

## 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."

The world was hard and the Pharisees were in the midst of a power struggle and the Sadducees were nothing but flesh. When man becomes flesh God is not pleased. For example, at the time of Noah, men abandoned God and they only enjoyed their sinful physical pleasure (Ge 6:3). They completely denied that they are both body and soul. Then God destroyed them all by the Flood, except grandfather Noah and his family members. The time of Sodom and Gomorrah was the same. At the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, people also became flesh, party animal men. God burned down the twin cities with fire and brimstone (Ge 19:24). When the people of the Roman Empire became flesh like brutal animals in a jungle, and only enjoyed a corrupted life of evil-doing, God destroyed them 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 animal men. They were wicked and evil. Despite them, Jesus taught the basic truth of God to them. But in the last passage there was a young teacher of the law who did not agree with the sayings of the

Pharisees and Sadducees while they 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 how they can please God most.

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

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?" (35) In fact, Jesus questioned why the Pharisees did not call Jesus Christ the great-great-grandson of David after many generations instead of calling him the Christ. In this verse Jesus points to the blind spot of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were traditionally religious people. Especially they were people who were waiting for the coming of the Messiah to save their people from sufferings. We rarely see people like the young teacher who believe in the Bible genuinely. For example, when we study Luke's Gospel there was a very old man called 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 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 to save men from their sins. It looked ridiculous for 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. In short, Simeon was a spiritual man of God.

But the Pharisees and Sadducees were tightly earthbound. They were indifferent to spiritual realities, especially to the promise of God to send a Messiah from the root of Jesse (Isa 11:1). Ironically, as much as they hated Roman rule, they were waiting for the Messiah to come to liberate them from bondage. They were a kind of waiting people. But in reality, they were not waiting for the coming of the Messiah. When God's time came, God sent his one and only Son into this world as the Savior of the world. But they saw Jesus with material eyes and utterly despaired how the baby in a manger could be a Savior of the world. To their assumption, this baby Jesus in the manger of a stable could not defeat even one Roman soldier. So they rejected him. John 1:11 says, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." God sent the promised Messiah to save them 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. They had to open their spiritual eyes to see man both physically and spiritually.

In order to help open their spiritual eyes, 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 blind contradiction of the Pharisees. They taught that Christ would come from one of David's descendants. Their teaching had been continued over 1,000 years and they were sincere about the coming of the Messiah. But there was a problem. They taught habitually. They did not believe in their hearts the core of the Bible teaching that Jesus would come as was promised. Another problem was that when Jesus came, they saw Jesus with material eyes and rejected him.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees did not believe that Jesus, who came as the son of a carpenter, is the Savior of the world. On the other hand, King David 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 in his heart, instead of thinking that "he is one of my great-great-grandsons after many generations." 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 coming 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, the coming Messiah and Savior of the world. Jesus' question was very simple. But we can see Jesus' broken heart toward the Pharisees. What they were doing was hoping for the coming of the Messiah. What they knew was that the Savior of the world would come to save his people from their sins. But they abandoned God and did not believe in the coming of the Messiah. Jesus really wanted them to believe first what they taught to others in the synagogue.

When we become material men there is a great danger that we become party animal men. When we become material men there is a great danger that we become merciless politicians. When we become material 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)

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 his disciples were even more startled. Why? Because they saw something with their eyes. 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 are no tears (Rev 21:4).

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.

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 heart of Jesus. 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, "...to 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 the 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 World War II, there were 100,000 widows in Korea because they lost their husbands during the

ideological war. But 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. Her husband 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 scholarship. She refused with one word, "no." We cannot quickly judge her selfishness. We must understand that a widow must depend 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). Here we learn that 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.

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 one testimony writing or one-to-one Bible study with Missionary Rebecca Choi. 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. Without heart nobody can be faithful.

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 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 for their perversion. 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 to please God.

In this passage we learn that we must know what we are doing through spiritual understanding. We must also give our hearts to God. May God grant all American young people the heart of Christ.