands you to walk by faith, not by sight?* God will reward you, friend; listen to Him speak by His Spirit through His Word.

Europe in the early 1500's was a very dark place; the sacred Scriptures were possessed by only a few in the highest echelons of the Church. There were no Bibles in the pews of churches, and laymen had almost no idea whatever of what the Bible contained, nor even that it was a book. Though monks were exposed to the teaching of the Bible (in Latin, mind you); what they were taught was filtered by the institution of the church.

After he was admitted as a monk in the Augustinian order, Martin Luther became very passionate in reading the Bible. He noted that the other monks did not read their Bibles very much at all. In fact, once a novice became a monk, he was no longer allowed to keep his Bible. At that point, a monk had to limit himself to only reading scholarly books, and those while in his cell. Luther was able to secure a copy of the Bible for his personal library, and he devoured it.

Sometime later, Luther dove headlong into translating the New Testament from Latin into German. Incredibly, Luther pulled off the entirety of this project in just 11 weeks! Luther relied mostly on Erasmus' second edition of his Greek New Testament, which came out in 1519. This is important, because there were other German New Testament translations in used, but they all relied on the Latin Vulgate, which contained innumerable errors, rather than the original Greek.