

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon January 17, 2021  
Luke 21: 1 – 4 - "The Glorious Freedom of the Pure Heart"

45 Then, in the hearing of all the people, He said to His disciples, 46 "Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, 47 who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, 2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. 3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; 4 for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

5 Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, 6 "These things which you see--the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." 7 So they asked Him, saying, "Teacher, but when will these things be? And what sign will there be when these things are about to take place?"

I. Introduction

- a. Mt 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God."
- b. 1 Jn 5:21 "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."
  - i. In today's text we see a poor widow with a pure heart, freed from the sinful entanglements of material idolatry. Christ our Lord holds her up as an example for all the world to emulate. If we are to be like her, it seems we must be broken loose from all the idols that still blind us and bind us. We children of God will eventually come to hate the idols we currently love and coddle, but will we come to cast them aside in disgust or will God rip them away before we learn to hate them? Another way to look at this: what idols do you want to take with you to your grave?

II. Today's sermon: Luke 21: 1 – 4 "The Glorious Freedom of the Pure Heart"

- a. V1 – The rich and their gifts
- b. V2 – The poor widow and her two mites
- c. V3 – The comparison: the poor widow gave more than all
- d. V4 – The rich gave from their abundance
- e. V5 – The poor widow gave out of her poverty
- f. Questions to know, love and obey God

III. V1 – The rich and their gifts

- a. "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury"
- b. "The rich"
  - i. Luke transitions from the prior rebuke of the scribes directly into this section. The scribes were those who devour widows' houses, those who appear wealthy with their robes, feasts and notoriety. So, when Christ looks up and sees "the rich" and then goes on to compare with the destitute widow, the immediate context naturally brings to mind scribes and other corrupted leaders amongst the rich. Yet, there were many types of rich in that culture, so the focus. With "the rich" is upon a group

of people who have an abundance of wealth and possessions, but with the knowledge of widespread corruption as background.

- ii. Henry “He had just mentioned the barbarity of the scribes, who devoured *poor widows*; and perhaps this is designed as an aggravation of it”<sup>1</sup>
- c. “their gifts”
  - i. No description of the gifts is given in Luke, but when given by the rich, the idea is of bigger gifts.
  - ii. Mk 12:41 “and many who were rich put in much.”
  - iii. These are the things that the eyes of the flesh notice. But, later we will see how God values our offerings to Him.
- d. “the treasury”
  - i. What is this place? Bock “Thirteen trumpet-shaped receptacles in the temple forecourt by the Court of Women served to collect freewill offerings that were used to underwrite temple worship ... [but] may, however, refer to the room by the Court of Women where such receptacles are found Gifts brought to this room were offered for a variety of reasons”<sup>2</sup>
  - ii. These funds may also have been used to care for the poor. So, it may have been unusual for a very poor and destitute widow to give here.
- e. Does it necessarily require faith to give offerings to God if you can afford to live without that offering?

#### IV. V2 – The poor widow and her two mites

- a. “and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites.”
- b. “Poor”- this descriptor for poor is used only here in the NT. It appears she’s the poorest of the poor.
  - i. Bock “It can be an intensive term: the “very poor””<sup>3</sup>
- c. “Widow” – Not only does she have no wealth, she has no family. She is bankrupt and alone.
- d. “Two mites” – a very small amount
  - i. Bock “Lepta were small copper coins, the smallest currency available, whose value was one-eighth of a penny (BAGD 472; BAA 958). Ellis (1974: 239) computes the value as one one-hundredth of a denarius, thus one one-hundredth of the average daily wage—a very small sum indeed”<sup>4</sup>
- e. Does it require faith toward God to give an offering when you cannot afford to live without it?
- f. Seeing such a contrast between the rich and their large gifts and this woman giving almost nothing, an observer could feel embarrassed for her, and perhaps

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<sup>1</sup> Henry, M. (1994). [\*Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume\*](#) (p. 1898). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>2</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [\*Luke: 9:51–24:53\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1645). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>3</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [\*Luke: 9:51–24:53\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1645). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>4</sup> Bock, D. L. (1996). [\*Luke: 9:51–24:53\*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 1645). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

wonder what good two mites could do. Even the kindest heart would be unlikely to see the true value of her gift.

- V. V3 – The comparison: the poor widow gave more than all
- a. “So He said, “Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all.”
  - b. This is a shocking statement. Surely, the opposite is true. All of these rich people, with their large gifts, have put in very much wealth. And, this penniless widow has put in an amount almost negligible, almost nothing. What can be purchased with two mites?! But, these are the thoughts of the mind that walks by sight. We must discover that our Lord values our offerings not by their weights in the measures, but by the faith of the giver. Faith is the treasure.
  - c. So, we discover those with faith are the wealthy ones. What we temporarily own in this life does not define reality. True wealth is that which cannot be taken and which cannot be destroyed, and we can possess this true wealth only by faith in God. He is the treasure.
    - i. Mt 6: 19-21 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
    - ii. Mt 16:26 “26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”
- VI. V4 – The rich gave from their abundance
- a. “for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God”
  - b. Such an offering does not require faith in God. It does not stretch them to a place where they feel they must depend upon God’s provision. They can still look to their own abundance. They can still rely upon what they can see. Such giving poses no threat to their idols.
  - c. This should serve as a warning to all who are rich in this world:
    - i. Calvin “those who possess greater abundance, and who have received from God larger communications, are reminded that it is not enough if in the amount of their beneficence they greatly surpass the poor and common people; because it is of less value in the sight of God that a rich man, out of a vast heap, should bestow a moderate sum, than that a poor man, by giving very little, should exhaust his store.”<sup>5</sup>
- VII. V5 – The poor widow gave out of her poverty
- a. “but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.”
  - b. She has given her entire livelihood. This leaves her wondering about her next meal. Such a gift requires great faith. Such a gift to God shows that she is sure He will indeed provide her daily bread. Such great faith in God, untangled from the idols of this world, grants this destitute woman sure confidence in God’s kindness and wealth, so she knows she’s not poor while in God’s care. She’s

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<sup>5</sup> Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [\*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke\*](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 113–114). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

alone, and yet she knows her Father will never abandon her. She can give joyfully, with courage, fully trusting God. This is the glorious freedom of the heart purified from idols and fixed upon God, and such joyful courage flows throughout all the life of such a worshiper, not just when writing checks or handling material wealth.

- c. This should be a great encouragement to all who are materially poor:
  - i. Calvin “the poor, who appear not to have the power of doing good, are encouraged by our Lord not to hesitate to express their affection cheerfully out of their slender means; for if they consecrate themselves, their offering, which appears to be mean and worthless, will not be less valuable than if they had presented all the treasures of [the greatest king].”<sup>6</sup>

#### VIII. Questions to know, love and obey God

- a. The widow’s broken life has led her to a broken spirit
  - i. Ps 34:18 “The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.”
  - ii. Ps 51:17 “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, You will not despise.”
  - iii. Do you respond to tragedy and suffering like this woman?
- b. The widow’s humility
  - i. Proverbs 18:12 “Before destruction the heart of a man is haughty, And before honor is humility.”
  - ii. If the Lord watched your life, would He hold up your actions as examples to follow? Such honor comes only as the fruit of humility.
- c. The widow’s faith
  - i. Hebrews 1:1,6 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ... 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”
  - ii. Do you have faith in God, sure of His love and care over you in every situation, every day? Are you like this woman who trusted God to reward her as she diligently sought Him?
  - iii. Was she after material stability or the reward of God Himself?
- d. The widow’s courage
  - i. Psalm 27:1-4 “The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? 2 When the wicked came against me To eat up my flesh, My enemies and foes, They stumbled and fell. 3 Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, In this I will be confident. 4 One thing I have desired of the Lord, That will I seek: That I

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<sup>6</sup> Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [\*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke\*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 113). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

may dwell in the house of the Lord All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the Lord, And to inquire in His temple.”

- ii. Do you see any evidence of fear of man, fear of starvation, fear of death, fear of loss, in this widow? Do you have this kind of courage?
  - iii. Are you like this woman, like the psalmist, worshiping the Lord, with that single heart-focus: to behold the Lord, to enjoy Him, to live in His Presence? With courage the sweet fruit of such a life of worship?
- e. The widow’s pure heart
- i. This woman’s power is her pure heart, just like David in Psalm 27:4.
  - ii. Where are the entanglements in your heart? Are you like this widow, no longer relying upon people or material wealth (or any idols) in an impure way?
  - iii. Mt 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.”
  - iv. 1 Jn 5:21 “Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”