

Series: Jesus' Unexpected Heroes
“A STRUGGLING WIDOW”
Sunday, September 27, 2009 AM Perth Bible Church
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INTRODUCTION:

This morning, we will continue our exploration of what Holy Scripture tells us constitutes a hero in the eyes of Jesus our Lord and Savior. **This morning we will look at what prompted Jesus to see a hero in a poor widow and how – in her example – any one of us can be His hero too!**

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:41-44

I.) AN UNEXPECTED **AUDIENCE** (v. 41)

- How easy it is to just go through the motions of our lives, rituals, religion and worship.
- How easy to assume that the only eyes following you are fellow parishioners.
- How easy it is to miss or forget that in fact Jesus is quietly but carefully observing us – from the inside out, and in the most seemingly mundane and routine functions.
- Yet, there He is! And He is the only One who has the authority to watch over and judge us; as well as the infinite insight to know the heart – attitudes, thoughts, motives and expectations – behind all that we do.
- So it was on this day past, and so it remains today. *Jesus is conscious of you and your heart, are you conscious of Him and His? How do you measure up?*

II.) CONTRASTS IN **GIVING** (vv. 41-44)

- Both Mark and Luke's Gospel accounts of this event immediately follow the recording of Jesus' admonition against the Scribes for being hypocritical showmen who publicly appear religious and generous while privately taking financial advantage of struggling widows.
- Therefore, we have here an exhortation from our LORD that addresses and contrasts the forms of religious devotion that do and do not please Him.
- Further, be careful to note that the differences between the two are NOT in action or quantity, BUT rather *in Spirit and in Truth* (John 4:24).
- Consider the example of a pig and a chicken: “Once upon a time, a pig and a chicken were walking down a village street. They came upon a church sign which was advertising a bazaar and breakfast which was going to be in a few days. At the bottom of the sign the menu read – ‘Ham & eggs will be served from 6:30 – 8:30 am.’ The chicken turned to the pig and said, ‘See! Even we can help the work of the church!!!’ ‘Yes,’ the pig said, ‘but yours is only a contribution, mine is a SACRIFICE!’”

A.) The Way of **Flesh**

- This is a religion, devotion, giving that is according to the natural inclinations, desires, and false wisdom of our sinful human nature. As such, it is . . .
 - 1.) **Proud** (v. 41)
- The way of the flesh is to give in such an amount and way as to increase our own esteem –

whether before others or simply in our own eyes and fuzzy feelings.

- The way of the flesh looks only at what is given (not what is needed or what *could* be given).

2.) **Demonstrative** (Mt. 6:1-4)

- The way of the flesh likes others to know and appreciate it's apparent worship and generosity.
- A good deed performed with a motive to make oneself appear bigger, better, or more important than others or perhaps even their own reality.
- Sometimes, this may be done in very obvious and flamboyant ways.
- Other times, however, it may be attempted with greater craft and subtlety.
- **ex.)** The person who goes to lengths to keep his or her financial tithes private and unknown, but then goes to equal lengths to let others know the lengths they go to keep their financial tithes private and unknown.
- **ex.)** Or, similarly, the person who is quick and unashamed to perform good deeds quietly, in private, and without notice, but after wards is not shy to slip the incident into a conversation or public prayer.

3.) **Duty** (2 Cor. 9:7)

- The way of the flesh is to worship, give, and/or serve according to what is necessary, required, or expected.
- It may be acted out with great frequency, consistency, and genuine commitment. But it is not from the heart. It is not something done freely or cheerfully.
- **How can one tell the difference?** It's quite simple. *Would you do the same thing, the same way, to the same degree and with the same commitment if nobody (even God) required or expected it?* If the honest answer is no or in any way 'not quite' or 'not exactly' then it is an action of duty.

4.) **Limited & Comfortable** (Mt. 19:16-22; Lk. 6:24)

- The way of the flesh is to actively, even willfully and passionately act, give and serve BUT only to the extent that it remains within one's own self-determined limitations and comfort zone.
- It says, *"I'll be happy to do 'this', just don't ask me 'that'."* Or, *"Sure I'll 'blah, blah, blah', just so long as you don't ask or expect me to also 'blah, blah, blah.'"*

re-list/summarize "The Way of the Flesh"

B.) The Way of **Spirit** (vv. 42-44)

- By stark contrast there is "The Way of the Spirit." This is the way that rejects the inclinations and temptations of our sinful human nature and instead uncompromisingly embraces the inclinations and ways of the Holy Spirit of Christ!
- Jesus holds up this poor widow as a hero because her act of worship and service is according to "The Way of the Spirit."
- *Her physical gift itself contributes next to no practical value whatsoever to the temple or its ministry. YET, the value of her devotion and the pleasure it brings our Lord is immeasurable!*
- **Why? Because her worshipful giving is:**

1.) **Humble** (v. 42)

- The poor widow just wanted to be able to give unto the LORD, no matter how little she may

have to give.

- She gave what she could (and so much more), even knowing how much others would consider her gift worthless, pointless, or even embarrassing or perhaps so little as to be disrespectful.
- She ignored the criticisms and scoffing of the flesh and the world and instead embraced gratitude that she had the ability to give anything at all.

2.) **Sacrificial** (vv.43-44)

- The poor widow gave unto her Lord not simply what she had to spare or didn't need. She gave beyond.
- She gave not generously, but sacrificially. In fact, she gave literally everything!
- **Luke 14:33**
- The human, practical value of what she gave was so miniscule that most of us would not even bother to make the effort to bend over and pick it up off the ground if we found it and could have it for free. Even worse, most of us would (and have) make fun of others who would value something so small and insignificant.
- Jesus, however, is observing and judging us not on the basis of our practical, quantitative contributions but on the value of the true gift of the heart that our contributions represent to Him.
- A question that has often been asked that we must continually consider regarding our worship, service and gifts to the Lord is: **“Are you giving – no matter the amount – in a way that costs you little, or are you giving in such a way that it really costs you?”** (*repeat*).
- You see, **when Jesus observes our acts of worship and devotion, He looks NOT at the quantity of our offering itself (be it time, finances, energy, emotion, activity), BUT RATHER at the degree of personal, self-less sacrifice that it represents for us individually?**
- *Put another way, Jesus is less interested in what we give and more interested in what we have kept for ourselves.*

3.) **Trusting** (vv.43-44)

- The way of the Spirit involves worshipful giving that, as a result, requires us to have to trust in God for our own provision and blessing.
- Sadly, even today, we too often do the opposite. We hold tightly to our time, talents and treasures as security for ourselves and 'trust' God to provide for His church and ministry without us.
- It's one thing to give financially and then go out to the restaurant. It's another to give financially knowing that the only way you are going to eat lunch afterward is if the Lord provides.
- It's one thing to give of our time and energy when we know we'll still have plenty left; or that we won't need any more that day; or that we'll still make it home in time for the start of the big game/TV Show/etc. It's quite another to give of our time and energy fully knowing that it will mean we don't get done when we want to or that it will take all the time and energy we naturally have even though there is still much more we need it for.
- Mother Teresa used to say, *“If you give what you do not need, it isn't giving.”*

4.) **Cheerful** (2 Cor. 9:7)

- Finally, the poor widow exemplifies *pure* worship. Not only does she exhibit genuine humility, sacrifice, and trust in God but she does all of this voluntarily, freely and cheerfully!
- *How often can the same be said of us?*

- **Illustration:** *Two wealthy Christians, a lawyer and a businessman joined a tour group that was going around the world. Their pastor asked them if they would take pictures of anything which they thought was unusual. In Korea, as they were traveling, they saw in a field a boy pulling a crude plow, while an old man held in his hands the handles. The lawyer was amused by this strange sight and took a picture.*

Commenting to the guide, he exclaimed: “That is an unusual sight, I suppose they are very poor.” “Yes,” answered the guide. “They are poor, that is the family of Chi Noui. When the church was being built in this area they were excited to give something to help it along, but they had no money so they sold their only ox and gave the money to the church. This Spring, they are taking turns pulling the plow themselves.” The lawyer thoughtfully responded, “That must have been a real sacrifice.” The guide said, “They did not call it that. They thought it was fortunate that they had an ox to sell.”

When they returned home, the lawyer took the picture to the pastor. As he sat down in the pastor's study he said forcefully, “I want to double my pledge to the church. And please give me some plow work to do. I have never known what sacrifice for the church meant. A converted Korean taught me. I am ashamed to say I have never yet given anything to my church that cost my anything.”

OUR OPPORTUNITY:

Reality shows that, proportionally, those with the most give the least and those with the least give the most.

Numerous studies from different communities across the globe have consistently shown that whether one is talking about giving treasure, talent, or time:

- 20% of members give 80% of all that is received
- 30 % give the other 20%
- 50% give nothing, ever.

When Jesus observes us this morning, today, next year what will the worship of our time, treasures and talents show Him – that we practice a religion after the way of the flesh or worship Him according to The Way of The Spirit?