

Widows in Luke's Gospel

Widow with Two Mites – Sacrificing (5)

Reading: Luke 20 v 45 – 21 v 6

In Luke 21 the widow is sacrificing, she gave until it hurt. The Lord Jesus uses her as an illustration to teach his disciples about values, about the different values of heaven and earth. The Lord Jesus is going to teach the lesson learned by Samuel in 1 Sam 16 *“for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”* Luke has much to say about this subject in his gospel e.g. Luke 7 ‘a sinful woman who anointed the Lord’s feet’, Luke 10 ‘Mary sitting at the Master’s feet’ and Luke 12 ‘a Pharisee and a publican praying in the temple’. In the story of the widow with 2 mites and the surrounding verses there are lessons on values; we find 3 assessments from the Lord Jesus.

20 v 45 – 47 **Scribes** - Men full of self-importance, but the Lord Jesus’ assessment v47 *“the same shall receive greater damnation”*. The lesson to learn is that life is a preparation for eternity, a temporary assignment.

21 v 1 – 4 **Rich Men** - The assessment of the Lord Jesus v3 *“this poor widow hath cast in more than they all”*. The lesson to learn is that God gives resources to us that we might fulfill His purpose.

21 v 5,6 **Goodly Stones** - Men wondered, but the assessment of the Lord Jesus v6 *“there shall not be left one stone upon another”*. The lesson to learn is that human achievements, at their best, are passing / temporary.

Scribes

The Lord Jesus gives a warning against the scribes, men full of their own importance, desiring the place of prominence and popularity, who enjoy being looked up to and admired. So many like them in society today. Like the rich farmer in Luke 12, these men lived for the things of earth; they were unaware of eternity and that this life is but preparation for the next. They did not understand that at the end of life on earth, the only thing that matters is a relationship with the Lord Jesus. They were living for this life, their ambitions were for earth and in their desire to achieve their goals v47 *“Which devour widows’ houses”*. Man has not changed; still today men live for time with no thought of preparing for eternity. Their ambitions are still on earth and in their desire to achieve goals, the weak, the vulnerable, anyone may be exploited. This should not be a characteristic of a Christian who should live a life preparing for eternity.

At the end of a life lived for time alone the Lord Jesus says v47 *“the same shall receive greater damnation”*. A life given by God to prepare for eternity, the only question to assess success at the end of life is ‘What have you done with the Lord Jesus?’ We are made to live forever and yet many, like the scribes, lose it all in a moment. The scribes had their priorities, their values, their understanding of what is important all wrong. Position, fame, wealth, pleasure, influence, popularity at the end of life mean nothing without the Lord Jesus

It has been said that when you live in the light of eternity, your values change. As Christians we are ‘ambassadors for Christ’, we are here on earth on a temporary assignment from heaven and home. Do we live like this? Preparing for eternity?

Rich Men / Poor Widow

As the Lord Jesus spoke of the scribes, v1 *“he looked up, and saw the rich men”* (like these scribes) and he saw a *“poor widow”*. He saw the rich men *“casting their gifts into the treasury.”* The Lord noted that their giving did not hurt, they gave of *“their abundance”*. Mark would record that some gave much, but they had more left over. The Lord also took note of the giving, the sacrifice, of a poor widow woman. Perhaps a widow woman whose house had been devoured by the scribes. She had only 2 mites to give, but she willingly gave her all; this is sacrificial giving. David knew about sacrificial giving 11 Sam 24 v 24 *“neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing.”* The assessment of the Lord Jesus was v3 *“this poor widow hath cast in more than they all”*. Again we have a different estimation, a difference in values between the Lord and men. Men looked at what was given and took note Mark 12 *“many that were rich cast in much”*. The valuation of heaven is different, the Lord took note of what was left and assessed that the widow *“hath cast in more than they all”*; she had given her all in the service of God.

In this incident we can learn the principle of sacrificial giving, the test of resources. If at the end of life the only question that matters is ‘what have we done with the Lord Jesus?’, at the Judgement Seat another question is important, ‘what have we done with what God gave us?’ God has given to us resources – gifts, talents, opportunities, energy, relationships, time, money – do we use them for ourselves or to achieve the purpose God made us for. The answer to this question will determine our reward, our place, in eternity.

God has made us all different and given to us different resources. The widow had considerably less worldly riches than the rich men did, but in the assessment of heaven she gave more. What is important is not who we are or the resources given, but what we do with them. The Lord Jesus taught more on this subject in Matt 6 v 19 *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

The widow might have thought why bother? a) I only have 2 mites, what is that compared to the riches of others? or b) the scribes and Pharisees will use for themselves, not the glory of God, but she considered her gift a sacrifice to God and the Lord Jesus took note.

Goodly Stones

As the Lord Jesus and his disciples left the temple it was pointed out to the Lord v5 *“how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts”*. Historians and writers from the time tell of the magnificence of this building, known as Herod’s temple. As the disciples pointed it out and wondered, the Lord Jesus gave his assessment v6 *“there shall not be left one stone upon another”*. Within a few decades the Roman legions would utterly destroy the temple.

The lesson to learn is that human achievements, at their best are passing, are temporary and are for this world only. In the light of this what do we rely on? what do we trust? what do we worship? Nebuchadnezzar came to know this truth. He said in Dan 4 v 30 *“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty”*, but God said, *“The kingdom is departed from thee.”* The rich farmer in Luke 12 trusted in his own achievements, *“soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years”*, but God intervened.

If human achievements are failing and passing, what should we trust in and what should we value? Psalm 20 v 7 *“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God”* and Psalm 125 v 1 *“They that trust in the Lord...abideth for ever.”*