

Take-Home Sheet | Session 11

The Lord Comes to His Temple (Mark 11-12)

A Ransom for Many: A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Mark

What We Found

The Son of David entered his city on a colt Zechariah ordered five centuries early (Zechariah 9:9), to the crowd's Psalm 118 "Hosanna", and then, ominously, "looked round at everything" in the temple and left. Mark 1:2 drew on Malachi 3:1; chapters 11-12 deliver the sequel (Malachi 3:1-2): "the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple," and "who can endure the day of his coming?" Next morning: Mark's greatest sandwich, a fig tree, all leaves and no fruit (the prophets' image of Israel, Jeremiah 8:13), wrapped around the cleansing of a temple that was all activity and no fruit, its Court of the Gentiles, the nations' one place to pray, paved over with commerce: "My house shall be called a house of prayer FOR ALL THE NATIONS" (Isaiah 56:7), not "a den of robbers", a hideout of false security (Jeremiah 7:11).

In the tenants parable, Jesus told salvation history with himself inside it: the servants (prophets) beaten, and last of all "a BELOVED SON", the Father's own word from the Jordan and the mountain, killed and cast out. Yet the vineyard is not destroyed; it is "given to others": new stewards, not no vineyard, and "the very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" (Psalm 118:22). He then out-argued every party: Caesar may have the coin that bears his image; and what bears God's image (Genesis 1:27), yourself, belongs to God, the application the Church has always drawn; the God of Abraham speaks in the present tense, "not God of the dead, but of the living"; and the whole law is summed in a double love (Matthew's parallel says it "hangs" there, 22:40): God with all heart, soul, mind, and strength, and neighbor as self. Last exhibit before the Passion: a widow's two coins, "her whole living", in Greek her whole livelihood, all she had to live on, given whole, days before another life is given whole.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Augustine (On Christian Teaching)

The whole of Scripture exists to build up the double love of Mark 12: love of God for his own sake, and neighbor for God's sake. Whoever thinks he understands the Scriptures in a way that does not build up this twofold love has not yet understood them.

Voices of the Church: St. John Chrysostom (preaching on almsgiving and the widow's offering)

God weighs the gift not by what leaves the hand but by what remains behind it. The rich gave surplus and kept their security; she gave two coins and kept nothing, and so gave more than all of them together. No one is too poor to be magnificent before God.

Voices of the Church: St. Bede the Venerable (Commentary on Mark, on the wicked tenants)

The vineyard is not destroyed but entrusted to other tenants, for God does not abandon his planting; he changes its stewards. And the rejected stone, refused by the builders, becomes, as the

psalm promises, the head of the corner of a new building.

Live It This Week

- Do a temple inspection with him: walk mentally through your "courts" (time, money, media, relationships) and ask what is crowding out prayer and people. Flip one table.
- Give one widow's gift this week: an amount of money or time that costs you security, not surplus, and tell no one.
- Pray the Shema each morning as Jesus quoted it (Mark 12:29-30), slowly, letting "all" audit the day.

Scripture Memory Verse

"[A]nd you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Mark 13, Jesus' longest speech in this Gospel, given facing the temple. Do not panic at it. And keep your sealed guess somewhere you can find it.

Catechism References

CCC 583-586, 755, 993, 2055