



Introduction – The Danger of Appearances

One of our commentaries did not even mention this event. It jumped right over it to future events starting in vs 5. Let's not do that. Until the future arrives, until our world ends, vs 1-4 teach us much about living the Christ life.

When Jesus recounts this story about the widow, he has less than one week to live; perhaps two or three days. This event must be more important than the four verses that tell the story.

In fact, Jesus is teaching us a valuable lesson about how to invest our lives until our world ends. With that in mind, let's look at the text -

- People are often impressed by what looks big: large checks, ornate robes, public prayers.
- But appearances can deceive—religion can mask greed.
- Jesus is about to expose the difference between show and sacrifice.

First: Note the Problem— Religion Gone Wrong (20:45–47)

- The scribes love the appearance of religion, long robes, greetings, chief seats.
- They "devour widows' houses" even as they pray long prayers.
- Picture it: those who should protect the vulnerable are exploiting them.

And so, in this text, Jesus answers the question hanging in the air. If the scribes present false religion, what does true devotion look like in God's eyes? Wow, what an important question, and, in the last few days of his life, Jesus is going to take the time to answer it.

In the midst of all the destruction Jesus is about to detail, he first shows us how to live. (Don't you just love Jesus all-the-more, the more you read the Bible?)

Second: See Jesus' Focus - A Poor Widow and Two Small Coins (21:1-2)

- Jesus shifts from condemning false leaders to watching real worshipers.
- He moves his attention from the scribes to a widow.

God's concern for the plight of widows is shown in the Law (Deuteronomy 14:29), the Prophets (Jeremiah 49:11) and the Writings (g Ps 68:5 and 146:9). Many stories in the gospels show Jesus' concern for the widow's existence (Lk 7:11-17). In the early church, widows were cared for and named as a group that needed to be included in the distribution of food (Acts 6:1-6).

The previous chapter finishes with Jesus denouncing the scribes, to the point of accusing them of '*devouring widows' houses*'. Scribes would often have done the equivalent of legal work for the community and perhaps had been unscrupulous in their dealings with widows – as a group without power or influence.

No one else may have paid attention to this widow, but she has Jesus' attention.

He must be sitting near the Court of Women, where 13 horn-shaped receptacles collected the offerings of widows (Deut 16:10-11). It's about 200 feet square and the first major court inside the Temple. It's called that because it was as far as women could enter into the Temple grounds. (See **map** at the end of the sermon notes)

It was a bustling area and often where rabbis and teachers taught (See John 8:20).

The temple was structured in such a way that giving was a fairly public act. In the Court of Women, worshippers publicly placed their offerings in one of thirteen trumpet-shaped offering chests. There was no paper money in Jesus' time so the loud clanging of gold, silver and copper coins ensured everyone knew what someone was giving.

*In contrast to the scribes' ostentatious, false piety,
the woman's humble gift barely tips the scales in the market.*

- Chuck Swindoll

- The wealthy give large sums, visibly, from their surplus—impressive amounts but low sacrifice.
- A poor widow slips in quietly and gives two copper coins—all she has.

- To men, her gift is negligible. To Christ, it is priceless.

Third: Learn Heaven's Economy of Sacrifice (21:3–4)

- The woman puts in two lepta, in our economy, two pennies.
- It is the smallest denomination in Jewish currency (MacArthur).
- Jesus declares: *"She put in more than all of them."*
- Why? Because God measures giving not by the amount but by the cost.
- The rich give for show, this woman gave anonymously.
- The rich give out of their abundance. She gave out of her poverty.
- The rich give leftovers; the widow gives her life.

Thought: What more can life take from this woman? It has taken her husband. Has it taken her children? What does she have left to give, but herself.? And yet, what we deem to be God's subtraction actually adds value to our lives.

IMP: *"she...put in all she had to live on"* – live = bios = "all her living" = her life. In effect, Jesus says, *"She has put in her life."*

- The scribes consume widows; this widow consumes herself in devotion.

Fourth: Let's Apply the Way of the Widow

- a) This text teaches us a lot about sincere/genuine giving. But its context teaches us as much.

This event happens at the end of an exhausting day in which Jesus has denounced the religious leaders and is about to announce Jerusalem's destruction.

In the middle, he sees the rich (*plousios/those who have enough*) and the poor (*penichros/destitute*). V 4 = (*ptochos = begger*).

In Luke, we've seen how the Jews interpreted blessing. God blesses the rich. The poor are cursed. That's why Jesus' listeners are so surprised the rich man goes to Hell and Lazarus goes to heaven.

Instead of teaching her the Lord's grace, the Jewish religious system had reduced this woman to begging. Misrepresenting God is the very reason the Temple and Jerusalem will be destroyed (vs 5-9 & 20-24).

Read MacArthur -

How different from Christ and the gospel message.

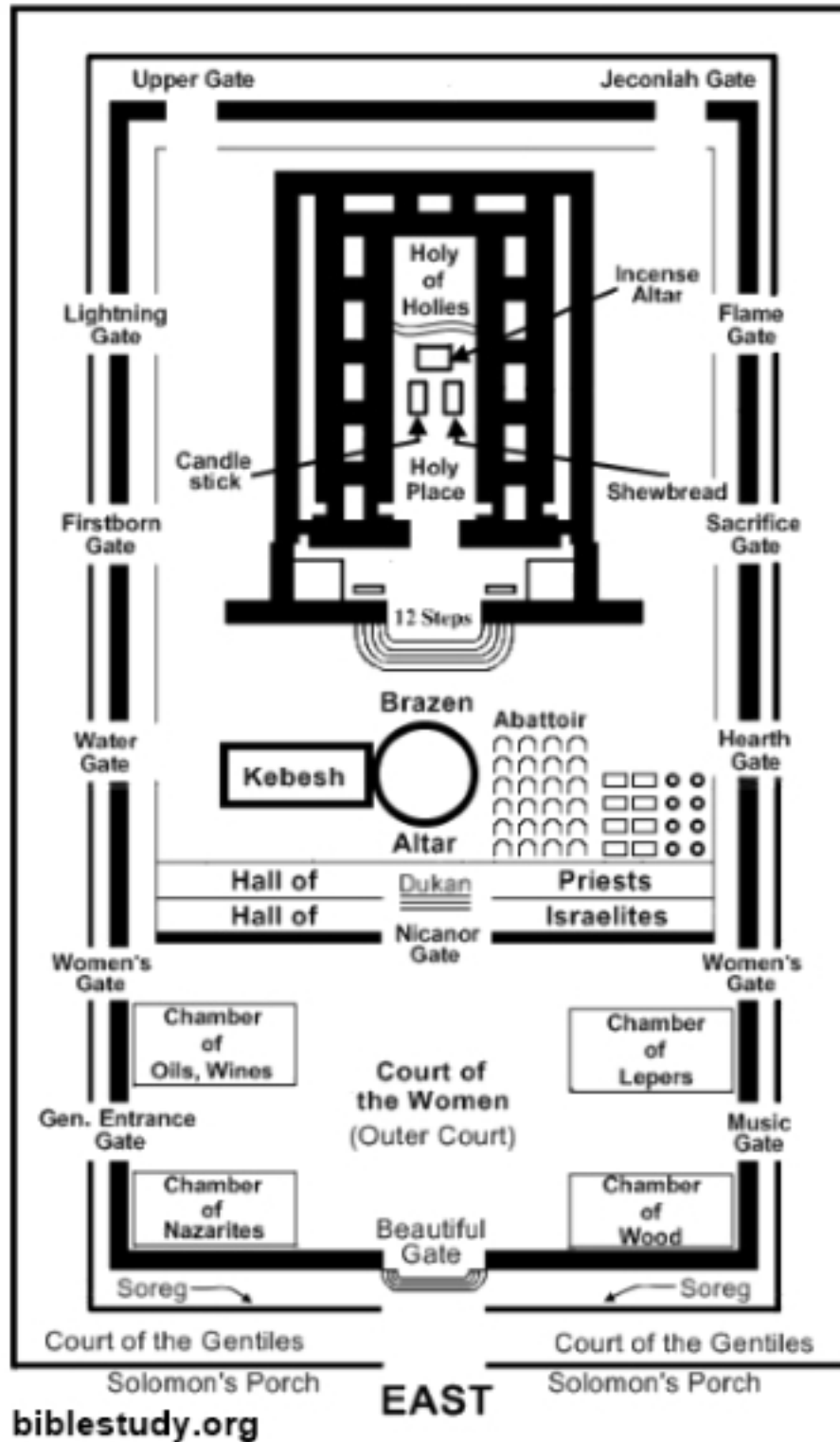
- b) Here we glimpse Christ Himself, who will soon give all He has, not from surplus but from His very life.

APP: Will we follow Christ in the giving of ourselves?

Conclusion: The religious leaders consumed widows. Religion consumes people. Jesus was consumed on the cross and that is sufficient to set you free. But what is freedom? What do we do with this "one wild and precious life?" (Mary Oliver)

Whether it's giving money or acts of service, we offer our lives to Jesus with the full confidence more life is given us, abundant and eternal. And that, friends, is *the truest offering*.

Interior of Jerusalem's Temple



The widow's offering (Luke 21:1–4) took place in the Court of Women, the most public space of the Temple where both men and women could gather. Here stood the treasury

with thirteen offering chests. Jesus had just condemned the scribes for devouring widows' houses (Luke 20:47), and in this very court He pointed to a widow who gave not from abundance but from poverty, offering her whole life to God. The location underscores the contrast: the religious leaders consumed widows, but this widow was consumed in devotion to the Lord.



Observation

(What does the text say?)

1. Who are the two groups of people mentioned in verses 1–2?
2. What does Jesus notice about the rich and about the widow?
3. What does the widow give, and how much is it worth?
4. What is Jesus' evaluation of her gift compared to the others?
5. What word does Jesus use to describe her giving (v. 4 – "all she had to live on")?

Interpretation

(What does the text mean?)

6. Why does Jesus highlight the widow's offering immediately after condemning the scribes in 20:45–47?
7. What does this story reveal about how God measures devotion?
8. Why does Jesus say the widow gave "more" even though the amount was so small?
9. What does the use of the word *bios* ("life") in v. 4 suggest about the meaning of her gift?
10. How does this event foreshadow Jesus' own offering on the cross?

Correlation

(Where else does the Bible teach this?

This is an important step, because if the Bible doesn't teach my interpretation anywhere else, my interpretation is probably wrong.)

11. Deuteronomy 10:17–18 – How does God's heart for widows and orphans relate to this passage?
12. Psalm 68:5; Psalm 146:9 – What titles for God connect to His care for the vulnerable?
13. Mark 12:41–44 – How does Mark's account emphasize the same lesson?
14. 2 Samuel 24:24 – How does David's statement about costly sacrifice compare with the widow's gift?
15. Romans 12:1 – What does it mean for believers to present their whole lives as an offering?

Application

(So what?

How should we live this truth?)

16. What does this passage teach us about how God evaluates our giving?
17. Where am I tempted to give God my "surplus" rather than my "self"?
18. How can I practice sacrifice—not just with money, but with time, energy, and love—in ways that honor Christ?
19. What small act of trust (my "two coins") is God calling me to today?
20. How can our church/community encourage each other to value faithfulness over appearances?

Closing Thought

The scribes consumed widows. This widow is consumed by God. No wonder Jesus condemns the scribes and applauds the widow. Her heart is his. His heart is hers. In just a few days, He Himself would give the truest offering, his life. And now, out of this text, he calls us to do the same.



Mon, Sept 15th. Read Luke 20:47. It is never about us. The widow's gift comes immediately after Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of religious leaders. False religion takes. True faith gives. Christ's faith gives you life. How about you? How do you use your faith? Are you taking or giving? Who might you serve today and how might you serve them, out of a life given to Jesus? Remember, you're not trusting the person you serve, you're trusting the Person who has sacrificially, wholly, proven his love to you.

Tues, Sept 16th. Read Luke 21:1. The Temple's brass trumpets drew attention to the wealthy and these gifts looked impressive. But Jesus didn't see it like that. In a world that prizes applause from people, Christ's gaze penetrates to our hearts, to motive and sacrifice. Where are you tempted to "look big" before others? Are you focusing more on appearance than on sincerity? Ask the Lord to give you a heart that lives for the applause of One. That will change everything.

Wed, Sept 17th. Read Luke 21:2. The widow's gift barely made a sound, if any, but Heaven heard. Heaven heard! Her small gift (humanly speaking) carried eternal weight because it represented her whole life. In a world that overlooked her, Jesus noticed. He delights in the quiet, hidden offering of whole-heart love. What small, unnoticed act of obedience might reveal and represent your heart today? What time, energy, or love can you place in God's hands for His glory alone? (Knowing you can never outgive God).

Thurs, Sept 18th. Read Luke 21:3–4. Heaven's math is different than ours. God's economy values sacrifice, not amount. In this passage, the rich gave from surplus; the widow gave her very life (bios). Jesus will soon do the same, pouring out His life for the world. Where do you cling to your surplus instead of surrendering in sacrifice? Are you willing to trust Christ enough to give in a way that reflects his sacrifice? Ask the Lord to prioritize your values so that you are giving your life, not leftovers.

Fri, Sept 19th. – Read Romans 12:1. The widow foreshadows Christ who will soon give His whole life. Her coins point to His cross. Because He was consumed for us, we can trust him with our lives. Our truest offering is not money but ourselves, and those irreplaceable parts of ourselves; time, energy, love. When we give our “one wild and precious life” (Mary Oliver), we find it returned in abundance, eternal and overflowing. Is God asking you to surrender something? What would your whole-life-offering look like today and each day this week?