

She Gave Everything

Mark 12:35-43

We began this journey through the Gospel according to Mark many months ago. Yet here we are on Mother's Day 2017 and the passage we land on just happens to be about Jesus holding up a poor widow as our example. A woman who loves God with all she's got. What she gives is tiny because she has been cut off from earthly treasure. She has fallen through the cracks of care in society. Yet she gives beyond all the richest people. She gives everything. And that's what counts to God. She brought to the temple all she had to live on...and placed it into the offering.

Last week I asked a few church family citizens what they thought about doing the same...giving everything. The first reaction...that's scary. If the Lord asks you to give away everything, will you hold anything back?

Do you feel He will call you into a service of drudgery? Or to give up something you hold dearly?

God says Seek ye first the kingdom of God. Matt 6:33 Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him. And He will make your paths straight. Prov 3:5-6

It all comes down to who we believe our heavenly Father to be. In our

trusting, we might find we need far less. It forces us to exercise our faith. It's the kind of faith that fights back the urge to worry about our children and give them over to the Lord's care. It trusts God's way...even when our feelings burn to go another way. We might have to sacrifice...like a mom.

Prayer

We've been walking with Jesus through the temple courts of Jerusalem during His last week. After disrupting the temple activities and declaring God's judgement on the whole temple system, Jesus faces a series of challenge questions from the Sanhedrin. He responds so soundly and with such authority that they are left speechless. Each question they pose becomes an opportunity for Jesus to demonstrate His superior knowledge about faith and God. He even knows whose hearts are near God or not. And this was all happening right in front of the crowds. Israel's religious leaders feared His growing influence with people from all over Israel, Galilee and beyond. That this man could cause their whole religious system to come crashing down. And that they (the spiritual shepherds of Israel) would be exposed as full of sin and in need of a Savior, too. (When I'm talking about the religious leaders,

most of their hearts were hardened, but not all. We know for instance that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were becoming believers.)

The religious elite were finished with their questions...but Jesus has a puzzle question for them. It's designed to expose their lack of understanding about the Messiah. Those who understand will see it's a hint about His own identity as both Son of Man (in the line of David) AND Son of God (Lord over David).

Read Mark 12:35-37

The first thing Jesus does is confirm the human author is King David. Second, He declares that David was inspired by the Holy Spirit. If we really let that sink in, it should reignite our interest in knowing God through the New and Old Testaments. It is all God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16-17)

The idea that the Messiah would be a son of David did not show up in Jewish literature till about 100 years before Jesus. Jesus is challenging the scribes that the title 'Son of David' for the Messiah is not the complete picture. Jesus pushes us again to understand the Old Testament. For He is quoting Psalm 110.

The OT was written in Hebrew so the first 'LORD' is Yahweh. And most Bibles use capital letters for Lord to indicate this. Who is God speaking to? Who is receiving this oracle from God?

Some Bibles have the second 'lord' (Adonai can be divine or a king) in small case. Like God is speaking to His appointed king for Israel. And research show this Psalm was used in ceremonies for appointing Kings in Israel. But that's not the way Jesus is using it. Jesus is pointing out that the common way to understand David's Psalm is mistaken. "My Lord" is one greater than any human king. This Adonai is one that King David bows to. He is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. But He doesn't just out and say it. He lets His listeners connect the dots...those who receive with humble believing hearts.

Jesus puts the scribes in their place...they don't know half of what they need to know about the Messiah. The Messiah is more than a son of David...He is Lord!

As Lord, Jesus is qualified to divide false disciples from true ones...those who obey God's will or not. Those who demonstrate the greatest commandment to love God completely.

V 38-40

Jesus warns about the teachers of the law seeking prestige, acting pious and exploiting the poor with their position. They are doing the opposite of the greatest commandment. Instead of helping they are harming and using

religion to justify it. Trafficking in piety for greed.

Flowing robes are the tallith prayer shawls with tassels attached to the four corners. These communicated wealth and power and were worn during formal prayer and other religious acts. Some scribes wore them in public to attract attention.

Most important seats in the synagogue were the benches along the wall. Particularly the ones at the front facing the people in the middle who sat on the floor. In front of the bench was a chest that contained the scrolls. When a scribe walked down the street or passed through a marketplace, people were expected to rise before them (except common laborers). The best places at a banquet were to the right or left of the host or at the host table.

Devouring widow's houses probably refers to some scribes pressuring widows to drain their resources as gives to their cause. Scribes were not necessarily from rich families and could not receive paying for their teaching. So they either worked another job or were depended on gifts. It may also have been possible for the teachers of the law to manipulated the law for claiming title on these homes. Women were not allowed to manage the estate of their deceased husbands.

There has been a history of this kind of problem: "making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless" (Isaiah 10:2, Amos 2, Micah 3)

Lengthy prayers do not impress God. I recommend reading Matthew 6:5-15 for a full treatment of this subject. Jesus condemns the scribes who expect people to recognize their success and blessing...even though some were taking advantage of the most vulnerable.

Could there be a warning for us in God's church today? Do we become arrogant, hypocritical, callous toward the most vulnerable?

James warns not to show preferential treatment to the rich and successful (2:1-7). Why do we do that sometimes? Not out of love but to gain their favor. Jesus looked upon the rich young ruler with love when He told him the truth that His riches were the very thing holding him back from eternal life.

Religious pride and exploitation will be noticed by God and judged abundantly. Now to a positive example...

V 41-44

What a contrast with the prideful and hypocritical scribes!

The idea of a temple treasury is an old one. The tribe of Levites were not given land in Israel. Instead, they took care of the temple system. They had

expenses such as gold, and silver vessels, costly curtains, garments warehouses for flour, oil, grain, wine, incense. They received money for these from dues, taxes and donations (2 Kgs 12:4). It was also a safe place for the wealthy use for storing their valuables. Josephus was a historian at the time of Jesus and he recorded that the person in charge of the treasury was only second in importance to the high priest.

This treasury was located in the Court of Women (first enclosure of the sanctuary). The Mishnah states there were 13 shofar-chests dedicated for special offering. Each were fitted with a trumpet-like opening to receive money and prevent theft. According to tradition, each chest received different types of donations.

So Jesus is watching rich people come up to the chest for large donations. The widow goes up to a chest with her two lepta...the smallest coins you could get in the middle east – worth 1/64th the amount of a laborer's wages for the day (denarius). Mark explains what the conversion of this coin would be for His Roman hearers called 'kodantes'. The NIV decided to go with an English equivalent. Today in Lillooet, minimum wage is \$10.85/hr x 8hrs = \$86.8. Now divide that by 64 = \$1.36.

How did Jesus know the exact amount...and that it was all she had? Scholars say the offerings were examined by a priest (visual opportunity) and the coins were dropped into the cylinder which would make different sounds...for different kinds of coins. But let's just give Jesus credit for this knowledge because He's the Son of God.

Jesus holds up the widow's gifts as the richest. How can that be?

Because faith is the currency God is interested in. The value of the gift to God is not in the amount given, but the cost to the giver. (We will encounter this from another woman again in chapter 14). Trusting God is where her heart is at. And that's where she puts her treasure. She lives by humble faith.

What does God want us to do about these examples?

1. Jesus is the Messiah (Christ), yet He lays His life down for us.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

2 Cor 8:9

2. Heed the warning about religious hypocrites looking for approval from people rather than God and ignoring...even taking advantage of the poor and elderly...particularly

widows. God's judgement will be abundant.

3. Give God Everything

The nameless woman's gift symbolizes an undivided heart (Matt 6:24). *Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in Him* (Psalm 34:8) Everything counts to God...even the smallest can be the biggest in God's eyes. It's so easy to get caught up thinking: "I have nothing offer compared to..."

That's not how the kingdom of God works. Little is much when it comes from God...like a Mustard Seed of faith (Heb 11:6, Mk 4:30-32). Christianity grew from just a few people...and here we are today.

God loves us completely. Do we respond with any less?

Has sacrificing for the Lord become a burden instead of a privilege?

I was reminded at the AGC conference that God's big job for us is to make disciples who obey Jesus. That takes sacrifice. The speaker at the conference was Lorne Meisner. He told us that God had challenged him to surrender more to God. He got home from a trip to find out someone needed to be billeted at his home. He remembered (perhaps with a groan) that God owned his home so he said 'yes' even though he wanted peace and quiet. Another time, he was about

to pick up his new car when he received a call from his son-in-law who needed a car. So Lorne said 'yes' because he realized God owned that new car. So he's driving the old one (he didn't even get to drive the new one home). But do you really think he regrets doing God's will?

Jesus didn't point out the rich giving large sums as the example. Safe giving doesn't impress God. We need to put our lives in the hands of our heavenly Father. There may be pain...but look at the results when a woman makes the sacrifice to bear a child. It is hard at the time of birth, but then great joy!

All to Jesus, I surrender

by Judson W. DeVenter

1. All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.
I surrender all, I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.
2. All to Jesus I surrender,
Humbly at His feet I bow;
Worldly pleasures all forsaken,
Take me, Jesus, take me now.
3. All to Jesus I surrender,
Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit,
Truly know that Thou art mine.
4. All to Jesus I surrender,
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessing fall on me.
5. All to Jesus I surrender,
Now I feel the sacred flame;
Oh, the joy of full salvation!
Glory, glory, to His Name!