

5. The Widows Gift

Mark 12:38 – 13:2; Luke 20:45 – 21:4

Mark 12:38 – 13:2

³⁸ And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces ³⁹ and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁰ who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

⁴¹ And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³ And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. ⁴⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!” ² And Jesus said to him, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

Luke 20:45 – 21:9

⁴⁵ And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, ⁴⁶ “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁷ who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, ² and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³ And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

⁵ And while some were speaking of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, ⁶ “As for these things that you see, the days will come when there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” ⁷ And they asked him, “Teacher, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?” ⁸ And he said, “See that you are not led astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is at hand!’ Do not go after them. ⁹ And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”

1.) Compare the two passages from Mark and Luke and note the details in each one.

Mark: Rich people put in large sums. One of His disciples commented about the temple.

Luke: Jesus warning about the Pharisees was to his disciples, but within hearing of all of the people

2.) Read the following passages and describe Jesus assessment of the scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 23:13-17 – “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.^[a] ¹⁵ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell^[b] as yourselves.

¹⁶ “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’

¹⁷ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?

They shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. By their false pretense at religion they block the way for true worshipers who seek God to find Him.

Matthew 23:23-24 – ²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

They make sure that they make their tithe, but neglect the more important issues of the law. Tithe saves nobody, but they are certain that they make it and ignore justice, mercy, and faithfulness. (Interesting that the Gospel deals with each of these three concepts)

Matthew 23:25-28 – ²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

They are concerned with the presentation of righteousness that they have but neglect the matters of their heart. They are interested in their appearance, not their heart.

3.) **Read Matthew 6:1-4. What does this passage tell us about how the Pharisees were giving in the synagogues?**

Jesus warns of giving for the purpose of achieving honor or esteem in front of men. Pride is a dangerous foe, and can undermine the best of intentions. Jesus tells his disciples to not let your other hand know when you are giving. This is an illustration to help them understand the dangers of giving in public, and the difficulty that we have with keeping right motives.

Matthew 6:1-4 - “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

²“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

4.) **Contrast Jesus teaching in Matthew 6:1-4 with Matthew 5:14-16**

Jesus tells his followers in Matthew 5 to let your light (good works) shine that others may see them and give glory to God. The issue here is not the visibility of the good works, but rather the intent of the good works. Jesus knows that our motives, what is in our heart is desperately wicked and deceitful and that our heart is full of pride and wickedness. This is the issue in reconciling these passages. We struggle with pure motives and giving glory to God for things that we can take for ourselves. Because of this struggle it is better for us to not let our right hand know what our left is doing when we give or do good works so that God Himself might be the reward and receive the praise. This is not to hide all of our good works, and to run from acknowledgement, rather to make sure that we are focusing our efforts on glorifying God and not ourselves. Our light should shine only to give glory to God, not to me.

Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Matthew 5:14-16 - ¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that^[b] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

5.) Compare the gifts of the of the two parties from Mark 12:41-44 and the chart below. Why does Jesus say that the widows gift is more than that of the rich person?

	Quantity	Jesus Assessment
Rich Person	Large Sum	Less
Poor Widow	Penny	More

Jesus knows that the rich give out of their surplus (their left-over) but the poor out of their need. Jesus does not comment of the motives, or the heart of the woman, but she cannot be far from God if she is giving her last few pennies away. The actions of the woman demonstrate her faith, and her faith is in God to provide for her needs. She gives everything she has, and walks away. We have no indication that she sounds a trumpet, or that it is heralded in the street that she gave a mere penny, but Jesus sees her gift, and in God's economy her gift is much larger than the gifts of many rich men. God does not value gifts the same as we value gifts. His economy is different than ours.

Acts 17:24-25 - ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,^[a] ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Remember when Samuel was reviewing the sons of Jesse to anoint the next king of Israel, God told him to let the tall and the good looking pass, because God knows what is in the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7 - ⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the LORD does not see as man sees*;^[a] for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

6.) **Read Luke 18:10-14 and observe the difference in heart attitude between the one that was saved and the one that was lost.**

The heart of the man who is justified is repentant. The heart of the one who continues in his sin is proud and self-justifying. One is relying on his own "good deeds" to save him and the other begging for forgiveness from God. Jesus provides the only way for us to approach God and not be punished for our sin. He opened the path to God through His death on the cross. He tells us that our faith should be in His saving work on the cross that covers our sin and cleanses us from our unrighteousness.

Luke 18:10-14 - ¹⁰“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed^[a] thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

7.) What are some ways that we give out of our surplus? Is this bad? Out of our poverty?

This story is not to tell us that we should give away all that we have. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 gives a clear instruction to the wealthy and tells them to use their wealth to help others, and to not rely on their riches, but on God.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 - ¹⁷As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.