

- 1) The onslaught of questions and attempts to trap Jesus has now stopped for a bit allowing Him to teach.
- 2) But, as we will see, those who wish to kill Him or discredit Him are still around.

Mark 12:35-37 (NIV)

- 1) Here we have another one of these situations where it helps to get a fuller picture of the situation if we look at another gospel account along with Mark.
- 2) Mark reports this incident more from the perspective of the crowd and Matthew looks at it more from the perspective of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Matt 22:41-46 (NIV)

- 3) Considering the Matthew passage, at first thought, this question could have been put to the Scribes and Pharisees as a test – a way by Jesus to perhaps get the final word in.
- 4) A different way to look at it might be that this was a subtle yet effective way for Jesus to say here I am – I am that descendant of David, I am the Lord.
- 5) In essence, a final invitation to belief or at least consideration of him as the Son of God, the Messiah, the Anointed One of God.
- 6) If this last idea is the correct one, then the reactions were most likely the expected reactions but not the one Jesus was perhaps hoping for.
- 7) The Pharisees go away, I personally feel, more convinced than ever to kill Him.
- 8) Further, they ask no more questions.
- 9) The people were “delighted” with what Jesus was saying.
- 10) As you recall, at the outset, the Pharisees had two options:
 - a) Discredit him in the eyes of the people and He would go away OR
 - b) Kill him by the most legal means possible.
- 11) With the reaction of the crowd, it appears that the first option is off the table (at least for the moment).
- 12) The impression I get is that they were delighted to see Jesus stump the Pharisees.
 - a) Not delighted to finally understand who He truly was
- 13) We will see both these reactions confirmed in a matter of days.
 - a) The Pharisees will finally see Him arrested and put on trial.
 - b) And at that trial, likely many of the people who were delighted at the results of the question we are discussing will be crying out crucify Him, crucify Him.

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

- 1) As we continue, we see Jesus making an observation and comment on the very men who just rejected His final invitation or could not answer His final question, depending on the way you look at it.

Mark 12:38-40 (NIV)

- 1) First Jesus describes the teachers of the law in pretty scathing terms.
 - a) He shows their hypocritical self-importance.
 - b) He concludes the remarks with an indictment – “they devour widow’s houses”
- 2) The scribes received no pay for their services.
- 3) They depended on the hospitality of devout Jews.
- 4) It was considered an act of piety for people to help the scribes.
- 5) Some people would even go so far as to place all their finances in the scribe's control (especially widows who trusted them).
- 6) Obviously, they were in a position to exploit people.
- 7) Many of them did this by cheating the poor out of everything they had and taking advantage of the rich.
- 8) Jesus goes on to say that even their prayers were merely for the sake of appearance.
- 9) Their long prayers were not conversations with the God they loved, but were merely theatrics to make people think they were especially holy.
 - a) Through their pious actions they hoped to gain status, recognition, and respect.
- 10) Combine all this and how could they deserve anything but condemnation!

We, (at least one hopes), do not have those who are like teachers of the law among us but, do we need to be on the lookout for them?

What about our own motives. Do we need to evaluate our own reasons for doing the things we do? Specifically,

- ***Is it o.k. to feel good about what we do?***
- ***Is it o.k. to appreciate or even enjoy the praise of others for a job well done?***
- ***Where does the problem come in?***
- ***What about gain – do we ever do “good things” hoping for a monetary or other compensation reward?***

- 1) What we are going to look at next follows so appropriately the last sentence of the previous passage.

They devour widows' houses ...

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

2) Looking at 12:41 thru 44

Mark 12:41-44 (NIV)

1) As I began looking at this passage, I ran across an introductory comment that was, I think, truly on point – the comment was ...

All around her were large examples of meaningless worship, shallow honor given to God, frivolous giving, and downright evil. But this woman's unnoticed act of sacrifice spoke volumes about herself and her faith.

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- 2) First, the statement was obviously true – we have here the religious leaders and their corruption and their desire to kill Jesus.
- 3) We have selfish motives dominating every aspect of the temple worship – money changers and merchants dishonestly making money off those who were trying to worship God as He had commanded.
- 4) And on and on ...
- 5) Another commentator takes this to what I think is the extreme negative level. He says of Jesus' observation of those making their offerings...

It must have deeply grieved and angered Him to see people sacrificing their money to this wretched, apostate, corrupt system of false religion, under the misguided assumption that doing so would please God and produce divine blessing.

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- 6) Yes, the system was corrupt but, the giving here if given with the right heart had to be pleasing to God regardless of the corruption.
- 7) Not everyone was part of this corruption.
- 8) Though it is easy to do, we must never forget that in and among all this there were many like this poor widow who devoutly worshiped God and wanted nothing more than to serve Him as He commanded.
- 9) And, I would imagine, there were truly devout Scribes and Pharisees as well who truly worshiped and served as they should.
- 10) I would like to think that many of these devout folks in the coming months and years would come to see Jesus as He is and continue to worship God and accept the salvation that Jesus brings.
- 11) With all that being said, let's look at the passage.
- 12) First, commentators disagree on the true meaning of it.
- 13) Jesus does not make a specific point that the woman is an example of anything.

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

- 14) Many times, we portray this woman as a model of dutiful, faithful giving and though that may be true, Jesus does not really make that point.
- 15) Some commentators argue that the story teaches that giving is not to be measured by the amount that was given but by what the giver kept back.
- 16) Others insist that giving must be measured by the level of the giver's self-denial, as reflected by the percentage of the person's resources that was given.
- 17) Another view is that a gift's value is directly related to the attitude with which it is given.
 - a) Was it given in selfless humility as an expression of love and devotion to God?
- 18) The widow, having given everything she possessed, had the least amount possible left after her gift.
 - a) Therefore, she must have had the attitude most pleasing to God???
 - b) According to that view, it would seem that the gift that most pleases God is everything one possesses.
- 19) One commentator gives what I think is a slightly negative view of this entire question. However, it may be on point!

What is clear from the passage is that the widow is not the hero of the story but the victim, duped into giving all she had by the false promise of Jewish legalism that doing so would bring blessing. She is a tragic example of how the corrupt religious system mistreated widows, and that is what connects this passage with the judgment passages that precede and follow it.

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- 20) There are several things here that I must agree with but several – not so much.
- 21) First, I agree, she may have been a victim – we really can't say that for sure.
- 22) Second, I agree that the religious system was corrupt but, as I pointed out a few moments ago there were many devout and sincere Jews that were truly trying to worship God as He desired.
- 23) Part of that worship was giving.
- 24) One must assume, their giving was to God NOT a "corrupt religious system".
- 25) If they expected or were to be blessed by anything from their giving it was NOT the religious system but God who was the source of the blessing.
- 26) Did she expect a blessing? – in this case, one would have to say yes.
 - a) If, as Jesus said, she gave all she had and that was literal then without a blessing in return for her sacrifice, she would simply go home and die of starvation.
 - b) Not likely literal but relative.
 - c) Blessing expected – probably.

Gospel of Mark – NOTES

27) Is there the possibility that the story connects this passage with the judgement passages the precede and follow it? – As I indicated at the start, I think ABSOLUTELY Yes!!!

28) Is that the point we should take from this? – I personally do not think so!

29) Jesus called His disciples to him and made this comment:

"I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44 They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on."

30) To me, this isn't saying again "beware of the corrupt religious system" but look at the level of sacrifice that the widow is making.

31) God looks for our love and our giving reflects that love.

Does God expect or want us to give everything we have away and live in abject poverty?

- No – he wants us to give and give generously.
 - a) Our hearts and love of Him should dictate our level of generosity – NOTHING ELSE!
- As we saw in the incident with the rich young ruler, the only time God wants us to give all of something is to remove a stumbling block to our love and dedication to Him.

The amount we give, be it based on percentage, or fixed amount, or whatever other method we may use must first and always be driven by our desire to give and our trust in God to provide – not our obligation. Agree / Disagree?