

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Mark: Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God

Part III: The Perfect Sacrifice Of Jesus, The Perfect Servant Of God, Mark 11:1-15:47

J. Heeding Christ On The True Versus False Commitment To God's Service

(Mark 12:38-44)

I. Introduction

- A. Mark's Gospel was written by John Mark who was rebounding from having abandoned Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:13) due to Mark's lapse in following Christ because of some difficulty.
- B. That failure mirrored a false versus a true commitment to God's work, for had he been truly committed, John Mark would have continued faithfully serving the Lord versus quitting because of some difficulty.
- C. Mark 12:38-44 offers a study in the sharp contrast between a false and a true commitment to God's work, and we view it for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Heeding Christ On The True Versus False Commitment To God's Service, Mark 12:38-44.

- A. Mark 12:38-40 presents Jesus' condemnation of the scribes' false commitment to God's service:
 1. The role of the scribes, much as the priests, was to study God's Word so as to teach its truths to Israel that the people might know the Lord and obey His will for blessing, cf. Malachi 2:4-7.
 2. However, many scribes were proud and self-serving, walking about in flowing robes with fringes to impress onlookers (Mark 12:38a,b; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 165), loving to be greeted as Rabbi, Teacher, Master or Father by the people (Ibid.; Matt. 23:7; Luke 20:46 with Mark 12:38c) and coveting the most important seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, Mark 12:39; Ibid.
 3. The scribes were also greedy for gain: in Jesus' era, they were not paid for their services (Mishnah *Aboth* 1. 13; *Bekhoroth* 4. 6), but depended on the hospitality of devout Jews, Ibid. However, they exploited the generosity of poor donors and "unethically appropriated peoples' property," Ibid.; Mark 12:40a.
 4. The scribes also hypocritically "made lengthy prayers . . . to impress people," Mark 12:40b; Ibid.
 5. For such sins, the scribes would receive God's greater condemnation, Mark 12:40c ESV.
- B. However, Mark 12:41-44 presents Jesus' commendation of the widow's true commitment to God's service:
 1. After severely condemning the scribes, Jesus entered the court of the women in the temple where, "(a)gainst the wall, were 13 trumpet-shaped collection receptacles for receiving worshipers' freewill offerings and contributions (Mishnah *Shekalim* 6. 5)," Mark 12:41a; Ibid., p. 165-166.
 2. Sitting "opposite" (*katenanti*, Ibid., p. 166) or across the way from one receptacle (Ibid.) to watch how people gave, Jesus saw the rich cast in many clanking coins, impressing the bystanders, Mark 12:41.
 3. However, then a poor widow came and threw in two *lepta*, the smallest of bronze coins that totaled in value 1/64 of the Roman denarius coin, the wage of a day laborer, Mark 12:42; Ibid.
 4. Jesus then called His disciples to Him and announced that in God's eyes, this poor widow had given more than all the others who had deposited their money, for she had cast in all that she had, her entire livelihood, while the others had given out of their abundance, Mark 12:43-44.
- C. In view of Jesus' words and the context, the contrast between this widow and the scribes is great:
 1. Opposite the **proud** scribes who sought to exalt their fame before others, this widow **humbly** risked public embarrassment or even ridicule by depositing a few very small coins in front of onlookers in the temple.
 2. Versus the **greedy** scribes who took financial advantage of others for gain, this widow gave of her last means of her livelihood, giving with **liberality**.
 3. In contrast to the scribes and the rich contributors who **hypocritically** publicly tried to impress onlookers, this widow **honestly** did not try impress others, but dropped two little coins to make little clinking sounds.
 4. Opposite the scribes who **failed** to live by **faith** in unjustly taking advantage of others for their income, this widow **trusted God** for her very next meal as she was giving the last of her money to the Lord!
 5. Versus the scribes who lived in **ease**, this widow endured **hardship** to serve the Lord: regardless what trials had led to her poverty, she had courageously come to the temple to give of her last coins to God.

Lesson: *Jesus' contrast of the scribes' false service with the widow's true service reveals that true commitment to God's service involves (a) humility, not pride, (b) liberality, not greed, (c) honesty, not hypocrisy, (d) living by faith, not manipulating for a livelihood and (e) shouldering hardship to heed God, not opting for ease to disobey Him.*

Application: *May we serve God the way the poor widow did versus the way the scribes did, and so gain His reward.*