

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

### 53. His Last Words and Actions in the Temple

#### Mark 12:35-44

Parting words, parting actions, carry tremendous weight. When we're about to go away we want to make sure that we take care of business; leave important things in working order — We want to make sure to communicate our heart on things that matter.

Tonight, we are looking at the last actions and words of Jesus on the Temple Mount before he would be nailed to a Roman Cross outside of the walls of Jerusalem.

**Mark 12:35–44 (CSB) <sup>35</sup>While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, “How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? <sup>36</sup>David himself says by the Holy Spirit: The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’ <sup>37</sup>David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How, then, can he be his son?” And the large crowd was listening to him with delight. <sup>38</sup>He also said in his teaching, “Beware of the scribes, who want to go around in long robes and who want greetings in the marketplaces, <sup>39</sup>the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets. <sup>40</sup>They devour widows’ houses and say long prayers just for show. These will receive harsher judgment.” <sup>41</sup>Sitting across from the temple treasury, he watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. <sup>42</sup>Then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. <sup>43</sup>Summoning his disciples, he said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup>For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had—all she had to live on.”**

Since His entrance into Jerusalem on the Sunday before Passover, Jesus spent every day teaching on the Temple Mount. The people would show up early in the morning and they would hang on His every word. Every day the Pharisees, the Herodians and the Sadducees would pelt Jesus with questions in the hope that Jesus would answer in a way that would give the Roman governor grounds to arrest Him and crucify Him.

The religious leaders had asked all their questions. *What about taxes? What about the resurrection? What is the greatest commandment?*

Now Jesus asks them a question — not to trap them — but to get to the heart of the matter. He essentially asked them *“Do you really know who I am?”*

He gets at this with a two-part question.

PART ONE — Verse 35

**Mark 12:35 (CSB)** <sup>35</sup>While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he asked, **“How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David?”**

**(NIV)** <sup>35</sup>... **“Why** do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David?

They said it because the belief that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David is firmly rooted in the Old Testament Scriptures

(2 Sam. 7:8–16; Ps. 89:3–4; Isa. 9:2–7; 11:1–9; Jer. 23:5–6; 30:9; 33:15–17, 22; Ezek. 34:23–24; 37:24; Hosea 3:5; Amos 9:11).

Before Jesus gets to the second part of His question, He tells them what David had to say about the Messiah — and that what David said about the Messiah was not a matter of human opinion.

**Mark 12:36 (CSB)** <sup>36</sup>David himself says by the Holy Spirit:

David was speaking about the Messiah by the Holy Spirit! What David had to say about the Messiah bears the weight of divine revelation. It was to be received as the very Word of God on the matter. Like Isaiah, Jeremiah or any of the prophets in the canon of Jewish scripture, David was a prophetic witness to the true nature of the Messiah. Jesus wanted them to see that according to the inspired authors of the Old Testament scriptures the Messiah was far more than a man who would help them realize their narrow nationalistic hopes.

**Mark 12:36 (CSB)** <sup>36</sup>David himself says by the Holy Spirit: The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’

The Bible Knowledge Commentary unpacks the question. Speaking by the Holy Spirit — speaking the authoritative word of God — David said:

**The Lord** (Heb., *Yahweh*, God the Father; cf. Mark 12:29) **said to my** (David’s) **Lord** (Heb., *’Ādōnāy*, the Messiah): **Sit at My** (the Father’s) **right hand**, the place of highest honor and authority, **until** (or “while”; cf. 9:1; 14:32) **I** (the Father) **put Your** (the Messiah’s) **enemies under Your** (the Messiah’s) **feet**, bringing about their subjugation (cf. Josh. 10:24; Heb. 10:12–14).

The inescapable fact is that by inspiration of the Holy Spirit **David** called the Messiah **Lord**. This raised a problem: **How then**, or in what sense, **can** (*estin*, “is”) **He** (the Messiah, David’s Lord) **be his** (David’s) **Son?**<sup>1</sup>

## PART 2

**Mark 12:37 (CSB)** <sup>37</sup>David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How, then, can he be his son? And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

Paraphrase — “How can David’s descendant be David’s Lord?”

Jesus’ rhetorical question pointed His listeners to the only valid answer: the Messiah is David’s Son *and* David’s Lord at the same time. This strongly implies that the Messiah is both God (David’s Lord) and man (David’s Son)

**Romans 1:3–4 (NLT)** <sup>3</sup>The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David’s family line, <sup>4</sup>and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord.

**2 Timothy 2:8 (NLT)** <sup>8</sup>Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach.

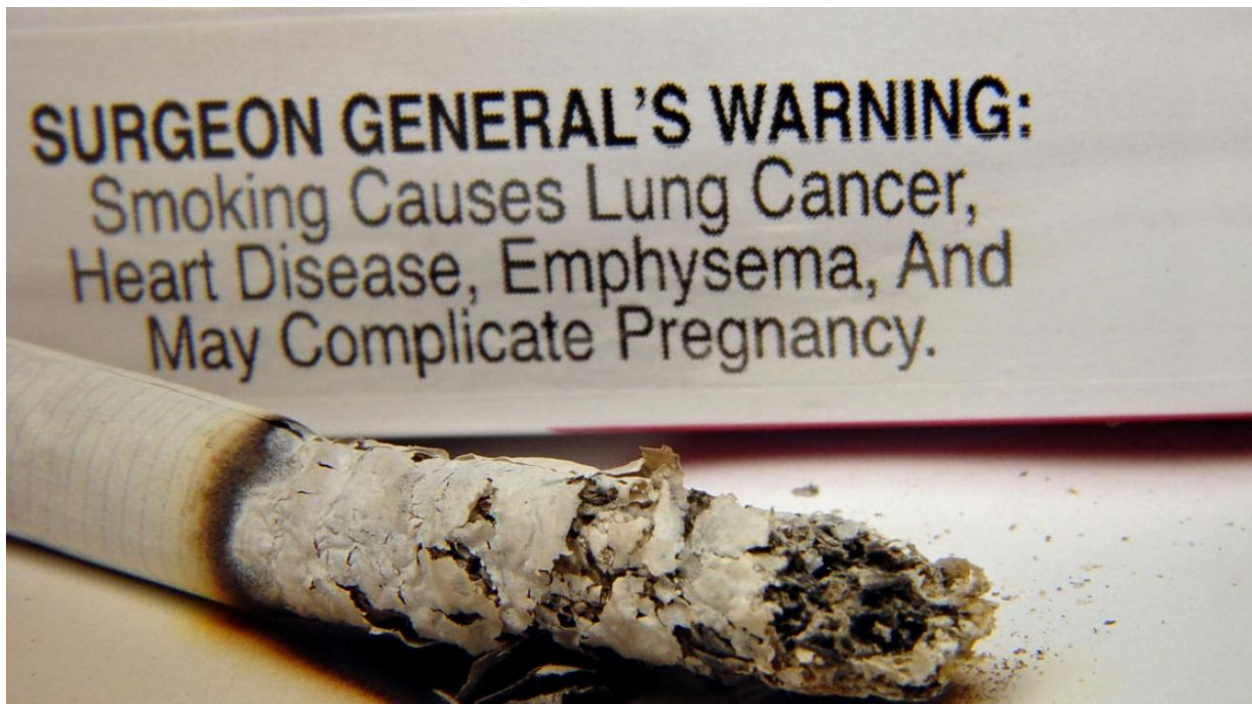
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<sup>1</sup> Grassmick, J. D. (1985). [Mark](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 165). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

He will restore the future Davidic kingdom on earth

**Mark 12:38–40 (CSB)** <sup>38</sup>He also said in his teaching, “**Beware of the scribes,**

Think of the warning on the side of a pack of cigarettes



Jesus saw the malignant motives of the scribes and Pharisees in the way an oncologist sees cigarettes.

**Mark 12:38–40 (CSB)** <sup>38</sup>He also said in his teaching, “**Beware of the scribes, who want to go around in long robes and who want greetings in the marketplaces, <sup>39</sup>the best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at banquets. <sup>40</sup>They devour widows’ houses and say long prayers just for show. These will receive harsher judgment.”**

Their behavior was driven by the same broken values that drive our broken world — all of which were antithetical to the heart and the ways of the true and forever

King — and antithetical to the ethos of His Kingdom. These are the things that drive fallen culture.

**1 John 2:16 (NKJV)** <sup>16</sup>*For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.*

These are the very things that we have been rescued from.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)** <sup>17</sup>*This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!*

**Brian Brodersen** — *The gospel comes to us right where we are, wherever we are, but it doesn't leave us there. The gospel pulls us out and brings radical transformation.*

**Mark 12:41–44 (CSB)** <sup>41</sup>**Sitting across from the temple treasury, he watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. <sup>42</sup>Then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. <sup>43</sup>Summoning his disciples, he said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup>For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had—all she had to live on.”**

**REMEMBER** — It's believed that the Gospel of Mark is essentially Peter's eyewitness account to the life of Jesus. Peter was struck that the last thing Jesus did at the Temple was watch people in the act of giving. They remembered seeing who it was that Jesus was watching; that Jesus noticed what they gave and how they were giving. They were also struck by the fact that the last words Jesus would speak on the Temple Mount had to do with those who were giving, what they gave and how they gave.

We've all heard the saying: *“Money speaks.”* When we say that we think of the way money can influence people and outcomes. But the saying: *Money speaks* is true in a way most people have never considered. Money reveals the state of the heart as few other things can. Jesus said

**Matthew 6:21** *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Jesus wanted His followers to know what love for God looked like — and He did it by way of contrasting the life of one poor widow against the phony religious actions of the religious leaders who got rich off of widows!

**Mark tells us **WHERE** JESUS WAS**

**<sup>41</sup>Sitting across from the temple treasury**

The Temple Treasury consisted of thirteen brass treasure chests that were called *trumpets* because they were shaped like inverted horns. They were narrow at the top and enlarged at the bottom.<sup>2</sup> According to the written collection of the Jewish oral traditions known as the Mishnah, each of those trumpet shaped chests bore an inscription that designated what the offerings were for: “‘New Shekel dues,’ ‘Wood,’ ‘Frankincense,’ ‘Gold for the Mercy-seat,’ and, on six of them ‘Freewill-offerings.’<sup>3</sup>

**Mark also tells **WHAT** JESUS WAS DOING**

**he watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury.**

Have you ever sat at an airport or a shopping mall and just watched people? It is so fascinating — so intriguing!

Jesus is the great observer. There are a number of times that we read in the gospels phrases like *Jesus saw the crowds*, or *Jesus saw* people in need.

The very last thing Jesus wanted to do before He left the temple precincts for the very last time before dying on a Roman cross was to go to a specific location and watch a specific crowd: He watched the givers. None of them had any idea that they were being watched by God who had become man.

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<sup>2</sup> James Hastings, ed., *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1973), p. 748.

<sup>3</sup> Mishnah, Shekalim XI.5.

This is so incredibly relevant to each of us this evening and it fits so beautifully with what we learned about Jesus yesterday morning. You and I are being watched in every moment. We're being watched even when we're not conscious of it. Every action — and the motive behind it — is seen and known by the One to whom we will give account.

Mark tells us **WHAT JESUS SAW** —

***41.... Many rich people were putting in large sums. 42Then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little.***

What did Jesus see as he watched the worshipers make their deposits?

**FIRST** — He saw *Many rich people... putting in large sums*. We want to be careful to not read into this that Jesus disapproved of all the offerings of all those who were wealthy. But we need to personally take to heart what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount

*Matthew 6:1 The Message* — *Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you **don't make a performance out of it.***

Jesus had to make it a point to tell the citizens of His Kingdom that worship is not intended to be a spectator event.

*Matthew 6:5 The Message* — *“And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers,*

Worship is intimate and vertical — even in a corporate context. There was in the day of Jesus, and still are today, a lot of spectators when people gather to worship. The Temple treasury would have been especially crowded on that day in **Mark 12** because it was the week of Passover.

The Passover crowd would have been oohing and aahing over the generosity of the rich — but Jesus wasn't. AGAIN — the words of Jesus in **Matthew 6**



*Matthew 6:1 The Message — “Be especially careful when you are trying to be good so that you **don’t make a performance out of it**. It might be good theater, but the God who made you won’t be applauding.*

Jesus wasn’t impressed. But as Jesus watched He noticed something that **did** made His heart applaud — I think that in His heart He gave a standing ovation!

**42 Then a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little.**

The life of widows in Biblical times was hard. Virtually everyone in the Temple treasury would have known that she was a widow because widows wore distinctive clothing — and in her case they were probably tattered and torn.<sup>4</sup> Jesus made it clear just how poor she was. He used the specific word that means she was *continuously destitute*.

**dropped in two tiny coins worth very little**

Her offering was two coins. These copper coins were so small, so thin, that they were called lepta — literally, “peeled” or “fine”.<sup>5</sup>

This tiny, thin coin was worth only **one four-hundredth** of a shekel — or about **one-eighth** of a penny.<sup>6</sup> In the day of Jesus it was 1% of a day’s wage.<sup>7</sup> Put another way — you needed 100 x more per day to eke out a living.

In 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish economy, the widow’s two lepta represented almost zero. Jesus saw this widow’s gift against the backdrop of the greed of the scribes who were devouring widows’ houses.

**Mark tells us WHAT JESUS SAID**

**43 Summoning his disciples,**

The first thing Jesus did was to **summon** the disciples

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<sup>4</sup> J. D. Douglas & Merrill C. Tenney. Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary.

<sup>5</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to St. Mark (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1966), p. 386.

<sup>6</sup> William L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 442.

<sup>7</sup> Guzik, D. (2013). *Luke* (Lk 21:1–2). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.



**Summon** = to authoritatively communicate a demand for the presence or participation of.

he said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup>For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had—all she had to live on.”

**THIS IS HUGE** — Jesus not only took note of the act of giving — He assessed their motives.

This poor widow was living out the Shema.

*Deuteronomy 6:4-5 Hear, O Israel (Shema Yisrael): The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

She was loving God with **all she was** and **all that she had**. When she slipped her two coins into the mouth of the “trumpet,” they were so thin and had so little weight that they wouldn’t have made a sound when they landed on the shekels of the rich.

**DON’T MISS THIS** — In reality, the temple was no richer because of her gift. But she was immeasurably poorer **because** she had given all! Everyone else in the Temple treasury saw rich people giving. Jesus saw a poor widow sacrificing!

I don’t know if you’ve ever heard the story of the chicken and the pig. A pig and a chicken were looking for work. They saw a church sign advertising a breakfast that was going to be held in a few days. At the bottom of the sign, it read “Help needed to serve breakfast with Ham and eggs. Apply for job here”. The chicken turned to the pig and said, “Hey let’s help out with this breakfast. I’m willing to give my eggs!” The pig said, “Ya — but yours is only a contribution, mine is a SACRIFICE.”

We so often think of giving in terms of “how much.” Jesus sees giving in terms of “how much is left.” She gave everything! Without a word she was saying to God, “I love you. Here’s my heart, my life. It’s not much, but it’s all I have.” She had

nothing to fall back on, nothing to rely on. She gave her next meal. She has nothing left. No more resources. No more savings. Yet she gave it to the God of all creation. And He took notice! In person!

Jesus had his own system of scales and weights. He knew the contents of the thirteen trumpets-shaped chests. He knew the exact number of shekels, the exact number of denarii. He knew exactly the weight of the heavy gold and silver. All of that was placed on one side of the heavenly scale — and on the other side he placed the two paper thin copper coins. On His divinely calibrated scales the massive load of what the rich had given gave way to the eternal weight of the widow's tiny offerings.

**QUOTE: JOHN CALVIN** — *“for with God it rates less for a rich man to give a moderate sum from a large mass, than for a poor man to exhaust himself in paying out something very small.”*<sup>8</sup>

The Last Supper and the Cross was looming before Jesus. Yet He goes out of His way to spend these moments in the Temple Treasury because He wants us to know what caught His eye there in the Temple Treasury. Jesus watched the rich give — and yet there was something in *what* this widow gave and *how* she gave that is important for us to know. By way of this widow Jesus shows us what He values in our giving.

**FIRST — When it comes to giving** of any kind (time, talent or treasure) God sees the heart; God weighs our motivation. When I write a check to the IRS, the IRS cannot care less about my attitude. It doesn't care if I give willingly or grudgingly, joyfully or painfully. All the IRS cares about is “give me your money!” God wants our hearts!

*1 Corinthians 13:3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

**SECOND — Giving that pleases God** is giving that costs us. Centuries earlier, King David exemplified this on the very spot where Jesus watched this widow worship

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<sup>8</sup> John Calvin, A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke and the Epistles of James and Jude, vol. 3, trans. A. W. Morrison (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 72.

God. David wanted the threshing floor of a Jebusite named Araunah so he could build an altar to God there — as well as the animals to sacrifice there. Araunah wanted to give them to king David. Here's what David said to the offer

*2 Samuel 24:24 No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing”.*

The threshing floor of Araunah is the very spot on which Solomon would build the Temple — was the very piece of real estate that Jesus was standing on — the very spot that this poor widow gave her last two lepta.

Giving that costs us is giving that pleases God.

**QUOTE: C. S. Lewis** — *“There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.”*<sup>9</sup>

**THIRD — God can do great things** with tiny offerings.”

This widow's gift — 1/8 of a penny — 1% of a day's wage in 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel given as a love gift to God has produced more for the kingdom of God and the advance of the Gospel over the two thousand years after that moment in **Mark 12** than we can calculate. Those two little coins and the heart that gave them have challenged and liberated countless men and women to give from their little or their much. Jesus taking note of this woman, taking note of what she gave and how she gave has turned those two thin coins into the giving of time talent and treasure that only eternity can calculate.

**THINK ABOUT THIS** — One day Jesus is going to say to her, “I saw what you did!” Not the least bit of sacrificial giving and service is forgotten by Jesus.

But there's even more here! The sight of this widow *“putting in all she had to live on”* was not lost on Jesus as He literally went from the temple towards the judgment hall of Pilate and to place called Calvary where He would give all He had to redeem and rescue fallen men and women.

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<sup>9</sup> “C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 67.

**LASTLY** — When it comes to giving, God is an “equal opportunity” employer. Anyone — poor or the rich, uneducated or educated, unknown or known — can give. When it comes to giving the question is not: Who do you know? How much have you accomplished? How much do you have? When it comes to giving the question is: **How** do we give? Grudgingly or willingly? **Does** our giving cost us anything?

**BEFORE I CLOSE** I want to move from thinking about giving on the personal level to thinking about giving in terms of the local church. It’s possible for a local church to love and give like the widow. We see this in the 1<sup>st</sup> century church. Paul told the Corinthians:

*2 Corinthians 8:1–5 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.*

God does not want our money. He wants us. And yet in a very real way **it’s impossible** to give ourselves to Him apart from our time, talent and treasure. It is true that money speaks. It tells us where our hearts are.

Jesus is still sitting across from the treasury of every church and watches. What is he seeing in my life? What is He seeing in Metro?