

## **The Lord's Economy** *Mark 12:38-44*

Good morning,

The Prophet Isaiah said in *Isaiah 14:24* ***The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand: NKJV***

Witness Lee said, "Because God has a purpose, He needs an economy.

*This Greek word for economy comes from two words: **oikos** meaning house or household and **nomos** meaning law.*

*Economy is a "house law," a household administration. This household administration is for the carrying out of God's purpose, God's plan.*

*God's economy is God's planned administration to carry out His eternal purpose....*

*God's household administration to dispense the divine riches of the Triune God as life and life supply into His chosen and redeemed people....*

Please open your Bibles to **Mark 12** as we continue in a verse-by-verse study of the **Gospel of Mark**.

Recently in the **Gospel of Mark**, we have learned lessons about how the Lord loves us apart from religious duties or sacrifices.

Last time in *Mark*, after the Pharisees, the Herodians, and the Sadducees had all tried to trap Jesus; a scribe, who was a lawyer from the Pharisees, then questioned Jesus.

The Scribe came to Jesus with this question, again trying to test Him, asking Jesus which is the first commandment of all.

The first and foremost commandment comes from the Law in...*Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*

*Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*  
*NKJV*

Through all His teachings, Jesus claimed to be equal with God.

This question from the Scribes desired to trip Jesus up; either He was not God and He had made false claims while teaching, or *Deuteronomy 6*, stating that there is only one God, is wrong.

William Lane, “*Because the whole man is the object of God’s covenant love, the whole man is claimed by God for Himself.*”

The most important thing you can do as part of God’s creation is to *love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*

Jesus also said from *Leviticus 19:18b, you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. NKJV*

We are to love our neighbor, because they should receive from us, the same kind of love we want to receive from them and God

The Lord is not asking us for religious rituals and ceremonies, or religious service, as a way of earning His favor. He wants those things offered to Him by us naturally because we love Him.

Then Jesus asked a question, “*Why did David call the Messiah Lord?*”

Jesus’ rhetorical question to the Scribes in *Mark 12*, pointed His listeners to the only valid answer: the Messiah came from David’s line, but He was David’s **Lord**, at the same time.

In today’s passage, Jesus gives some warnings about the false pretense of the religious leaders as well as revealing His heart about gifts that are given with the right motivation.

### **I. Beware of certain priorities.**

Read *Mark 12:38-40*

Remember from last week, it was a scribe who came to Jesus and asked, “*Which is the first commandment of all?*”

Scribes had a rich history in Israel, however like a lot of religious leaders, their hearts became hard towards the Lord, and they became a hindrance for people wanting to serve the Lord.

Scribes were well educated men who studied the Law, in order to transcribe it correctly, copy the Bible meticulously, and then write commentaries on it.

The scribe had to say each word aloud while they were writing.

As a scribe would copy scripture and would come upon the name of God; they used a special black ink, to write the word.

Then the scribe had to wipe the pen and wash their entire body, before writing the most Holy Name of God, YHWH, every time they wrote it.

During Jesus' time, the scribes started adding man's traditions to the Law and they became known for teaching the letter of the Law while ignoring God's **heart** behind the giving of the Law.

The scribes rose to a celebrity status as the group of religious leaders who not only interpreted the Law, but also added their own pet peeves to the rules the people had to keep.

The scribes made plenty of rules but failed to keep the spirit of the Law themselves.

These men were like dad saying, "*Do as I say, not as I do*".

David Guzik said, "*The scribes represented a complete contrast to the picture of how a disciple should be — as a servant, as a child, as one carrying a cross.*"

Even though the scribes had celebrity status, Jesus said about them *in His teaching*, "***Beware of the scribes***", as He described their attitudes and priorities while holding the office of a scribe.

Alan Cole said, "*The scribes and Pharisees had become the symbol of hypocrisy.*"

The list of charges from the Lord that the scribes did, which we should be aware of, are as follows...

**1. The scribes *desire to go around in long robes*.**

There seems to be a two-fold description of the scribes within this first warning...

Cole, *“The scribes not only love the outward show and empty glory of religious observance, which is the sin of pride; they love money, and that is another sin, the sin of covetousness.”*

Long robes also seemed to describe the scribes, as men who thought they were above getting their hands dirty, as they watched while others work.

**2. The scribes *love greetings in the marketplaces*.**

The scribes demanded recognition from others due to their position as holy men, called by God.

In 2014, I went to Louisiana to receive my Seminary degree as I attended a very large graduation ceremony.

As I was checking in, another gentleman was checking in and we had an awkward interaction. He first introduced himself to me, let's call him Bob, but then he quickly corrected himself...

Bob said, *“I'm pastor Bob, that's pastor Bob, okay?”* To which I replied, *“Well Bob, I'm Rich, nice to meet you.”*

Later that morning, at one of the group classes we were to attend, Dr. Steve Pettey, the head over the Seminary, led the class with the topic about reaching different people groups.

Dr. Petty looked over at me, with Bob in the row in front of me, and said, “*Rich, you pastor a church in Oregon, right? Tell us what it is like to pastor a church on the West coast.*”

When Bob heard Dr. Petty call on me and that I was a pastor, he was very surprised.

The lesson is, do not become so impressed with yourself or your calling; rather we should be impressed with the God who loved us and has called us to represent Him!

3. The scribes loved *the best seats in the synagogue and at feasts*.

Loving *the best seats in the synagogue and at feasts* show the scribes demanded the status and the perks that came with privilege.

Again, the scribes were “*A complete contrast to the picture of how a disciple should be.*” (Guzik)

4. The scribes “*devour widows' houses*”.

David Guzik said, “*They sinned against the weak and vulnerable but excused it because they thought they were so spiritual.*”

*In that day, a Jewish teacher could not be paid for teaching — but he could receive gifts.*

*Apparently, many scribes used flattery and manipulation to wrangle big gifts from those who could least afford to give them — such as widows.*

*The Jews of Jesus' day taught that teachers were to be respected almost as much as God; they said that they deserved more honor and respect than any other people in life.*

*They taught that the greatest act someone could do was to give money to a teacher. Of course, it was the teachers themselves who taught this."*

There are some modern-day Televangelists who come up with all sorts of gimmicks to fleece money from God's people.

It is true that the laborer is worth his wages.

Paul told his protégé Timothy in ***1 Timothy 5:18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." NKJV***

If someone works full time in the ministry, they deserve to be taken care of, but to take advantage of the Lord's people, especially the vulnerable ones, is a terrible sin against the Lord.

**5. The scribes, *for a pretense, make long prayers.***

This verse seems to contradict ***1 Thessalonians 5:17, pray without ceasing. NKJV***

But Jesus was speaking of motivation. The scribes' relationship with the Lord was only for looks, they did not truly know God.

They thought they looked very spiritual because of the length and eloquence of their public prayers.

This is like someone who prays in the King James language publicly but speaks like a New Yorker normally.

G. Campbell Morgan said, “*When a man is away from his wife and the journey is short, the letters are short. The farther he is from his wife, the longer the letters become.*”

“*Some people must be a long way from God because their prayers are so long.*” (G. Campbell Morgan)

Notice the verdict from Jesus, “*These will receive a greater condemnation.*”

## **II. The huge, meager offering.**

Read *Mark 12:41-42*

How we treat money reveals the state of the heart, more than almost anything else can.

Jesus said in *Matthew 6:19*, “*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;*

*Matthew 6:20* but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.

*Matthew 6:21* For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. *NKJV*



Jesus contrasted the life of a poor widow verses the actions of the phony religious leaders who got rich off of widows!

Notice where Jesus was sitting, across from the temple treasury.

The Temple Treasury had thirteen brass treasure chests that were called **trumpets** because they were shaped like horns.

They were narrow at the top and were larger at the bottom.

When someone would drop large coins into the trumpet, there would be a large clanging sound.

The Mishnah taught that each of those trumpet shaped chests bore an inscription that designated what the offerings were for.

Jesus watched as the crowd dropped money into the treasury.

Remember, this is the last time Jesus would be at the Temple, before dying a criminal's death on a Roman cross, and He is people watching.

Think about this sobering, yet comforting thought, you and I are being watched by Jesus every moment of our lives.

Jesus saw many rich people putting in large sums of money and then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little.

*As Jesus watched the worshipers make their deposits, what did He really see?*

***Matthew 6:1*** "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

***Matthew 6:2*** Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. NKJV

Giving is a part of our worship, but it seemed these people were making a show out of their prayers and their offerings.

Worship is supposed to be **intimate** and vertical towards the Lord only, even when we gather together corporately, we should not make a public spectacle of worship or giving.

The Temple Treasury would have been especially crowded at that time because it was the week of Passover.

Jesus was not impressed with these people who were making a show of their offerings, but as Jesus watched, He noticed something that did made His heart happy.

Notice, "***Then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little.***"

The life of widows during New Testament time was hard.

The clothing she would have worn were probably tattered and torn. In fact, Jesus made it clear just how poor she was.

Jesus used a specific word which meant she was continuously destitute, and she dropped two tiny coins in the offering that were worth very little, but the offering was all she had.

It is said these two coins represented 1 % of one day's wages.

A person would need 100 x more than this offering per day to be able to maintain an average life.

Jesus saw this widow's gift after He taught about the greed of the scribes who were **devouring** widows' houses.

### **III. How Jesus felt about the huge, meager offering.**

Read *Mark 12:43-44*

Last week we said, "*The Lord is not asking us for religious rituals and ceremonies, or religious service, as a way of earning His favor.*"

The Lord wants those things offered to Him by us, as an overflow, because we love Him.

Notice what Jesus said about the widow's offering... ***This poor widow has put in more than all those who have given.***

Jesus did not say she put in more than any **one** of them; He said she put in more than **all of them** put together.

Last week, Jesus told the scribe the first commandment was found within the Shema, to love God with all of our hearts.

This poor widow was practically showing the Shema, in life.

***Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!***

***Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.***

This widow was loving God with all she had.

When the widow offered her two coins into the Temple Treasury's trumpet, they were so thin they would not have made a **sound** when they landed on the shekels of the rich.

Everyone else there that day gave out of their abundance, but she gave sacrificially, and it was all she had.

Many hear this account and think that the temple was no richer because of the widow's gift.

While everyone else saw rich people give and thought they were the important ones, Jesus considered the poor widow's sacrifice as important, because she gave everything!

Jesus has His own economy and set of mathematics.

Jesus is all-knowing so He knew the exact number of shekels, the exact number of denarii in the treasury that day.

With Jesus, two parts of one penny, is equivalent to **billions**. Because the widow gave from her poverty, she gave all she had, without concern for her future needs, so, Jesus honored her gift.

This widow had to trust the Lord to provide for her needs, and because she did trust Him, she offered Him everything.

John Calvin said, “*For with God it rates less for a rich man to give a moderate sum from a large mass, than for a poor man to exhaust himself in paying out something very small.*”

#### **IV. Practical Application.**

Witness Lee said, “*God’s economy is God’s planned administration to carry out His eternal purpose....*

*God’s household administration to dispense the divine riches of the Triune God as life and life supply into His chosen and redeemed people... ”*

If you watch the news at all lately, the economists are reporting that the world is heading into financial chaos. Rising interest rates, fuel prices, and inflation are all causing fear and anxiety.

As Christians, this world is not our home; we are citizens of heaven and **ambassadors** of Christ as we live in this world.

Of course, we should be wise with our expenditures and investments, but the Lord’s economy is so different than ours; Jesus can take very little and make it much within His economy.

Remember, at this point of the ***Gospel of Mark***, the cross was a few days away and Jesus is at the temple for the very last time.

*What catches Jesus’ attention?* A poor widow woman who gives all to worship the Lord.

Jesus values our giving; whether we are offering the Lord our time, talent, or treasures, He sees the heart and motivation.

When I pay a bill to a company, the company I owe the money to doesn't care about my attitude or gratitude; they simply want to get paid. But the Lord wants our hearts above all else!

***2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. NKJV***

Our worship of the Lord should cost us something.

David wanted a threshing floor that belonged to another man so he could build an altar to God. The man wanted to give it to him.

***2 Samuel 24:24 "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.***

***2 Samuel 24:25 And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. NKJV***

The threshing floor David bought is the **very spot** where Solomon would later build the Temple and it was the place where **Jesus was standing** as this widow gave her offering.

We need to realize that the Lord can do great things with tiny offerings. God's mathematics are so different than ours.

The Lord does not need our money, He wants our hearts. But Jesus knows our hearts are connected to our wallets, so He instructs us to worship Him through giving.

In His economy, two parts of one penny can buy the cattle on a thousand hills. Two little coins and the heart that gave them meant so much more than the other offerings to the King.

One day Jesus is going to say to the widow, “*I saw what you did!*” None of our sacrificial giving or service will be forgotten.

What this widow did by “putting in all she had” in the treasury, was not lost on Jesus as He literally went from the temple towards the judgment hall of Pilate and to place called Calvary.

When we trust the Lord and offer Him what we have because we trust Him; it shows trust and faithfulness.

Trust and faithfulness happen as we rest in the Lord and accept what He says is truth, which is our love response to Him.

God’s economy is different. In God’s economy we are given “life in all its fullness” and it is **not based** on what we do, or how hard we work, or how long we work.

We can’t earn God’s love; it is a gift of God so no one can boast.

Worship is telling the Lord what He is worth to us. How we respond in worship and giving of our time, talent, and treasures reveal what we **really** believe about the Lord and His kingdom.

The Lord is the supplier of all we need and all we have...

Ultimately as Witness Lee said, “*God’s household administration to dispense the divine riches of the Triune God as life and life supply into His chosen and redeemed people....*”