

07.18.10 / Mark 12:38-44

**Passage Insight**

The context is important here as Jesus has been correcting and rebuking the religious elite for a while, leading up to this passage. In verses 18-27, we see Jesus correcting the religious men in power. In verses 28-34, Jesus then claims authority over the scribes by passing judgment on them. Finally, in verses 35-37, He corrects the scribes' lack of understanding of who Jesus is, and in so doing He claims equality with God the Father. These interactions set the tone for what is about to come.

Jesus tells His listeners to "beware" of the scribes, implying that to do as they do invites danger in the form of God's condemnation. The scribes were dangerous because of their seemingly slick outward appearance that masked an inward ignorance of God. They were dangerous because they were not only leading themselves astray with their corrupt, greedy actions toward the weak in the congregation like the widows, but those who paid attention to them and sought to follow their lead as well. They were leading people AWAY from God. The scribes were more interested in what they could gain from their position than what they could bring to the Lord, as is seen in their selfish gobbling up of other people's praise, as well as their theft from the widows. Regarding positions of power, Scripture is clear that Jesus holds all things together, including the rulers and authorities in all seats of power, so if anyone has influence, it is merely because Jesus has allowed it, not because someone has earned it or is deserving of it apart from the Lord. By misusing their positions of authority for personal gain, including theft, their pride, entitlement, and ultimately mistrust of God were revealed. In short, the scribes fought to GAIN something personally, when Jesus calls us to LOSE everything when we follow Him.

Jesus sees our hearts. He saw through the scribes' deception and revealed a trust in themselves rather than a trust in God. He also saw through the apparently small gift to the commitment of the woman's heart. We cannot hide from Jesus.

There is simply no room for us to order our lives base on WHAT WE WANT, as the scribes did. There is no room for us to take the gifts that God has given us and use them for personal gain as though they somehow belonged to us. To do so is to invite God's condemnation. There is, however, much room for us to fail as we pursue the Lord, receiving His lavish forgiveness and trusting Him and Him alone for all of our provision. Just like the widow, we are called to look solely to Him, hold nothing back from Him, and in fact, WILLINGLY BRING EVERYTHING TO HIM. For Jesus, the value in any gift is not in the amount given, but rather in the cost to the giver. Following Jesus costs us everything, yes, and in turn it buys us the priceless treasure of Jesus Himself in all His glory and beauty. Well worth the cost.

Ultimately, it is not the appearance of worship that the Lord seeks, but rather a heart that is fully inclined toward Him.

**Application Questions****Religion for Gain**

- 1) What are your motives for living a holy life (approval of others, influence in others' lives, willing response to what Jesus has done for you, increased sense of self-worth, something else)?
  - 2) Where would others say your life is honoring God, but you know otherwise?
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**Giving All We Have**

- 1) Where in your life is it revealed that you're holding something back from God (in your finances, in your relationships, in your prayers, somewhere else)?
- 2) How have you convinced yourself that you can handle these things better than the Lord?
- 3) Where is your trust when you do this (in finances, in yourself, in someone else)?
- 4) What are you afraid of losing if you turn your entire life over to Him?
- 5) Holding things back from God is a vestige of the life we lived before we began trusting Jesus. Pray that the Spirit would reveal the things you keep from God and empower you to give all to Him.

**Genuine Affection**

- 1) The widow's actions revealed the source of her true affections. What do your actions reveal about your affections?
- 2) The only way for your heart to change is to be affected by God Himself, and this is only going to happen as you trust in Jesus. If Jesus has your affection, why is this the case?
- 3) If you struggle with giving Jesus affection, why is this?
- 4) We will never give Jesus our affection unless we see His beauty. What is the most beautiful aspect of Jesus to you?

**Sources**

- Prayer
  - Pillar
  - Barclay
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