

Theme: Jesus condemned the scribes who looked outwardly impressive but were inwardly far from God, but He praised a poor widow whose tiny offering flowed from a heart of true faith and love for God.

## I. Intro - Hypocritical Religious Leaders

- A. A seemingly endless stream of hypocritical religious leaders
- B. Sexual sins, massive mansions, extravagant clothes
- C. These leaders looked outwardly successful and claimed to be godly, but were pursuing power and wealth.
- D. Yet, there are many faithful leaders and true followers of Jesus who are often overlooked.
- E. This was true in Israel as well!
- F. The end of Jesus' public ministry - scribes & the widow

## II. More Than Meets the Eye - The Hypocrisy of the Scribes

- A. The outward appearance of the scribes  
As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, <sup>39</sup> and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. Mark 12:38-39
  - 1. The scribes were well respected in Israel - and played the part
  - 2. The scribe's distinctive clothing set them apart
    - a. Long white prayer shawls with tassels worn only by scholars or men of great social standing
    - b. This was an outward symbol that they were important - and implied it was because they were great servants of God.

- 3. The scribes were treated with public respect
  - a. When a scribe passed by on the street, everyone except a tradesman at work was expected to rise to honor them.
  - b. When a wealthy person had a banquet they tried to have scribes and their pupils there to give an aura of importance to the banquet.
  - c. The scribes were the best seats in the synagogue and in banquets - even over parents and the elderly!
- 4. The scribes were the rock stars, celebrities, and influencers of their day!

### B. The inward bankruptcy of the scribes

They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely. Mark 12:40

- 1. The scribes took advantage of widows
  - a. The scribes were not wealthy as a rule - they were not supposed to be paid for their study.
  - b. They were supported by donations and gifts - and this led to abuse then as now!
  - c. This could also lead them to favor the rich over the poor and vulnerable - which was condemned by God!  
Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, <sup>2</sup> to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. <sup>3</sup> What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? <sup>4</sup> Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives or fall among the slain. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised. Isaiah 10:1-4
    - 1. Jesus' words echo Isaiah's condemnation of leaders in his day!

2. Note God's strong condemnation of this in Isaiah's day - and Jesus repeats this judgment!

2. The scribe's religious life was a sham display for others rather than God

They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely. Mark 12:40

- a. The scribe's prayers are not to please God but to win the praise of other people who might hear them!
- b. They are more concerned with the praise of men than God! Even intimate communication with God has been corrupted so that they are praying to be heard of people rather than God!

3. The scribes fail at the two great commands! They are not really loving God and rather than loving their poor neighbors they take advantage of them!

#### C. Jesus' judgment on the scribes

1. Jesus rejects the scribes in all their outward pomp and inward bankruptcy! They will be judged "most severely"!
2. Next time we will look at the full diatribe against them from Matthew 23.

### III. More Than Meets the Eye - The Hidden Riches of the Poor Widow

#### A. The outward appearance of the poor widow

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. <sup>42</sup> But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Mark 12:41-42

1. Jesus is watching people put money in the offering boxes in the Temple.

- a. This is in the Court of the Women - where women and children were allowed to worship.
- b. There were 13 receptacles shaped like a shofar (ram's horn) where people deposited various types of offerings.

2. Many rich people are throwing in large amounts of money

- a. This is the group that the scribes would praise - look how much they give!
- b. Their gifts are all outwardly impressive and may come from a heart of worship.
- c. The focus is not on anything wrong with their gift - but an invitation to look beyond outward circumstances

3. A poor widow gives two cheap coins

- a. She is a widow - one of the most vulnerable people in society.
- b. She is specially called "poor" - she has little to live on and is often overlooked by the religious leaders.
- c. She gives two small coins - virtually nothing
  1. Two lepta (Mark translates for Romans - quadrans)
  2. 1/64 of a day laborer wage - a dollar or two in today's money
- d. No one would notice this gift - except God!

#### B. The inward riches of the poor widow

Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup> They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on." Mark 12:43-44

1. Jesus wants the disciples to see past the outward and perceive the reality that God sees.
2. He calls the disciples and begins with “Amen!”
3. Others gave “more” but it was just their surplus!
4. She is the one really giving “more” because she is giving everything she has!
5. This poor widow displays whole-hearted love for God and worships with all she has.
6. The scribes are praised as those who are the great lovers and servants of God, but in reality theirs is an empty show.
7. The widow is overlooked by everyone for her gift and service seems so small, but in reality hers is a gift of full love that is precious in the sight of God.
8. This incident is a living example of God’s word to Samuel when God chose David to be King - and David’s greater Son, the Messiah, is driving this point home.

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7

#### IV. Applying the Word

##### A. Do I see that the Lord looks at the heart?

1. The scribes and the culture were focused on the outside, but God was looking at the inside!
2. Our culture today has an obsession with outside facade - clothes, body, hair

3. This is the basis of social media influencers - a glamorous outside that often hides an ugly soul
4. Jesus strongly condemned this practice  
“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. <sup>28</sup>In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Matthew 23:27-28
5. What if a pair of glasses allowed us to see what someone’s soul looked like rather than their body? That would change things!
6. Do I look at others by their outward facade (clothes, physical beauty, wealth, influence) or by their character and the state of the soul?
7. Am I more focused on my outward facade (clothes, physical beauty, wealth, influence) or on developing a beautiful soul by the power of the Spirit?

##### B. Do I see the nature of true discipleship?

1. The poor model is a picture of discipleship
2. Her gift was not judged by amount but by arising from a heart full of love and trust,
3. Her gift was not judged by amount but by the fact that she gave everything she had.
4. Is my discipleship a mere add-on, the giving of excess, or does it shape and direct everything else in my life?
5. Does my discipleship reflect a wholehearted commitment to Jesus and His Kingdom?

- a. Time
- b. Money
- c. Service
- d. Comfort zone

### C. The Lord's Table

1. This Table is more than meets the eye!
2. The Spirit is active through this sacrament!
3. Let the Spirit convict of any area not submitted to the Lordship of Jesus!
4. Let the Spirit drive home Christ's wholehearted sacrifice for you!
5. Come to the Table!

### More Than Meets the Eye

Mark 12:38-44  
September 1, 2024  
Communion  
2 Corinthians 9:8

Teaching keywords: Discipleship; biblical characters; giving; leadership; worship

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8

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