

Introduction

1. Are you a people watcher?
 - a. Sometimes it's fun just to sit back and watch how people are dressed (e.g., WalMart), what they do, and sometimes what they say.
 - b. You can see and hear some interesting things!
 - c. Jesus was a people watcher.
2. Jesus watched those giving offerings at the temple and made an interesting statement about the gifts and attitudes of those giving them.
3. **Read Mk 12:41-44.**

A. Watching the People (41-42)

1. Jesus was still in the temple court with His disciples watching people.
 - a. Jesus' public ministry in Mark's gospel is complete. His focus now is on teaching His disciples.
 - b. He was "sitting" with His disciples watching the people come and go from the temple. (41)
2. He was specifically watching them give their offerings.
 - a. As the people came through the temple court, they often placed an offering (Gk., *chalkon*) in "the temple treasury" (Gk., *galophulakion*).
 - 1) The annual temple tax was due around the time of Passover, but the people also gave voluntary offerings for various needs throughout the year.
 - 2) Larry Pierce notes, "Josephus speaks of treasuries in the women's court of Herod's temple. In the N.T., the term 'near the treasury' seems to be used of that receptacle mentioned by the rabbis to which were fitted thirteen chests or boxes, i.e. trumpets, so called from their shape, and into which were put the contributions made voluntarily or paid yearly by the Jews for the service of the temple and the support of the poor" (Larry Pierce, *Outline of Biblical Usage*).
 - b. Jesus observed that the rich (Gk., *plousio* – plutocrats) gave much (Gk., *polla*) from their "wealth" (Gk., *perisseuontos*). (41)
 - c. He also observed that a poor widow (Gk., *mia chera ptoche*) gave two small copper coins (Gk., *lepta duo*). (42)
 - 1) Daniel Akin notes, "Being poor and a widow and a woman, she was the least of the least in the cultural context of the day" (Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 300).
 - 2) James Brooks adds, "The 'two very small copper coins' were two *lepta* (so the Greek text). The *lepton* was the smallest coin in circulation in Palestine and was worth 1/64 of a *denarius*, a day's wages for a common laborer" (James Brooks, *Mark*, 203).
 - 3) This coin, commonly known as the widow's mite, was worth only a few cents.
 - d. The poor widow gave "nothing" in the eyes of the world but "everything" in the eyes of God.
 - 1) Jesus observed not just the gift but also the heart of the giver. The motive behind the action is most important!
 - 2) Warren Wiersbe notes, "The rich made a big production out of their giving (see Matt. 6:1-4), but Jesus rejected them and their gifts. It is not the *portion* but the *proportion* that is important: The rich gave out of their abundance, but the poor widow gave all that she had. For the rich, their gifts were a small contribution, but for the widow, her gift was true consecration of her whole life" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Diligent*, 144).
 - e. This poor widow truly loved God with all her heart, soul, mind, and strength and her neighbor as herself. This was in accord with Jesus' earlier teaching (cf., Mk 12:30-31).
 - f. The rich would have looked down the woman for giving such a humble gift, but Jesus saw beyond the gift to the woman's heart.

B. The Insight (43-44)

1. After His time of people watching, Jesus “called his disciples to him” (43a)
2. Jesus made a statement of kingdom truth: “Truly I tell you . . .” (Gk., *amen lego* – “Verily I say” – KJV).
3. He made a stunning conclusion, “. . . this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others” (43).
 - a. The rich gave some from their abundance.
 - b. The widow “out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on (*olon ton bion autes* – “all the life of her”) (44).
 - c. It was not important how much was given but the heart of the giver that mattered to Jesus/God.
 - d. God evaluates not the monetary value of the gift but the heart of the one giving it.
4. What a contrast between the gift of the poor widow given in humility and the proud boasting of the teachers of the law whom Jesus denounced in last week’s lesson.
 - a. In our conclusion last week we looked Pr 18:12: “Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.”
 - b. In last week’s lesson Jesus predicted the downfall and judgment of the haughty hearts of the teachers of the law.
 - c. We also noted that in the pride and self-centeredness of the Jewish leaders who “devoured widow’s houses.” (Mk 12:40).
 - d. In this lesson Jesus honored the humble heart of a widow who gave all she had.
 - e. Jesus had clearly taught that “. . . many who are first will be last, and the last first” (Mk 10:31).
 - f. This humble widow that the rich evaluated as last was elevated to first by Jesus because of her humble, whole-hearted giving to God.
5. I want a heart like the widow’s don’t you?
 - a. I haven’t always had her kind of heart in giving.
 - b. I was raised to tithe, but God convicted me in my 20s about giving to meet needs.
 - 1) God taught me the value of tithing on His abundant provision to me.
 - 2) I don’t say this to boast, but God led me in my 20s to tithe 30% of my income.
 - 3) I obeyed but did not fully understand at the time.
 - 4) However, by learning to live on less, I was able several years later to respond to God’s call to go to seminary and train for ministry.
 - 5) If I had not been faithful in responding to God’s call to give, I would not have been in a position to respond to His further call to ministry—at least not as easily!
 - c. Unlike the widow, I have never given everything in my bank account, everything I had to live on.
 - 1) I am amazed at her faithfulness and trust in the Lord!
 - 2) I don’t believe that all of us are to directly give everything we have, but we should be willing to do so if the Lord leads us to do it.
 - 3) We are stewards of all of our possessions. God is the owner and must direct how we use all that we have—money, talents, and time.
 - d. Whether I’ve had a little or a lot in my bank account, I’ve always had enough to meet my needs. I am truly blessed beyond measure.
 - f. Jesus had a heart like the widows.
 - 1) He would soon give all He that he had on the cross of Calvary for your sins and mine.
 - 2) Paul concludes,
 - 3) “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9).

C. Questions/Thoughts for Reflection

1. Can you ever outgive God? No!
2. Are you giving your all to the glory of God or just giving some?
3. Is your giving proportional to your income?
4. Wiersbe concludes, "Pride of living and pride of giving are sins we must avoid at all cost. How tragic that the leaders depended on a religious system that shortly would pass off the scene. How wonderful that the common people gladly listened to Jesus and obeyed His Word. In which group are you?" (Wiersbe, 144).
5. We are to give graciously with joy and love for God and neighbors in our hearts.
6. Daniel Akin concludes, "Biblical giving is a voluntary act flowing from a thankful heart, which involves giving of one's self and all that one has" (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Mark*, 299).
7. It is not that we have to give but that we get to give to the glory of God from the providence that He continually sends our way.