

**Mark 12:41—44**

June 2, 2019

Almost 25 years ago D.A. Carson, the accomplished New Testament scholar wrote a little book called, *Basics for Believers*. I recommend the book if only for the forward. He wrote tongue in cheek and said,

“I would like to buy about three dollars worth of gospel, please.

Not too much – just enough to make me happy, but not so much that I get addicted.

I don’t want so much gospel that I learn to really hate covetousness and lust.

I certainly don’t want so much that I start to love my enemies, cherish self-denial, and contemplate missionary service in some alien culture.

I want ecstasy, not repentance; I want transcendence, not transformation.

I would like to be cherished by some nice, forgiving, broad-minded people, but I myself don’t want to love those from different races – especially if they smell.

I would like enough gospel to make my family secure and my children well behaved, but not so much that I find my ambitions redirected or my giving too greatly enlarged.

I would like about three dollars worth of the gospel, please.” D.A. Carson

None of us would be so coarse as to say it that way....but I would be lying if I said those kind of thoughts never enter my mind.

They do.

I want a comfortable Jesus.

I want to follow a Jesus who is comforting but not challenging. I want to follow a Jesus who is not just out for my good but what I think is good too. I want to follow a Jesus who does radical things for me and does not ask radical things of me.

I don't think I'm alone.

We can all want a comfortable Jesus, but Mark has introduced us to a Jesus on his terms, not ours. Mark has introduced us to this man from Galilee who gives more than we could imagine and asks more of us than we expect.

This Jesus is anything but comfortable.

Today we see him again and hear again that we are to take this Jesus on his terms.

Jesus is not just a man to observe, watch, marvel at, or learn from. He is unique. He is a man that everyone must respond to. The story of his life is news, good news that we all must respond to.

**"The beginning of the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Mark 1:1**

Today, we get another chance to respond to Jesus Christ the Son of God.

We all need to respond to Jesus. Christians respond by continuing to follow him; Others respond by starting to follow him.

How will you respond?

His offer is an offer of life, not comfort.

PROP: Don't hold anything back.

We go again to the temple and take our place beside Jesus. He is going to let us borrow his eyes this morning to see something we would have never noticed if we were there.

“And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup> And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. <sup>43</sup> And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. <sup>44</sup> For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.” Mark 12:41-44

PRAY

What Jesus saw  
What Jesus said

## 1. What Jesus saw (that no one else did)

After an exhausting day of verbal jousting with all of the Jewish religious elite—Jesus sits down. The Pharisees, the Herodians, the Sadducees and the scribes all took their turns and were rebuffed.

Jesus chooses a seat across from what Mark called “the treasury.” We need to take the scene in so that we can try and see through his eyes.

We are with Jesus in the temple and it would have been the most crowded place for 1000 miles. The temple court would be teeming with people in for the Passover Celebration.

The normal population of Jerusalem was something like 50,000 people. At Passovertime, Jewish pilgrims would come to Jerusalem causing the population to swell to a whopping 250,000 people. If we were there in the temple complex that day we would have thought all 250,000 of them were there.

All of the pilgrims making the trip would come to the temple not only to purchase their sacrifice, but also to give money. Some paid the temple tax. Some paid a freewill offering.

Whatever the case, BIG MONEY is flowing into the temple as Jesus sits down.

The interesting and noteworthy thing is the way that the people gave. The temple had 13 inverted brass shofar shaped horns connected to containers. So when pilgrims dropped their coins in, they would tumble

and rumble and crash through the trumpet into the box.

The more someone gave the louder the noise—remember there is no such thing as paper money in Jesus' day. No one was throwing in Jacksons or Franklins.

There are literally tons of coins clanging.

This is what Mark reports to us in

Vs. 41,

And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums.

But someone does something that no one sees. No one except Jesus. If we were there, we would be taken with the spectacle and miss the person that Jesus sees. Jesus lends his eyes to Mark and we see her too.

Vs. 42,

“And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.”

This nameless widow drops two ‘lepta’ coins into the offering box. These lepta were the absolute smallest coin in circulation.

We don't know if she had any other mouths to feed besides her own. We don't know if she had children or parents to provide for. We do know that as a

widow she would have a hard time scratching out a living.

One lepta could feed her for a day—she gave two.

In other words, the only way the gift could have been more insignificant is if the widow dropped one lepta into the container. It is not a stretch to say that it was the most insignificant gift of the day.

The temple's accountants may have ignored the widow's offering. Her gift was less than a rounding error.

What the accountants missed, our savior did not.

He sees what no one else did. He also says something that no one else could.

## **2. What Jesus said (that no one else would)**

This quiet act of devotion was completely unnoticed by all the important and wealthy people that day. Everyone but the most important person in the universe.

No act of devotion—no matter how small—is missed by Jesus. Not with this widow and not with you either.

The disciples didn't see what she did, and if they did they wouldn't understand the significance. So Jesus called them all in.

Jesus explains,

Vs. 43,

<sup>43</sup> And he called his disciples to him and said to them,  
“Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more  
than all those who are contributing to the offering  
box.

Did you hear that?

Jesus says she gave ‘more’—he is measuring  
something besides money.

Look again at what he said,

‘this poor widow has put in more than all those who  
are contributing to the offering box.’

Not just more than the others.  
But more than all the others combined.

Everything about this woman shouted—Less, less,  
less.

- Her appearance: less.
- Her offering: less.
- Her social standing: less.

But Jesus said—MORE.

Jesus has a different measuring system. His economy  
works differently. He values different things than we  
do.

How are a couple lepta more valuable than all that flowing gold and silver?

Again, Jesus explains.

Vs. 44,

“For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

What does this mean?

James Edwards summed it up perfectly by saying,

“In the temple, others gave what they could spare, but the poor widow spared nothing.” James Edwards

Vs. 44

This is one of the few places that that ESV obscures the meaning just a bit in the translation. Where the translators say,

‘she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.’

Literally it should be rendered,

‘she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole life.’

Jesus does not mean she died as she gave her meager gift.



What does he mean?

She held nothing back. She gave all she had.

‘She put in everything she had—her whole life.’

The reason she gave more than all the rest is because she did not hold back. This poor widow was devoted to God.

In giving those thin coins, she was saying with her actions, “All I have is yours, All I am is yours, my future is in your hands.”

At this point you might expect the sermon to take a turn to talk about giving money. But there is more here than just money.

She held nothing back.

This anonymous widow ‘gave her whole life.’ She expressed her complete devotion to God by giving him all she had.

She held nothing back.

This passage is not so much about money—as much as completely devoting ourselves to God.

We must hold nothing back.

As valiant as this widow’s action was—the point is not—go be like the widow.

Not supposed to empty our bank account and give everything and become destitute.

We have to take another step. Our eyes must be fixed on Jesus and what he says and what he does. We need to get to know him.

Jesus is the most vital person in this story. Our eyes are not to stay on the widow but the savior.

- The widow metaphorically put in her whole life.
- The savior put in his whole life, for keeps.
- She gave everything she had.
- He gave up everything he was.
- She gave from her poverty.
- He impoverished himself.

She had two lepta and held nothing back.

He had all things and held nothing back.

The biggest giver in this episode is Jesus. The most generous person in this story is Jesus.

No one really understood it yet, but Jesus was about to give everything, his whole life. This was Tuesday—Jesus would be arrested on Thursday and die on Friday.

A mere 48 hours from this conversation, Jesus will be arrested and tried; beaten and crucified; and die.

He held nothing back. Even his whole life.

Like the widow, no one at the time of his death could rightly perceive what was happening. It appeared Jesus was caught in a maelstrom of chaotic events and evil people.

But throughout Mark Jesus was clear. He came for the express purpose of dying. Of holding nothing back.

When Jesus and the 12 started this journey, Jesus told them all how it was going to end.

“See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. [34] And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.” Mark 10:33–34

Jesus came to give.

He came to give and he held nothing back, not even his own life.

He came to give it to you.

Think of the generosity of Jesus.

- Mankind had rebelled against God.
- Mankind had shaken his collective fist at God.
- Mankind had tried to take the place of God.
- Mankind had pretended there was no God.

To these people he generously gave himself.

Even the disciples, his best friends on earth, they ran from him when his hour of tribulation dawned. They ran from the one who had come from them.

To these people he generously gave himself.

And yet, Jesus came and held nothing back for people who didn't deserve it, were not looking for him and didn't care about him.

The widow held nothing back and people were indifferent. Jesus held nothing back and they hated him for it.

To these people he generously gave himself.

What should our response be to generosity like this?

To give ourselves to Jesus and hold nothing back.

Don't hold anything back.

It is at points like this where we must face the reality that Jesus is worth it. We must understand that we must not hold anything back.

In light of his grand generosity with us—we are to give ourselves to him without holding anything back.

Are you?

Is that a category for you?

We can think that when we hold something of ourselves back, we are protecting ourselves from disappointment, distress and disillusionment.

When we do that, we recast Jesus in who we want him to be and not who he really is. We hold ourselves back and subtly remake Jesus in our own image.

And we reason that Jesus does not want us to sacrifice too much.

And we hold a little of ourselves back.

And we can reason and say things to ourselves like, “Jesus doesn’t want me to be THAT radical, that unbending.”

And we hold a little of ourselves back.

We can think, “Jesus can’t mean that I should forgive those people who hurt me.”

And we hold a little of ourselves back.

We think, “Jesus can’t mean I should sacrifice that much of my time for others.”

And we hold a little of ourselves back.

We think, “Jesus can’t mean that I should be that generous with my money—its my money!”

And we hold a little of ourselves back.

We think, “Jesus can’t mean that I should overlook that many sins committed against me.”

And we hold a little of ourselves back.

We think, "Jesus would never ask me to do something THAT hard."

And we hold a little of ourselves back.

We think, "Jesus would never ask me to suffer like that."

And we hold a little of ourselves back.

We think, "Jesus would never ask me to really hold nothing back. Its unreasonable."

And we hold a little of ourselves back.

We hold ourselves back and subtly remake Jesus in our own image. The Jesus of the Bible becomes the Jesus 'I' want.

I see this in me.

The Jesus I want is easy to follow.

Following my Jesus always makes me happy and he never makes me feel uncomfortable.

Following my Jesus does not mean that I have to hate covetousness, greed, lust or self-centeredness.

Following my Jesus does not mean that I have to love my enemies, esteem self-denial or contemplate how I am to give my life away for the good of others.

The Jesus I follow makes me more popular, not less; he gives me the gift of happiness, not the gift of repentance; he calls me to transcendence; not transformation.

The Jesus I follow lives to help me be cherished on social media by nice, encouraging, applauding, affirming people who think like me; he would never ask me to look foolish or out of step.

The Jesus I follow is present enough to make my family secure, my children well-behaved, but he is not so present that I find my ambitions redirected or my standard of living greatly changed.

The Jesus I want is easy to follow.

But that is not the Jesus we have met along the way in the book of Mark.

I can't prescribe what it looks like for you to follow Jesus and not hold anything back. I can't tell you what that means for you in your daily lives.

What does it look like for you?

I have a proposal for all of us here this morning. I can imagine that when the widow took her money and dropped into the offering box, I can imagine she was afraid.

What if each of us did ONE THING a month for Jesus that makes you afraid?

I'm not talking about selling all your possessions and going out to the far flung countries of the world. I'm talking about something in your daily life—what if once a month we did ONE THING for Jesus that makes us afraid.

ONE thing that makes you afraid.

I'm not talking about a foolish stunt or an irresponsible action. I mean something that takes you right out of your comfort zone and causes you to trust the Lord in ways you haven't in a while.

Something hard.  
Something out of the ordinary.  
Something uncomfortable.

We are all different. Different things cause us to be afraid.

You might think that you don't have much to offer and the Lord doesn't need your contribution. True.

He does not need your time, talents and treasures—you need to sacrifice them for Jesus.

What is ONE THING that makes you afraid? Don't think extravagant, grand gestures, think daily decisions of extravagant devotion.

What makes you Afraid and puts you in a position of need at the mercy of Jesus is going to be different than others.



What if like the widow we looked to do ONE THING hard for Jesus each month?

What might that look like?

- Really opening up your life to a Christian friend—where you struggle, need help.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Sacrifice sleep for prayer.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Putting your phone away.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Ask someone very different than you to coffee.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Take a break from social media to pray more.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Fight your anger ferociously.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Give a caregiver the gift of uninterrupted conversation.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Speak ONLY to build others up and not to tear down.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Start going to small group and get to know other imperfect, messy people like you.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Talk about Jesus with your unsaved friends.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Give generously to the mission of the gospel at this church.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Confront your own complaining.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Invite old friends and new friends over for dinner even if you serve hot dogs and the house isn't perfect.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Be impossible to offend.

ONE THING—Each month.

- Make friends who are unbelievers and show them the difference Jesus has made for you.

ONE THING—Each month.

You might not think that any of that stuff sounds very hard or that it will make much of a difference. You have it exactly backwards.

Our efforts might be small and poor but he measures our sacrifice. Like the widow, its not the amount but the sacrifice.

The eyes of Jesus are on you. His gaze is upon you to bless you. He is eager to celebrate those small and seemingly insignificant sparks of devotion.

And he is watching you ready to call the angels to his side and say, “Hey look! She isn’t preoccupied with FB, but is having coffee with an unsaved neighbor!

‘she is giving out of her poverty and is holding nothing back.’

OR Woah! He has turned off the game to be really serve his family.”

‘he is giving out of his poverty and is holding nothing back.’

What is your ONE thing this month?

PRAY

*Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the*

*blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. **Hebrews 13:20-21***

