

Mark 12:41-44 Give Your Heart Falls Ch. PM 10/8/2023

In our study of chapter 12 of Mark, there have been many stand-offs between religious leaders and Jesus. How pleasant it is for us now to come to the last passage of chapter 12 and find this delightful little story told, which brings a warmer mood at the end of the chapter.

The religious leaders throughout chapter 12, and especially the scribes of verses 38-40, were a symbol of fake devotion to God.

In sharp and distinct contrast, the widow at the end of chapter 12 was a symbol of true devotion to God.

The Lord Jesus reversed the perceptions of the disciples, teaching them that giving is a window into our hearts.

1. Some people make a big production about giving a lot, yet they remain quite comfortable, having a lot left over. (v.41)

Verse 41, 'treasury' refers to the collecting boxes in the temple, the part of the temple where anyone could enter and directly make donations. Many rich people would put in coins of silver or gold.

2. Other people quietly and joyfully give to God sacrificially, knowing that God will take care of them. (v.42)

Verse 42, there is a very intentional and noticeable contrast between verse 41, '*Many rich people, large sums,*' and verse 42, '*a poor widow small copper coins, penny.*' Mark revealed to us that this widow used the smallest possible amount of money in a coin in use in those days. It was such a small amount, that it took two coins to amount to one penny.

Here Jesus sharpened His teaching from the previous paragraph. Verse 38, Beware the scribes, and verse 40, they are ones who "*devour widows houses...*" The bad example of false teachers was that they would stoop so low as to even steal from widows. In contrast, a godly widow herself, out of her love for God would gladly keep providing meals for the scribe, and she would see it as her service to God. Meanwhile the scribe would gladly eat up her food until there is none left for her. What a contrast Jesus is teaching between the scribe's taking and the widow's giving. The scribe's religion is a sham. The widow's religion is genuine.

3. Jesus sees why we give. (v.43-44)

Verse 43, there are two signals in verse 43 that this next statement of Jesus is a statement of which we should take special note. 1) Jesus called or summoned His disciples to Himself. A rabbi would summon His students whenever the Rabbi had some lesson worthy of teaching in that moment. 2) the second signal is the beginning words of Jesus, "*Truly, I say to you...*"

With the two signals of importance now provided, we get the content of the statement of Jesus. (v.43), "*This poor widow has put in MORE than all those who are contributing to the offering box.*"

But the two words of Jesus "**MORE THAN**" cannot possibly be referring to the monetary value of the coins. The "*more than*" has to refer to something else. Jesus explained in verse 44, that all the other givers "*contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.*" Here Jesus showed that the "*more than*" was in reference to the widow's self-sacrificing generosity. She was an example to all of God's people, because she gave until it changed her ability to provide a living for herself!

Jesus taught the opposite of what the disciples were accustomed to thinking. Jesus taught that what matters in God's sight was not the amount of the gift. Rather, it is how much is left over in your possession after giving.

In other words, what matters to God is your heart devotion to God that causes you to move from comfortable giving to sacrificial giving. What causes a person to give at great personal cost?

Based on this measurement, the two coins that were both needed in order to amount to a single penny are now **MORE THAN** all the large gold and large silver donations!

The wording of verse 44 is insistent and the point is driven home with considerable effort in the careful word choice. "*Out of her poverty*" is compared with the abundance of each of the other givers. For each and every one of them, the amount that they gave would never be felt or missed. But for her situation, the emphasis of verse 44 is upon the fact that the amount that she gave would be felt by her. Her amount left over after her donation, must be accurately understood with three unavoidable and revealing words "*...everything she had...*" We are not allowed to so soon wiggle out of the starkness of her action. The verses insists that we **NOT** move on, that we **NOT** look away from the impact. Then the point was confirmed and hammered home yet again with the final six words, '*...all she had to live on...*' Now when we compare that to any one of the rich donors, we see the failure of anyone else to do likewise to this widow. Why would she do that? Love!

This teaching sheds more light on what Jesus had said to a rich man in chapter 10:21, "*You lack one thing; go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.*" And we remember what the disciples of Jesus said in chapter 10:28, through the mouth of Peter, "*...we have left everything and followed You.*"

There is another woman we will study in chapter 14, and she was not poor. Quite the opposite. She had enough money to obtain an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over the head of

Jesus, and by doing, Jesus said that she “...*has anointed My body beforehand for burial.*”

These two Christian sisters have some things in common, and some things that differ. One gave a gift that was large and costly. The other gave a gift that was very small, and to be truthful, was worth almost nothing. Yet what is in common with both is not how much they gave, but why they gave it to God. In both instances, the women were giving God their hearts.

SI - let me tell you a quick story to illustrate the opposite, so that we see better what Jesus is showing us about the motivation of these two women. A man stood up in a meeting where they were taking pledges for donations towards a fundraising goal and he said, ‘I want to give \$100 – anonymously.’

What is the difference between these two widows and the man? His motivation was giving as a strategy to get praise, and the women’s motivation was giving as an expression of praise. He was faking generous giving as a strategy to get praise, while in contrast, the women were sacrificially giving as an expression of genuine praise to God. Which are we doing when we give? Why do you give?

Have you ever given up something, sacrificed something, done without something, in order to take the money that you would have spent, and give it to someone in need?

When we decide on our own, quite cheerfully, to provide something meaningful to others, something that is taken out of our own necessary provision, this is something of which God sees, and God commends as worthy of doing!

Conclusion:

1) Because Jesus gave Himself for you, give your heart to Him.

The best giver in the Bible is not this widow in chapter 12 or her Christian sister over in chapter 14. The best giver in the Bible is Jesus Himself, as He said so well over in chapter 10:45 – that He came to give His life as a ransom for many. 2 Corinthians 9:15, “*thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift!*”

Is it possible for Christians to give like Christ, and give in a Christ-like way, imitating this widow? Yes. First Christ gave Himself for us, then we give our hearts to the Lord. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, “*We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”*

We could ask - why did the widow give both of her coins, and why did Jesus mention both coins, and why did Mark write for us both coins? She could have

kept one, but she gave both! We see into her heart when we understand that she voluntarily gave both coins. Because of her decision, she was left without the means to buy her very next meal. Rather than calling that irresponsible and impulsive, Jesus drew special attention to it as a godly action that serves as an example to us all. The widow had every confidence that God would provide for her next meal, and for all of her meals for all of her life, just as God had always done before. She gave out of love, not out of fear. She gave out of generosity, not out of calculations of self-preservation. She gave everything. That includes her heart. She gave herself to God, and that action is the most like Christ, who gave Himself to God the Father in order to be sacrificed to death in order to rescue us.

The call of Christ in the gospel is a call to absolute surrender to God and total trust in Him to provide for us. There is a qualitative difference in the way God looks at money from the way that people in the world look at money. So, there ought to be a qualitative difference in the way that Christians look at money, from the way that other people look at money. 1 Samuel 16:7, "*...the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.*"

Jesus taught the disciples to take their eyes off of the amount given, and taught them to look at the amount left over. The rich are still rich after their large donations. But the poor woman went from possessing little to possessing nothing, after she gave all that she had. Hers was truly sacrificial and even extravagant giving, and it showed that the LORD God was her only hope, her only trust, her only security, and her only treasure. She was not rich in finances, but she was rich in faith in God.

2) After we give our hearts to God, we will treat widows correctly.

The widow is a category throughout the Bible that actually refers to any person who is unprotected and facing a need.

The same Jesus who had just denounced the scribes for "*devouring widows' houses*" (verse 40), now shows by His own example how widows should really be treated. What is the proper attitude toward widows? This passage teaches us. One should help widows. And one should commend widows whenever such commendation is appropriate and fitting. Psalm 68:5 says that God is the "*protector of widows.*" In Exodus 22:23, God warns us about widows, "*if you do mistreat them, and they cry out to Me, I will surely hear their cry.*" Psalm 146:9, "*The LORD...upholds the widow, but the way of the wicked He brings to ruin.*" In Deuteronomy 16:11, the widow is to be invited to join in the celebration of the harvest, along with the family having the harvest celebration. In Isaiah 1:17, God commands that His people "*...plead the widow's cause...*" In the development of the early church, widows were not forgotten. In fact, it was the neglect of certain widows which led to the appointment of another permanent set of officers in the

church, the deacons, so that in the future the widows were ensured to receive better care. Acts 6:1-6. According to the apostle James, one of the ways that we know religion is pure and undefiled is that such persons visit the widows in their affliction. (James 1:27)

Once again here the greatest teacher's teaching launches repeats of His teaching throughout the rest of the New Testament. Consider James 1:27, "*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*" Then in James chapter 2, the apostle goes on to describe the outlook of the godly person with regard to the rich and the poor, the greedy and the generous, the truly godly and the pretend godly.

A Christian man was teaching his daughter about giving as a part of worship. She was going to give all of the money from her little purse. The Father told his daughter, "Sweetheart, you do not have to put all of it in the offering plate. You keep some back for yourself for treats." The daughter said, "I don't need money. I have a Daddy!" That child said it for us. We can say, We don't need money. We have a Father in heaven!

May God change the way we think about money.

May we start with giving our own hearts to God.

As a result, may we have true joy being generous to the cause of Christ and to those in need.

Revelation 5:12, "*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!*"