

## A WIDOW'S OFFERING

Mark 12:35-44

Key Verse: 12:44

*“They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on.”*

Last week, Jesus told us to love the only true God with all our hearts and love our neighbor as ourselves. In today's passage, Jesus teaches us how we can love our God, using a widow's offering as an example. But first, Jesus explains how important it is for us to look at things with spiritual eyes in light of God's word so that we may see what God is doing.

### I. DAVID VS. TEACHERS OF THE LAW (35-40)

Look at verse 35. *While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, “How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David?”* This is a somewhat puzzling question that Jesus asked as he taught a crowd of people in the temple courts. We need a context for this question. Earlier, Jesus helped the religious leaders who had attempted to trap him with trick questions. Except for the one teacher of the law who came to Jesus, the Jewish leaders did not seem to grasp the Scriptures even as they studied the Bible everyday. They were preoccupied with burnt offerings and other religious ceremonies while neglecting to love God and love their neighbor. Most of all, they would not accept the Messiah whom God sent to save them from their sins. The Messiah was standing right before their eyes and doing God's work, but they did not recognize him. Instead, they tried to eliminate him out of their jealousy toward him. They were spiritually blind. Their spiritual blindness was a serious matter because they were in leadership positions.

Jesus was heart-broken when he saw the spiritual blindness of the religious leaders. In order to help them, Jesus asked them a question. Look at verse 35 again. *While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, “How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David?”* In the question, Jesus pointed out the contradiction of the Jewish leaders. God promised that he would send the Messiah the stump of Jesse (Isa 11). So they knew that Christ would come from David's lineage. This prophecy was given to them 1,000 years before the birth of Christ. Finally God fulfilled his promise by sending Jesus as a human son of Joseph who was a descendant of David. On the first Christmas, an angel of God declared, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.” (Lk 2:10-11). But the Jewish leaders rejected him as the Messiah. Why? It was because they saw him with their human eyes, not with spiritual eyes. When Jesus came to them, they said, “Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him (Mk 6:3). They did not believe that Jesus, the son of a carpenter, could be the Savior of the world.

There was another reason why the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Like everyone else in Israel, they were waiting for a Messiah who would save his people from their enemy at that time—the Roman Empire. In other words, they were waiting for a political messiah. They expected for the messiah to come and liberate them from the Roman Empire, even though God promised that he would send the Messiah to set them free from their sins. Because of their insistence on their own ideas, they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. God sent his one and only Son Jesus as the Savior of the world. But the religious leaders saw Jesus only with their human eyes. They knew that Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. They knew that the humble Jesus would not conquer the Roman Empire with his military power. He didn't even have body guards, let alone an army. So they rejected him. John 1:11 says, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." The Jewish leaders rejected Jesus because they had no spiritual eyes to see what God was doing.

On the other hand, David was different. This is the point of Jesus' question. King David, whom all the Jews respect, believed that Jesus would be the Messiah. Now, Jesus would not be born until 1,000 years after David's death. So how could David accept Jesus as the Messiah? But that's exactly what David did. He believed that Jesus would come from his family line, as God promised, and become the Lord. Look at verse 36. *David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet." David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?" The large crowd listened to him with delight.* Jesus quotes from Psalm 110 which is a psalm of David. David believed the promise of God concerning the coming Messiah and worshiped him in advance. He called his great-great-great-grandson "Lord," and worshiped him, because he saw him with spiritual eyes in light of the word of God. Unlike the religious leaders, David did not insist on his own ways, but believed in the promise of God. David could see the Messiah with his spiritual eyes when the Lord was not born yet. But the Jewish leaders in Jesus' time had the Messiah right in front of their eyes. But they could not see him because of their spiritual blindness.

Only those who have spiritual eyes can see and accept Jesus as the promised Messiah. There was an old man named Simeon at the time of Jesus' birth. The historian Luke describes him as one of the "waiting people" (Lk 2). Simeon was looking forward to the coming of the promised Messiah. In his constant prayer, he was convinced by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Messiah. Finally, he held the baby Jesus in his arms when Jesus was brought to the temple for the presentation to God (Lk 2:28). Simeon praised God, saying, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk 2:29:32). Simeon was an old man, but he had the spiritual eyes to see the Messiah in the little baby Jesus. It must have looked funny for the old man Simeon to bow down and worship the baby. But Simeon was very happy to see the Messiah with his own eyes. He worshiped the baby Jesus because Jesus came to save him from his sins.

Simeon was an old man, but he was a spiritual man. He saw the tiny baby Jesus as the Messiah, because he believed in God and his words. David did not even see Jesus with his eyes, but he was happy to just know that the Messiah was coming into the world to save sinners. He was happy to just think about Jesus' coming, because he believed the promise of God. However, the religious leaders saw with their own eyes the wonderful work of God that Jesus was doing. Jesus had compassion towards a man of leprosy and touched him, saying, "I am willing. Be clean." The man was healed immediately. Jesus deeply understood the agony of a lonely Samaritan woman and led her to the living water welling up to eternal life. Jesus turned wash water into premium quality wine. Jesus fed a crowd of 5,000 with only five loaves of bread and two small fish. Despite the overwhelming evidence, the teachers of the law refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah, because they did not believe the promise of God. They had no spiritual eyes to see the work of God. They insisted on their own ideas. Let us pray that God may grant us spiritual eyes to see as we study the word of God. May God help us to believe the promise of God so that we may see what God is doing and participate in his redemptive history!

Look at verses 38-40. *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, and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely."* Jesus warned the disciples about the hypocritical life of the religious leaders. Likewise, we should not envy the lifestyle of the worldly people, but struggle to become spiritual men and women.

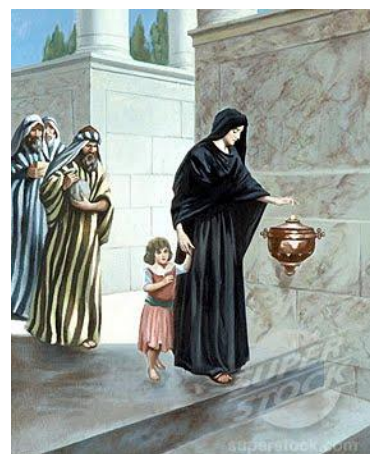
## II. SHE PUT IN EVERYTHING SHE HAD (41-44)

Look at verse 41. *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.* Jesus and his disciples were sitting somewhere in the temple area and watched the people come and put their money into the offering box. The temple had beautiful and magnificent buildings that impressed Jesus' disciples who were hillbillies from Galilee. They were also impressed by the religious leaders coming and going around the gorgeous temple, wearing long, designer-label purple robes. On the other hand, the disciples themselves were wearing tattered garments from K-mart or a thrift store. So the disciples were tempted by the privilege and honor enjoyed by the religious leaders. Later, Jesus taught them that they must see the gorgeous temple and the religious leaders with spiritual eyes.

As they continued to watch the temple area, a shocking event took place right before their eyes. Look at verse 41 again. *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.* Some rich people came to the offering box and looked around to make sure people were watching them. They took out bundles of money from their money belts in deliberate motions, and slowly put them in the offering box. The eyes of the disciples popped out. They had never seen so much money in their life. But the rich people were dropping big bundles of money into the box

as if they were bags of potatoes. The disciples must have been swayed by the desire to be like the rich people.

Jesus understood his disciples very well; he did not rebuke them, saying, “Why do you love money so much?” Instead, he drew their attention to another person. Look at verse 42. *But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny.* This time, a poor widow came to the temple and offered to God a few worthless coins. She dropped the coins carefully, not wanting anybody to notice. But to her embarrassment, the coins made loud noise. The people who saw it probably thought that her offering was worthless to God. But what did Jesus say? Let us read verses 43-44 together. *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. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on.”* Here Jesus teaches us that our heart offering is more meaningful than the amount of money we offer to God.



We should bring our thanksgiving offerings to God, remembering the love and grace of God who gave us his one and only Son as our Savior. Jesus said, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” God is especially pleased when we give our offerings to him out of our poverty, not just leftovers. Martin Luther was once asked to make a contribution to a ministry. He was poor and didn’t have any money to give. But he had a medal of Joachim, elector of Brandenburg, which he cherished. He opened the drawer and told the medal, “What are you doing there, Joachim? Don’t you know how lazy you are? Come out and make yourself useful!”

Look at verses 43-44 again. Jesus said, *“I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on.”* Jesus said the widow offered to God more than the rich people did, even though what she brought was not even worth a penny. What kind of mathematics is this? We must think about Jesus’ value system. Jesus saw that the widow put her heart in the offering box along with her coins. We learn that what God wants from us is not bundles of money, but a broken heart. God is not a charitable organization. God is the Creator of the universe. He is the Owner of everything in this universe. The rich people would have been mistaken, if they had thought they were doing a favor to God by offering bundles of money. In God’s accounting system, the large amount of offering is meaningless unless it is accompanied with a thankful heart that is offered to him.

Look at verse 44 again. *They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on.* How does this verse apply to our lives? The widow’s heart-offering can be our repentance before God. Consider David who sinned against God by sleeping with another man’s wife. But once he realized what

he had done before God, he came to God with his broken heart. He deeply repented his sin before God and asked God's forgiveness. When he struggled in prayer, he realized that no amount of offering to God was better than his own broken heart. He said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart ..." (Ps 51:17) God accepted David's broken heart and continued to keep him as the king and shepherd of his people.

The widow's offering reminds me of Mary who brought a jar of perfume to Jesus (Jn 12:1-11). She wanted to express her love and gratitude to Jesus. She looked around to find something good to bring to Jesus. The most valuable possession she had was an alabaster jar of pure nard, a very expensive perfume that she had saved for her wedding. She brought the perfume to Jesus, poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped his feet with her hair. Judas Iscariot complained that it was a waste of money. But Jesus accepted her heart and blessed her act of love. It was a fragrant offering to the Lord!

Again, what can we bring to God as our heart-offering? This is something I'd like ask all of us to ponder this week. The widow's heart-offering can be our faithfulness to God. I know a beautiful woman of God in Chicago. When I met her the first time in the mid-1980s, she was a medical student. We know how demanding medical school is. But this student was very faithful to God. In the midst of her overwhelming medical study, she never missed even one 1:1 Bible study or personal testimony writing. God blessed her to marry to a handsome and caring husband, a graduate of the Northwestern University. And she is now a successful medical doctor with several children. But she is still faithful to God, praying for young students. This way, she is bringing her heart-offering to God.

The widow's heart-offering can be our 1:1 Bible study. When people abandon God and live pleasure-seeking lives, God is not pleased. God judged the people in the time of Noah by sending the great flood. God judged the people of Sodom and Gomorrah for their sinful life. The people of Sodom were indeed wicked in God's eyes. All men from every part of the city--both young and old--were consumed by sinful desires (Ge 19:4-9). God rained down burning sulfur on the wicked people (Ge 19:24). Spiritually speaking, many young people in our society do not seem to be much different from the people of Sodom. They set their minds on pleasure-seeking lifestyle. Not many of them want to meet God personally through studying the word of God. It is not easy to carry out 1:1 Bible study in this environment. But we must give our hearts to 1:1 Bible study, as it is an acceptable offering that pleases God.

In this passage, we learn that we must offer our heart-offering to God who has given us his one and only Son to be our Savior. May God help us bring many young students to God through our heart-offerings to God! May God help each of us to develop spiritual insight by accepting the promises of God!