

## 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."

In the last passage there was a young teacher of the law who did not agree with the sayings of the Pharisees and Sadducees who debated with Jesus. The young teacher agreed with Jesus' words, for the words of Jesus were none other than the words of God. Jesus was greatly comforted by the young teacher of the law. Still, Jesus had a great shepherd heart for the Pharisees and Sadducees. So in this passage Jesus tells them how to understand spiritual realities, and to know the Messiah God has sent. The world was hard and the Pharisees were in the midst of a power struggle and the Sadducees, who were enjoying their pleasure, were nothing but party animals. When man becomes flesh God is not pleased. For example, at the time of Noah, men abandoned God and only enjoyed their sinful pleasure. Genesis 6:3 says, "Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.'" Their spiritual blindness reached to the [degree](#) that they did not know that man is both body and spirit. Then God destroyed them all by [the Flood](#), except grandfather Noah and his family members. The time of Sodom and Gomorrah is another example. At the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, people also became flesh, that is, animal people. God burned down the twin cities with the fire of brimstone. Genesis 19:24 says, "Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah--from the Lord out of the heavens." When the people of the Roman Empire became flesh like brutal animals in a jungle, and only enjoyed a corrupted life and evil-doing, God destroyed her until there was no trace of the Roman Empire. God is not pleased when man becomes flesh and lives like an animal, suppressing the [truth](#) that man is both body and soul. At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees and Sadducees were hypocrites. In reality, they were nothing but party animals and wicked. In spite of this, Jesus taught them the basic truth of God.

### I. Jesus is the Son of David (35-40)

First, Jesus taught the word of God even during the passion week. 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?'" Incarnated Jesus is both the perfect God and the perfect man. After the earthly messianic ministry was over, Jesus came up to Jerusalem to become the Lamb of God to die on the cross for the sin of the world. Therefore, at this moment Jesus was bracing himself at the thought of nails being driven into his hands and legs. Jesus was in his prime time. So he had never wanted to die. In anyone's case, it is instinct to think about only himself. The same would be true with Jesus. But Jesus did not do so. In Jerusalem, crucifixion awaited him. The cross awaited him on which the Roman soldiers would put him to death.

But Jesus was not at all dispirited. Jesus didn't think about himself. What did he do? Even during the passion week, Jesus was teaching the word of God to the people who were in the temple courts. This account is recorded in all the synoptic gospels. One saint said, "Even if I die

tomorrow, today I will plant an apple tree." This is a philosophical statement. Probably no one has planted an apple tree before his death.

But Jesus was teaching the word of life to people who were walking around in the temple courts. It was because Jesus wanted to plant the seeds of life in each person so that they might have the life of God in them. Here we see that Jesus is the Son of God who is the same always. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Second, Jesus is the servant of all men. Jesus came to this world as the Son of God. During the messianic ministry Jesus planted the word of God. Jesus was teaching the word of God in the temple courts.

Jesus died on the cross not saving himself. He was surrounded by his once beloved flock of sheep; now they were shouting at Jesus, "Save yourself, as you saved others! Come on, hey! You come down from the cross to save yourself!" But Jesus swallowed all his pain and sorrow. Why did Jesus do so? It was because Jesus wanted to obey God's hope to save people from their sins. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us how to serve God Almighty. We only praise God for Jesus.

Let's read 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?'" 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."'" Jesus said this so that people, especially the teachers of the law, might acknowledge that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Ironically they were the ones who were waiting for the coming of the Messiah to save their people from their sufferings. In the last passage the young teacher believed in the Bible genuinely. Another example is Simeon. He was looking for the coming of the Messiah. In his constant prayer he was convinced by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the baby Messiah. Finally, he enjoyed embracing the baby Jesus the Messiah in his arms, when Jesus came 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. The baby Jesus was a month-old infant. But Simeon had spiritual eyes to see that the infant boy was the Christ. "The Christ" meant he is God's anointed King, promised to come as the Messiah to save people from their sins. In short, the baby Jesus was the Messiah. It looked ridiculous for an old man Simeon to bow down and worship a baby. But Simeon could worship him and he was also happy to die because he had seen the Christ with his own eyes. In short, Simeon was a man of spiritual insight.

It is indeed significant that each person must have his or her view of the Messiah based on the Bible. In order to have a view of the Messiah, we must study the Bible wholeheartedly. Suppose we have no clear view of the Messiah. We become spiritually blind men and women.

We must know that Jesus is the promised Messiah. We must know that Jesus is the way, life and truth (Jn 14:6). We must know there is no living hope in this world. Only in Jesus do we find a living hope. 1 Peter

1:3,4 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in heaven for you...."

To be brief, Jesus came to this world as our Messiah. Through his death to forgive our sins and his resurrection, Jesus, the glorious Risen Christ, opens the way for us to come to the kingdom of God where there is no sorrow or tears, but eternal life and shining glory (Rev 21:4).

The world has been unlimitedly stained. The sense of honor and standard of morality have long since vanished. Sensual pleasure breaks up families. A man's meaning is determined by how many dollars per hour or how many 10,000 dollars per year he earns. Those who are in the sphere of modern culture sigh deeply in the morning and before going to bed. Now we know why we must have a view of the Messiah and why Jesus Christ is our Messiah.

We must know that God sent the promised Messiah to save people from their sins. But they rejected him and despised him because they had no God in their hearts. They were different from Simeon. Simeon could see the baby Jesus in rags as the Savior of the world. The religious leaders had to grasp spiritual realities. But they were obsessed with the world. Their diligent study of the Bible led them to be legalists and traditional.

Third, the Pharisees were spiritually blind men. See again, Jesus asked a question in verse 35b: "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David?" In this question Jesus points out the Pharisees' spiritual blindness. They taught that the Christ would come from one of David's descendants. Their teaching had been continued over 1,000 years and they were thirsty for the coming of the Messiah. But there was a problem. They studied and taught the word of God habitually. Habitual Bible study made them spiritually blind men. Bible study requires whole-hearted devotion. Bible study requires the attitude of treasure hunters. Medical study is difficult. So medical students study hard. In reality, Bible study is far more difficult. It is because the Bible is like an ocean. However, they did not believe in their hearts the core of the Bible teaching, probably because of their human situations. The most serious problem was that they had forgotten they were a chosen people. Another problem was that when Jesus came, they saw Jesus with human eyes and rejected him.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees could not believe that Jesus was the Messiah. It was because he was a son of a poor carpenter. On the other hand, let's think about King David. He believed that the Messiah would come from among one of his descendants. David believed this in his heart and also worshiped the promised Messiah who was to come through his offspring. 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 was a king. There was no one above him except God. But he believed the word of God concerning the coming Messiah and worshiped him. And David called him "Lord," which means that the Messiah is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. David did not compare his kingship with that of the coming Messiah.

Jesus asked the Pharisees again, "David himself calls him 'Lord.'"

How then can he be his son?" (37) In this verse, Jesus understood their logic. David was one of the ancestors and Jesus is one of his descendants born 1,000 years after David. But David called him Christ the Lord and the coming Messiah and the Savior of the world. Jesus' question was very simple. But we can see Jesus' broken heart toward the Pharisees. What they were doing was waiting for the coming of the Messiah. The Messiah came and was born and laid in a manger. They saw Jesus proclaiming the kingdom of God, wearing rugged clothes and they saw that his disciples looked like people of unemployment. They could not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, even when he was doing the messianic ministry. Finally, they abandoned the Messiah who came to this world to save people from their sins. Nevertheless, Jesus really wanted them to believe what they taught to others in the synagogue, and what they studied in the Bible. Jesus also wanted them to see his messianic ministry and accept him as the Messiah who had finally come to them.

When we become mundane men like the Pharisees there is a great danger that we become like party animals. When we become mundane men there is a great danger that we become merciless politicians. When we become godless men there is a great danger that our hearts become calloused toward spiritual reality, as a leper does not feel pain, though his whole body is rotting moment by moment.

## II. She put in everything she had (41-44)

First, immature disciples (41-42). When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he looked around at the temple and the next day he cleared the temple before the eyes of religious leaders who had political authority and power (11:15). His disciples were stunned at the authority and power of Jesus. As we have studied, Peter was in deep human agony over how he could have such authority and power like Jesus. This time the disciples were even more startled. Why? Because Jesus saw the grandiose temple differently from them. Obviously, Jesus and his disciples came out of the temple and they were sitting opposite the temple (41). The picture of the temple was in their sight. One of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" (13:1) Jesus' disciples were mostly rural people. One of them saw the temple building. The pillars of the buildings were so magnificent and spectacular. He wanted to run to one of the pillars and kiss it. More than that, he wanted to be one of the priests in the temple. At the same time, he was very reluctant to be one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Temple workers wore gorgeous robes like royal subjects in the ancient palace. Jesus' disciples were wearing blue jeans which had more than 30 patches. We can understand the young disciples' vanity and desire to be gorgeous. But from Jesus' point of view they had no spiritual insight. The temple buildings were all desecrated and burned down in 70 A.D. by General Titus of Rome. Jesus' disciples did not know that the things of the world perish, spoil and fade away in the matter of time. They did not know the kingdom of God, which is forever, and where there is no sorrow and no tears.

Another shocking sight to the disciples was the bundles of money. There was an offering box in the temple. Rich people stood proudly and pulled bundles of money out of their robes and slowly put them in the offering box. When Jesus' disciples saw the bundles of money they felt crazy. They had never touched such huge amounts of money with their hands. But the rich people were putting big bundles of money into the

offering box as if they were giving potato chips to a child. The disciples must have been swayed by the money because they suffered enough from poverty. It is natural as young people that they liked bundles of money.

Second, Jesus' value system (43-44). Jesus understood his disciples very well and he did not rebuke them, saying, "Why do you love money so much?" Instead, he told them a very short story. Look at verses 43-44. "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.'" In this short story we learn the value system of Jesus. We learn that heart is more important than bundles of money.

As we know well, widows are sorrowful and helpless. There is the story about Ruth's family. Naomi was the mother-in-law. She had two sons, Kilion and Mahlon. Because of famine they immigrated to Moab. They married there, Kilion to Orpah and Mahlon to Ruth. But soon Kilion and Mahlon died. And three widows were left in a foreign country, Moab. Naomi cried endlessly and finally told her two daughters-in-law to leave her and remarry. The first daughter-in-law cried for a while and kissed Naomi and went her way. But Ruth did not want to leave her mother-in-law and said, "Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die...if anything but death separates you and me" (Ru 1:16-17). The story of Ruth is so beautiful. But we cannot say that it is a happy story. James 1:27b says, "...look after orphans and widows in their distress...." When we read the Bible, there are many stories about widows. God wants us to care for them. It is because widows lost their husbands, whom they loved so dearly. They have no security. In the ancient time, the wage for a woman was very low. But widows are great when they have faith in God. After the Korean War, there were 100,000 widows in Korea; they lost their husbands during the ideological war. 97% of them did not remarry. They raised their children with all their hearts. Most of their children are now professors in many countries and key members of the Korean government.

On the other hand, there are worldly widows. As soon as their husbands die, they become helpless and depend on money. There is one widow whose husband died young. He was a self-made man. After passing the government exam he became a judge. Once he was a chief judge. But he did not know Jesus. He loved money more than anything else. He accumulated great wealth in the earth. But he died young. His wife took over his wealth and established a sort of company and became a woman president. Her grandson was accepted to Harvard University. So her grandson's pastor asked her to give him a certain amount of scholarship. She refused with one word, "no." We cannot quickly judge her selfishness. We must understand that a widow depends on money as her security.

Here we must think about Jesus' value system. Jesus said that the rich gave out of their wealth. But the widow put in everything--all she had to live on (44). The rich people put money in the offering box proudly. But the widow put her heart in the offering box. What God wants is not abundant sacrifice, but a broken heart. Why did the widow put what she had in the offering box? It was because she had Jesus in her heart as her Messiah who would take care of her forever.

We have to think about the widow's heart-offering. The widow's heart-offering can be our repentance to God. Once, David sinned against God greatly. But he came to God and asked his forgiveness of sins as he felt all his bones were melted. He said in Psalm 51:19b, "then bulls will be offered on your altar." Again in verse 17a he said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart...." God accepted David's broken heart and continued to keep him as the king of his people. The widow's heart-offering can be our faithfulness. There was a beautiful girl student. She studied medicine and became a medical doctor. Medical studies are not easy. But she never missed testimony writing or one-to-one Bible study even once. As a result, God blessed her and gave her a prince-like husband. She is still faithful to pray that her husband would be a great servant of God. The woman doctor resembles the widow who offered everything she had.

The widow's heart-offering can be one-to-one Bible study. Whenever the people of the world seek physical pleasure only, God does not leave them alone. God judged the people in the time of Noah. God judged the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. God judged the people of Rome. The USA is in a situation that her people must apologize to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. So nobody wants to meet God through one-to-one Bible study. It is not easy to carry out one-to-one Bible study. But we must give our hearts to one-to-one Bible study as our heart-offering to God.

In this passage we learn that whatever we do, we must do it with spiritual understanding. We must also give our hearts to God. May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation when we have the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation when we live as his holy children.