**LUKE 21:1-4 WIDOW AND THE TWO MITES**

Would you agree that giving to the church is a good Biblical thing to do? Yes of course.

Would you say that it is a good thing to give to a main line church, but they are weak doctrinally and their theology is watered down, probably liberal. Mmmm, questionable, probably not.

Would you say that it is a good thing to give to a cult or false religion? No of course not.

Would you say it would be a good thing to give to a Roman Catholic Church? NO.

So, we would discriminate who we would give our offerings to based on what they believe? Yes.

It would be actually wrong to give to false religions and even Christian denominations if they do not hold to the truths of scripture. We are responsible in giving and we want our money to count for the kingdom of God and His glory. What can any church do for the kingdom of God if it mixes in error and heresy with some truth?

What would you say if you saw a poor widow giving her only money she has to a false religion?

This is what we are going to be looking at today from this familiar text highlighting the widow who gave everything she had, it was not much at all, but it was everything she had. You might be thinking , oh boy , here we go on another message dealing with sacrificial giving. Well truthfully we really don’t touch on giving unless we deal with a text that has that subject. If it’s there we will cover it. We believe in giving and without your giving to the church we don’t have a building to meet and we would be unbiblical if we didn’t have that as a part of our ministry. We have had a few messages on giving in the Gospel of Luke so we have covered that and it is always a reminder for us how important it is to give in the church and outside the church in helping someone on our own. But…we need to see where we have been in our study of Luke and where this is going. We are on the last few days of Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem before the cross. It might be Wednesday of the passion week and we have seen Jesus at the Temple teaching everyday. He has been questioned by the religious leaders as their motive was to stump Him and catch Him in a trap. The truth is, He answered every question perfectly. He turned the tables on them when He asked a question about who He was as compared to David. He silenced them. He then went right for the throat showing their motives and intent. He gave them a scathing rebuke and it led to judgment. They were false leaders, hypocrites, and He does not take hypocrisy and false teaching lightly. Beware of the scribes and Pharisees is what He is emphasizing, that is the context.

Now what in the world is this little passage here for in between false leaders and judgment? How does this fit? He is condemning the hypocrites and will talk about the judgment on the nation which is 70 AD and right here for a few verses would Jesus say, now we need to talk about sacrificial giving and then lets get to the judgment? That is what we will get to today.

**1. JESUS OBSERVES PEOPLE AT THE TREASURY 21:1-4**

A. SITTING DOWN

 MARK 12:41 says Jesus was sitting down and He must have been looking down. He had just finished his confrontation and speaking woes to the scribes and hypocrites. He then showed His disappointment for the nation of Israel as they had rejected Him , Jesus was grieved O Jerusalem O Jerusalem how I cared for you as does a hen gathers her chicks. Behold your house is left to you desolate. This was the lowest point of His ministry. He is exhausted and sad. Mark says He was sitting and His eyes must have been looking down as He contemplates the damning religion of Judaism and the fact that the temple where He sat, which He had earlier cleansed, was so corrupt, its religion so ungodly that it along with the city of Jerusalem and the whole nation of Israel had to be totally destroyed and kept under judgment for millennia.

 B. LOOKING UP

 LUKE 21:1 He looked up and started looking at what was going on in the court where all Jews could go, but not Gentiles. It is past the court of the Gentiles.

 C. OBSERVING

 ETHEOREI---THEATRE---GAZE, LOOK INTENTLY

Jesus had said in Matthew 6 that you were to do your giving in secret.  But the religious system had developed a very public, prominent way to do it and Pharisees came along and had trumpets blown announcing their arrival to give, according to Matthew 6.  So He looks up and there He sees the people coming, the treasury and He observes how people were putting money into the treasury.

 PROVERBS 15:3

 D. TREASURY

 COURT OF THE WOMEN The Temple was organized into a series of courts. As you initially entered the Temple area, you found find yourself in the Court of the Gentiles. This was a vast area the size of several football fields. This was the place where the buying and selling and the money changing took place that Jesus had disrupted on the previous day.

Surrounding the Court of the Gentiles were a series of "porches" or cloisters through which ran double rows of Corinthian pillars, each cut from marble and measuring 37 feet in height and covered by a flat roof. The entire court was paved with marble. The southern of these porches was known as "Solomon’s Porch" (Acts 3:11).

This court derived its name from the fact that Gentiles were permitted into this area provided they conducted themselves in a reverent manner.

A low wall ran completely around the Temple structure. It had periodic gates and an stone inscription located at each gate. Archaeologists have discovered two of these inscriptions and they read as follows:

*No outsider shall enter the protective enclosure around the sanctuary. And whoever is caught will only have himself to blame for the ensuing death.*

Beyond the Dividing Wall was a flight of 14 steps that led up to a terrace on which stood the inner wall of the Temple. This inner wall had a number of gates, but the main gate was located on the eastern side. This was the "Beautiful Gate" (Acts 3:2). There were 12 steps leading up to this gate. The doors of the gate were made of Corinthian brass and mounted on massive hinges. Entering through this gate brought one into the Court of the Women.

The Court of the Women was not exclusive to women. It was called this because this was as far within the Temple as women were permitted to enter. The court was surrounded by colonnades. Along the walls there were thirteen jars which served as receptacles for various offerings. Worshipers would come in and drop their offering into one of the jars.

He is near to these jars where worshipers would come to make their offerings. He was watching the offerings and, in particular, he was watching the rich bring their offerings.

 E. PEOPLE PUTTING MONEY INTO THE TREASURY

 MATTHEW 6:1-4

There were those who made a great show of their goodness and their spiritual authority. They sought honor and prestige. The scribes were in that category, but they were not the only ones. There was also a temptation for the rich to engage in this sort of activity. Luke 20:45-47

This is the real center of false religion.   It's all about the money. We know the Sadducees who ran the temple franchises were lovers of money, because Jesus said you've turned My Father's house, a house of prayer, into a den of robbers, as they extorted money out of people for sacrifices and coin exchange.  False religion is always about the money.  When you get to the treasury, you get to the heart of false religion. Jesus is right at the heart of what the hypocrites were all about.

 LUKE 16:14---LOVERS OF MONEY

 THE RICH –PLUSIOS—FULL SUPPLY, ENOUGH people who could make offerings and still have enough to live.

 PLENTY LEFT OVER

 F. THE POOR WIDOW

He sees the normal course of false religion, poor, deceived souls putting their coins in, trying to buy blessing and salvation

 WIDOWS---THE VIEW OF THE DAY

Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes and love respectful greetings in the marketplaces and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, who devour widows' houses, The scribes had a system that abused the poor and the defenseless for whom they had only disdain.  They viewed any poor widow as being under the judgment of God. That's why she was a poor widow.  And they would aid God in making life tough for them to punish them for whatever sins God was punishing them for.  Furthermore, widows were women and women were second-class, and Pharisees every day prayed, "Lord, make me not a Gentile or a woman."  And because they were widows, they were defenseless and easy prey. There are warnings all throughout Scriptures to care for the poor, care for the widows, and do not abuse them.  The real tragedy that struck our Lord was the abuse of widows taking place in the name of God in the temple, the temple of God.  They had turned it into a den of robbers and they were robbing those who had the least.  It is ugly exploitation of...of widows in the house of God in the name of God.

 JAMES 1:27

 POOR—PENICHROS POOR,V3 PTOCHOS-DESTITUTE

meaning poor and needy but not totally destitute.  It's way down there, but it's not the bottom.  It would mean somebody with very, very little, penichros, a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins After she gave she was ptochos---destitute

 TWO COPPER COINS

 PUT IN MORE THAN ALL

 ALL THAT SHE HAD TO LIVE ON

an illustration of a poor widow who is being devoured by a religious system. Her last two cents, her life she gives to this system, dutifully, along with everybody else. Trying to live up to the system, trying to buy her salvation in an act of charity in a hope that it will earn her favor with God, she gives up her last two small copper coins, smallest coin, she dropped two of them in one of those thirteen shofars.

He is observing the corruption of the system that is going to be destroyed under the leadership of these corrupt, condemned leaders.  They're exploiting the most defenseless, the most impoverished.  Jesus certainly is not saying she gave her last cent and that's what you should do. Of course not. He doesn't want you to give up everything you've got. He's given us richly all things to enjoy.

If you saw a widow give her last two cents to some religious organization in the hope that she could purchase salvation or purchase blessing, or buy healing, or buy prosperity, you wouldn't commend her, you'd want to stop her and you'd want to shut down that religious system that preys on the desperate.  This act did not please our Lord.  She's simply been taught and she bought into a system that destroyed her.

**2. THE TRADITIONAL VIEW—GIVING**

Universally, commentators tell us that our Lord is giving us a little glimpse of true worship in the middle of the false worship that dominates the temple.  They tell us that it's a beautiful little story in the midst of ugliness; a little light in the midst of darkness, an illustration of giving till it hurts, contrasted with the selfishness of the spiritual leaders.  This is the traditional, universal explanation of this passage.  I am not saying this is absolutely wrong and in fact we can glean a lot from that and that can be helpful.

A**.** MOTIVE AND ATTITUDE OF THE GIVER

Is it selfless?  Humble?  Surrender?  Expressing love for God, devotion to God and trust in God?  The widow, we are told, had the least left behind, gave the highest percentage, and must have had the best attitude.

 B. PERCENTAGE GIVEN

The percentage given is really what the issue is relative to one's expression of self-denial in that percentage.  Obviously, the woman gave the highest percentage; everything.  So it's about the percentage you give.

 C. SACRIFICIAL GIVING

This passage is used much of the time for what sacrificial giving is all about. Give until it hurts.

 D. AMOUNT LEFT OVER

Jesus is teaching that the measure of a gift is not how much you give but how much you have after you give.  But that's the measure of the gift.  The measure is not the amount of the gift, but the amount left over.

 E. SELF-DENIAL

The true measure is the self-denial involved, the cost to the individual

 F. VOW OF POVERTY

The gift that truly pleases God is when you give everything and take a vow of poverty.  And all of these and combinations of all of these are defended by virtually all those who write on this text.

 G. TRUE WORSHIP

The widow would be giving true worship while the religious leaders and the system is false worship.

There's only one comment that Jesus made: She gave with her two copper coins relatively a great deal more than all the others because all the others gave out of their surplus, which means they had some left.  She gave out of her poverty all she had to live on.

**3. CONTEXTUAL VIEW PREVIOUS AND FUTURE VERSES**

 **JUDGMENT**

The traditional view with all those elements are not talked about by Jesus here. He does not talk about percentage or motives and attitudes or vow of poverty. He just observed and then told the disciples what they had just observed. If He wanted to say, "Now you need to give like the widow, she had a good attitude and she gave a maximum percentage and what she had left behind was little.  This is the kind of sacrificial giving that we're after."  He doesn't say that, doesn't say anything.

A.PREVIOUS LUKE 21:46-47, MARK 12:38-40,

 MATTHEW 22:41-23:1-39 WOE TO YOU---O JERUSALEM

 B. FUTURE

 MATTHEW 24, MARK 13, LUKE 21:5-36

 C. ABUSING THE WIDOWS AND THE POOR---WOE TO YOU

I think Jesus was angry.  And that's why He says in verse 6, "As for the things which you're looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."

 This continued to go on through history?  For Martin Luther in the Reformation it was a Catholic Church abusing the poor that in his mind invalidated the whole system.  They were building massive cathedrals.  They were building St. Peter's in Rome.  They were building it from the money of the poor, destitute, impoverished people to whom they were selling indulgences to build St. Peter's, promising the people that for money their sins would be forgiven.  When it became so abusive, Luther reacted, the people reacted, and you had a Protestant Reformation.

Contemporary quote-unquote “evangelists” call this seed faith.  "Give me your money and God will multiply it back to you."  God doesn't want a widow to give up her last two cents. You couldn't find that in the Bible any place.  That's the last thing God would want a widow to do.

Woe to you who sell your miracle water and your miracle cloths that promise to heal the desperate if they send you their money.  Woe to you wealthy, self-indulgent preachers who become rich on the backs of the lonely, poor, disillusioned, diseased and desperate who are told to give you their money as an act of faith so that God is obligated to make them healthy and wealthy.  Woe to you who indulge in $10,000 a night hotel rooms, claim revelations from God, spend $112,000 a month on your private jet with money taken from the most desperate people.  Woe to you, you will not escape judgment.

She's caught in the corruption of the system at the hands of those wretched leaders.  She has given her last coins to a false religion.  Jesus is angry.  And that's why He'll destroy this den of robbers.  Judgment came, 70 A.D., and it continues now on that temple, on that city, on that land until Jesus comes again.