A WIDOW'S OFFERING

Mark 12:35-44
Key Verse: 12:44

“They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

When man becomes flesh God is not pleased. At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees and Sadducees were hypocrites. In reality they were nothing but party animal men. They were wicked and evil. They had to be judged and condemned even as God had judged the men and women of Sodom and Gomorrah. Despite them, Jesus taught the basic truth of God to them. In the last passage we saw there was one young teacher of the law who did not agree with the sayings of the Pharisees and Sadducees while they debated with Jesus. The young teacher of the law agreed with Jesus' words, for the words of Jesus were none other than the words of God. Jesus was greatly comforted by the young teacher of the law. Through the encouragement of this one sincere young man, Jesus could keep his great shepherd heart for the Pharisees and Sadducees. So in this passage Jesus tells them how to understand spiritual realities and how they can please God most.

I. Jesus is the Son of David (35-40)

While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts he asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the Son of David?" (35) In fact, Jesus questioned why the Pharisees did not call Jesus Christ the great-great-grandson of David after many generations instead of calling him the Christ. In this verse Jesus points to the blind spot of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were traditionally religious people. They were nationalistic people who wanted to see the nation of Israel resurrected and triumphant over the world power nations. They were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. But they did not believe the word of God.
We rarely see people like the young teacher who believe in the Bible genuinely. For example, when we study Luke's Gospel there was a very old man called Simeon. He was looking for the coming of the Messiah. In his constant prayer he was convinced by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the baby Messiah. Finally, he enjoyed embracing the baby Jesus in his arms when Jesus came to the temple for the presentation to God (Lk 2:28). Simeon praised God, saying, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk 2:29-32). Simeon was an old man. The baby Jesus was a month-old infant. But Simeon had spiritual eyes to see that the infant boy was the Christ. "The Christ" meant he is God's anointed King, promised to come to save all men from their sins. It looked ridiculous for old man Simeon to bow down and worship a baby. But Simeon could worship him and he was also happy to die because he had seen the Christ. In short, Simeon was a spiritual man of God.

But the Pharisees and Sadducees were tightly earthbound. They were a kind of waiting people. But in reality, they were not waiting for the coming of the Messiah. They were waiting for a descendant of David to rise up and become king and lead them to victory against the Roman oppressors. When God's time came, God sent his one and only Son into this world as the Savior of the world. But they saw Jesus with material eyes and utterly despaired how the baby in a manger could be a Savior of the world. To their assumption, this baby Jesus in the manger of a stable could not defeat even one Roman soldier. So they rejected him. John 1:11 says, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." God sent the promised Messiah to save them from their sins. But they rejected him and despised him because they had no God in their hearts. They were different from Simeon. Simeon could see the baby Jesus in rags as the Savior of the world. The religious leaders had to grasp spiritual realities. They had to open their spiritual eyes to see man both physically and spiritually.
In order to help open their spiritual eyes, Jesus asked a question in verse 35b. "How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David?" In this question Jesus points out the blind contradiction of the Pharisees. They taught that Christ would come from one of David’s descendants. They were sincere about the coming of the Messiah. But there was a problem. They taught habitually. They had an expectation of a military savior. But they did not believe in their hearts the core of the Bible teaching that Jesus would come as Lord and Savior of the world. When Jesus came, they saw Jesus with material eyes and rejected him.

The Pharisees and the Sadducees did not believe that Jesus, who came as the son of a carpenter, is the Savior of the world. On the other hand, King David believed that the Messiah would come from among one of his descendants. David believed this in his heart and also worshiped the promised Messiah who was to come in his heart, instead of thinking that "he is one of my great-great-grandsons after many generations." Look at verse 36. "David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: 'The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" David was a king. There was no one above him except God. But he believed the word of God concerning the coming Messiah and worshiped him. And David called him "Lord," which means that the coming Messiah is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. David did not compare his kingship with that of the coming Messiah. Jesus asked the Pharisees again, "David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?" (37) In this verse, Jesus understood their logic. David was one of the ancestors and Jesus is one of his descendants born 1,000 years after David. But David called him Christ the Lord, the coming Messiah and Savior of the world. Jesus' question was very simple. But we can see Jesus' broken heart toward the Pharisees. What they were doing was hoping for the coming of the Messiah. What they knew was that the Savior of the world would come to save his people from their sins. But they abandoned God and did not
believe in the coming of the Messiah. Jesus really wanted them to believe first what they taught to others in the synagogue.

When we become material men there is a great danger that we become party animal men. When we become material men there is a great danger that we become merciless politicians. When we become material men there is a great danger that our hearts become calloused toward spiritual reality, as a leper does not feel pain, even though his whole body is rotting moment by moment.

We must think for a moment about what it means to believe that Jesus is Christ the Lord. Look at verse 36 again. "David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" The Lord God made a solemn promise to the Messiah. To paraphrase, he said, "Obey me and wait on me, and I will make all the enemies bow down before you." Christ came into this world as the Son of God. But he did not use his divine nature to exalt himself or gain worldly possessions and authority. Instead, he obeyed the will of God for him to shepherd the lost and wandering flock of God, and to call the rebellious religious leaders to come back to God and find their holy mission through the Son. The religious leaders did not repent, but only attacked him until they had him arrested, tried and finally crucified on the cross. They thought that they had defeated their political enemy and rescued their political positions. But God kept his promise. God accepted Jesus' death for the sin of the world. God raised Jesus from the dead and made him the Risen Christ, giving him the victory over the power of sin and death. Finally, God exalted the Risen Christ and set him on the throne at his right hand. From now on, it is the Christ who has the authority to forgive our sins and give us the inheritance of eternal life and the kingdom of God. In this way, Christ has been made Lord of all. Like David, we must not see the Christ humanly as the great great grandson of David. We must know that he has been established by God as Lord and Savior of the world. May God help us to worship him, and honor him with our lives by living as his servants on earth.
II. She put in everything she had (41-44)

Jesus and his disciples came out of the temple and they were sitting opposite the temple (41). The picture of the temple was in their sight. One of his disciples said to him, "Look, teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" (13:1) Jesus' disciples were mostly rural people. One of them saw the temple building. The pillars of the buildings were so magnificent and spectacular. He wanted to run to one of the pillars and kiss it. More than that, he wanted to be one of the priests in the temple. At the same time, he was very reluctant to be one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Temple workers wore gorgeous robes like royal subjects in the ancient palace. Jesus' disciples were wearing blue jeans which had more than 30 patches. We can understand the young disciples' vanity and desire to be gorgeous. But from Jesus' point of view they had no spiritual insight. The temple buildings were all desecrated and burned down in 70 A.D. by General Titus of Rome. Jesus' disciples did not know that the things of the world perish, spoil and fade away in the matter of time. They did not know the kingdom of God, which is forever, and where there are no tears (Rev 21:4).

Another shocking sight to the disciples was the bundles of money. There was an offering box in the temple. Rich people stood proudly and pulled bundles of money out of their robes and slowly put them in the offering box. When Jesus' disciples saw the bundles of money they felt crazy. They had never touched such huge amounts of money with their hands. But the rich people were putting big bundles of money into the offering box as if they were giving potato chips to a child. The disciples must have been swayed by the money because they suffered enough from poverty. It is natural as young people that they liked bundles of money.

Jesus understood his disciples very well and he did not rebuke them, saying, "Why do you love money so much?" Instead, he told
them a very short story. Look at verses 43-44. “Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.’” In this short story we learn the heart of Jesus. We learn the value system of Jesus. We learn that heart is more important than bundles of money.

James 1:27 says, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” When we read the Bible, there are many stories about widows. God wants us to care for them. It is because the widows lost their husbands, whom they loved so dearly. They have no security. In the ancient time, the wage for a woman was very low. But widows are great when they have faith in God. After World War II, there were 100,000 widows in Korea because they lost their husbands during the ideological war. But 97% of them did not remarry. They raised their children with all their hearts. Most of their children are now professors in many countries and key members of the Korean government.

On the other hand, there are worldly widows. As soon as their husbands die, they become helpless and depend on money. One woman’s husband died by committing suicide, leaving behind four children. The man committed suicide because he could not find the meaning of life in working hard after his children had grown up. He had provided well for his wife, so that she needed nothing. But she told her future in-laws, “I’m not going to leave any inheritance, because I can’t trust any of my children with my money.” We cannot judge her for her selfishness. We must understand that a widow must depend on money as her security.

Here we must think about Jesus’ value system. Jesus said that the rich gave out of their wealth. But the widow put in everything—all she had to live on (44). Here we learn that the rich people put money in the offering box proudly. But the widow put her heart in the offering
box, overcoming her fear by faith. What God wants is not abundant sacrifice but a broken heart.

We have to think about the widow’s heart-offering. The widow’s heart-offering can be our repentance to God. Once, David sinned against God greatly. But he came to God and asked his forgiveness of sins as he felt all his bones were melted. He said in Psalm 51:17a, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart...” God accepted David’s broken heart and continued to keep him as the king of his people. The widow’s heart-offering can be our faithfulness. There was a beautiful girl student. She studied medicine and became a medical doctor. Medical studies are not easy. But she never missed one testimony writing or one-to-one Bible study. As a result, God blessed her and gave her a prince-like husband. She is still faithful to pray that her husband would be a great servant of God. Without heart nobody can be faithful.

The widow’s heart-offering can be one-to-one Bible study. Whenever the people of the world seek physical pleasure only, God does not leave them alone. God judged people in the time of Noah. God judged the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. God judged the people of Rome. The USA is in a situation that her people must apologize to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah for their perversion. So nobody wants to meet God through one-to-one Bible study. It is not easy to carry out one-to-one Bible study. But we must give our hearts to one-to-one Bible study to please God. We should not think that our time, our heart and our faith are useless to God. We must have faith in God that our heart-offering can be our five loaves and two fish which God can use to feed this generation with the overflowing word of God.

In this passage we learn that we must know what we are doing through spiritual understanding. We must also give our hearts to God. May God grant all American young people the heart of Christ.