



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Mark 12:35-44 Mark

“David's Son, Clergymen and Widow”

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Howard, and good morning. One of the problems with Christmas is that some of the greatest hymns of the faith are Christmas hymns and we only get to sing them during that time of the year for maybe two or three Sundays. So it's always good to sprinkle a Christmas hymn in the summertime or whenever. I enjoy singing them, too.

Well, our text this morning is Mark 12:35-44. So turn with me in your Bibles to that passage and follow along as I read Mark 12, beginning with verse 35.

“And Jesus answering *began* to say, as He taught in the temple, ‘How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?’

“David himself said in the Holy Spirit, “THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET.”

“David himself calls Him “Lord”; so in what sense is He his son?’ And the great crowd enjoyed listening to Him.

“In His teaching He was saying: ‘Beware of the scribes who walk around in long robes, and *like* respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, they are the ones who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.’

“And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in

large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amounted to a cent. Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, 'Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.'

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May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Shall we bow in a word of prayer?

Our gracious heavenly Father, we do thank You for the privilege and the opportunity that we have to come together and to open the Scriptures as a body of people, not just a collection of people, but a body of people, a people that You have chosen for Yourself and redeemed by the blood of Your Son, people that You have made into Your church. And we are mindful, Father, as we consider our passage and we consider the greatness of Your Son, who He is. From that great Psalm that David wrote, we are mindful, Father, that we are debtors to You. We are recipients of Your grace. We have been brought into Your family by the blood of Your Son, but we have also been bound together to one another and to this local assembly. And we pray that You would impress that great truth upon us. We're not just a collection of people, but we are a people brought into union with one another, which is a union in Your Son and a union to You.

And we pray that You would increase in that union with one another and increase in our relationship as a church. Bless us in that way. And this is one of the most important ways we do that, Father. We come together and we feed together upon the Scriptures. And so we pray that You would bless this time of study, that You would build us up in the faith, and that You would make us more and more like Your Son, that we would be a people that have an influence in our community, in influence within our families, with those closest to us. Make us like Your Son.

And we know that You do that in large part, Father, through the teaching of Your Word, as we see Him in the Scriptures, we become like Him. And that miraculous process of sanctification, whereby the Spirit takes Your truth and He uses it to form and transform us into the image of Christ. We confess we have a long way to go before we truly emulate Him, and never will, Father, until we are joined to You in eternity, but we pray that at this time, You would do a work at this hour with us.

And we thank You for the privilege to study together and to sing together, to worship our Lord together and the privilege to pray for one another. And we do that, Lord. We have many whose names are listed and who are in need of our prayers: people who are sick, people in financial difficulty. We pray for them. And ask for Your blessing. We pray for those who mourn. We remember **Veronica Pomeroy** and we pray for her at this time. She grieves over the loss of her father. And pray that You'd give her strength, blessing.

We pray, Father, for our nation, as well. And we think of our leaders in these difficult days and with difficult decisions, we pray that You'd give them wisdom. We may not like what we see, and we should not like what we see, but all the more reason, Father, to pray for the king, as we are urged to do by the apostles. And we do. We pray for our president. We pray for his cabinet and the senate and the congress, and all of those that You've put in authority over us, because ultimately, Lord, it is You who have placed them in those great positions of authority. Daniel said it so well in the 2nd chapter of his book, "You raise kings up and you bring them down. You are the one who is in control."

Regardless of what we see around us, Father, we know that the vision of Isaiah in Isaiah 6 is as real today for us as it was for him in a troubled time centuries ago. You, the Lord God, are sitting upon Your throne, high and exalted, and we are to look to You. Help us to do that. And help us this morning as we consider Christ, who He is, as He unveils or reveals to a greater extent to those around Him who He is as the Scriptures of the Old Testament declared Him to be. Help us to gain a clearer vision of Him and a greater appreciation. We pray these things in our Savior's name, Amen.

A few years ago, Tom Wolfe wrote a bestseller that was made into a movie entitled *The Right Stuff*, and I suspect that many of you have either read the book or seen the movie and will remember that it told the story of a small group of men, first some combat pilots, and then test pilots, and finally the seven original astronauts who, by their endurance and by their ability and by their courage, reached the top of the pyramid to become a small flying fraternity, men who had something special about them, something that set them apart, what they called something of the right stuff. And the stuff that they were made of was revealed through extreme tests, endless tests, life-threatening challenges. And to some degree, that's true of all of us. Not the

same experiences, of course, and maybe not with the same intensity and life-threatening tests that they were put through, but all of us, to one degree or another, are put through tests. And it's through those tests that we learn something of the stuff that we're made of and others learn of the stuff that we're made of.

And that was never more true of any man than it was of our Lord. He was tested by Satan. He was tempted by the world. He was tempted in all things as we are, the author of Hebrews writes, yet without sin. And one of the great periods of testing that He went through was on the last Tuesday of His life, when He was put through a battery of questions from men trying to catch Him in a compromising answer, one that would either incriminate Him with the Roman officials or would in some way undermine His popularity with the people.

These were questions that were carefully framed by the legal authorities of His day, men who were skilled in debate, men who knew the law, and men who knew how to argue the law. And so He was facing some of the great minds of His day, and men with great political authority. And yet He faced them very well. With each of those questions, the Lord gave the answer and gave it with such skill that He silenced every one of His opponents and He demonstrated that He was made of greater stuff than they had anticipated.

And in the exchange that now follows in the passage that we are considering, He explains to them what He was made of and the kind of person that He really was. We've come to the end of their questions. Mark writes in verse 34 that after asking a number of questions and failing to trap Him in His own words, "no one would venture to ask Him any more questions." But that wasn't the end of it. The Lord now takes the initiative with a question of His own, but a very different question from those that had been asked of Him. His question was intended to produce light and not strife. It wasn't a question in which He was trying to trick or trap anyone. It wasn't a question that probed marginal issues and raised theological trifles as their questions had done. In fact, the question that He raises is the most important and the most practical of all questions that can be asked. The question, what do you think about the Christ? Who is He?

It was a question that was aimed right at the heart of their theology and one that exposed their ignorance of who Christ really was, of the nature of the Messiah.

But one that, I think, connects very closely with the last question that He was asked. Do you remember what that question was? The question we studied just last week. You'll remember a scribe came to Him and he asked the Lord, "What is the greatest commandment of all?" The answer that the Lord gave was very simple. The greatest commandment is love, to love the Lord God with a whole heart, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. And the scribe agreed with the answer that He gave, in fact seems to have agreed with some enthusiasm. And the Lord responded to him not by saying, "Yes. You're right. Excellent response. Excellent answer." He commends him, but He does so in such a way that He gives a warning, as well, because He says to that scribe, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Not far, but not in. Something was lacking. There was something more that was necessary and that something more was faith in our Lord. And so the Lord will now raise a question that will help people understand who He really is and encourage them to have faith in Him, because the only way to enter the kingdom of God is through the door of the kingdom, which is the Lord Jesus Himself, or as we sang in that hymn at the beginning of our hour, "the key of David." That is who our Lord is. He's the key to the kingdom.

Well, it was probably afternoon by the time that the questions ended, and by this time a large crowd had gathered to hear the Lord's responses to these great leaders of the people, the priests and the elders of the city, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, all of these august company of people, they had come to listen to what the Lord had to say to these men. And no doubt many of these scribes and Pharisees were still in the audience, those men who had challenged Him, and so He asks them in verse 35, "How *is it that* the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?"

It was a question that they would have recognized as being about Him because the word "Christ" is simply the Greek word for "Messiah" or "Anointed One." They didn't know Him at the time the way we know Him, as Jesus Christ. And they may have known Him as Yeshua ben Yosef, Joshua, the son of Joseph, or something like that. They didn't know Him as the Christ, but that word they would have known. They would have known it very well because, as I said, it's the Greek word for Messiah. And the multitudes had already hailed Him as the Messiah, as the Christ.

You'll remember when He entered Jerusalem on palm Sunday and they greeted Him with that title, the Son of David, which is a messianic title, a title for the Messiah.

And so He asks this company of people. But the question is particularly pointed at the scribes and He asks, "What about the son of David? Who is he? What kind of person is he?" Now they all had opinions on who the Messiah was, very definite opinions. There was one thing that a Jew in that day could talk about, it was the Messiah. They looked for Him to come with great anticipation and and they looked for Him to come with a sword, as a conqueror, as one who would vanquish their enemies and who would establish the kingdom of God.

And they weren't altogether wrong in that. After all, as one reads Isaiah, we see a number of descriptions of the Messiah, and they are descriptions of a warrior, a warrior king. For example, Isaiah describes Him as treading the wine press of God's wrath. And we go all the way over to the book of Revelation. In chapter 19, we have that description by the apostle John of the Lord on a white horse with a sword flashing from His mouth. The apostle Paul gives a very similar description in 2 Thessalonians 2, where he speaks of the Lord destroying the lawless one with the Spirit of His mouth that is coming.

So that image of the Messiah as a conquering king is a correct one, but not a complete one. They wanted the Messiah to be the son of David because they wanted a Jewish king to reign over a Jewish kingdom. They wanted a resurrected Davidic kingdom that would have all the glory and the splendor of that kingdom 1,000 years earlier. They wanted one who would meet their needs, very much like He did on that afternoon in Galilee, recorded in John chapter 6. You'll remember the great miracle where He breaks the bread and fish and He feeds a multitude with it. And they wanted more bread like that. They wanted someone who would provide for them daily. They wanted a king who would meet their convenience. They wanted the son of David in their terms and in their definition. And while that idea of the son of David, of a conquering king, of a political ruler is a correct one, it was very limited and it was grossly insufficient. He is David's son, but He is far more than that and infinitely greater than David.

And so to make that point, He asks this question about the Christ in verses 36-7. Since He is called the son of David, and everybody knew that – since He is called

the son of David, how is it that David calls Him his Lord? Well, that's what he does. He calls his own son, his own descendant "Lord" in Psalm 110. And Jesus quotes it. "The Lord said to my Lord, – " or to put it a little more literally, "Yahweh or Jehovah said to my Adon, my Master" " – sit at My right hand, until I put Thine enemies beneath Thy feet."

Now the question is since David calls the Messiah his Lord, calls Him his Master, in what sense is He his Son? What father is it who looks at his son or his grandson and calls him, "Lord, Master"? So that's the question that arises out of this Psalm. How can one who is David's junior in age be considered greater than him? And particularly one such as David, who is the head of the royal line. He's the first. It comes from him. How does this greatest of Israel's kings look upon one of his distant descendants as his Lord? What kind of Son is He? That's the question. And the answer is found in the Psalm itself. Look where He's seated. Next to the Lord God. He's greater than men. Must be. No man, no mere man, can sit on the level with God. He's no earthly person. He's no earthbound being. He's a heavenly person.

Well, perhaps he's one of the angels. They're heavenly beings and they're certainly greater than men. True, but they don't compare with God. In fact, the author of Hebrews picks up that very point in talking about who Christ is and the greatness of Christ. And He points out in that first chapter that He's greater than the angels. If anybody suspects that the Lord Jesus is simply an angelic being, he dispels that illusion because he says, quoting from this very passage in the Psalm, he says, "To which of the angels has He ever said, 'Sit at my right hand?' " Search the Scriptures and you won't find one example of Him saying that. He says it to none. He doesn't say that to an angel because an angel cannot sit at His right hand. Only one who is equal with God can sit on the level with God, can sit on a throne at His right hand.

And so He does that because He's equal with God. He's David's Son, no question about that. The Lord isn't calling that into question. He is the human descendant of Israel's greatest king, but He's also superior to David. He's David's Lord. Now, that's no fanciful or exotic interpretation that the Lord developed out of some obscure passage of Scripture because Psalm 110 was no obscure passage. It

was one of the great messianic Psalms and the Jews were very familiar with it. And, in fact, we see that from the New Testament because it's one of the most often quoted Psalms – in fact, maybe the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament. A messianic Psalm. They were very familiar with it.

And so it's no obscure passage, but that interpretation that He gives is also very consistent with other statements that are made in the Old Testament. We find a number of statements such as this in the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 11:1, the Messiah is called the "shoot from the stem of Jesse," which is a way of saying He's the offspring of Jesse, who is David's father, so He's one of David's descendants. He's the shoot from that stem. He's the product of that line, David's descendant. But later in that same chapter, in verse 10, He is called the "root of Jesse," the source of Jesse, the source of David. And so what we have here is just from that passage in Isaiah, the Messiah described as on the one hand David's descendant with a human nature, and on the other David's creator, One with a divine nature. He is the One whom Isaiah calls "mighty God" and "eternal Father."

And all of that fits within the statements of this Psalm, with David's Lord sitting at God's right hand. But that's not all. This scribe who asks the Lord the question, "What is the greatest commandment?" demonstrates from his answer that he was a man well-versed in Scripture. He knew the Word of God and would have been very conversant with Psalm 110, which as I've said is a messianic Psalm and a very important Psalm in the Psalter. And any careful student of that Psalm would have remembered that the King that was sitting at the right hand of Yahweh was not just a King, but He was also a Priest.

Now, was David a priest? No. He wasn't a priest. There was a clear-cut division of labor in the Old Testament. A king had to come from the tribe of Judah, but a priest had to come from the tribe of Levi, and specifically from the line of Aaron. And no one else could serve as a priest. And there's one example in the Scriptures of a king, a great king, in Israel, King Uzziah, contemporary of Isaiah who, though he was a great king, got proud at one point and decided he wanted to enter into priestly activity. And he barged into the temple. Priests tried to stop him, warned him not to do this. He was violating the law of God by trying to act as a priest. He would not have it. He goes forward and God stops him and inflicts him with leprosy,

and Uzziah lived out the rest of his days after being hurried out of the temple isolated from the people and died a leper. A graphic illustration of the fact that there was to be a separation and the two could not be brought together. David, as great as he was, could never function as a priest. And yet, this King is a Priest forever, David writes, according to the order of Melchizedek.

Do you know who Melchizedek is? He is that mysterious figure who appears briefly in Genesis 14 to bless Abraham as He returns from battle. And to whom Abraham paid homage with gifts. His name means “king of righteousness.” He was the king of Salem, ancient Jerusalem and priest of God most high. And in giving him gifts, Abraham acknowledged that Melchizedek was his superior and as the author of Hebrews develops that point, he points out that he was superior to Abraham’s descendants, specifically superior to Levi and the priestly line, which is a way of saying that the priesthood of Melchizedek is greater than the priesthood of Aaron. And so the Messiah is greater than David because one, He’s a divine King. David wasn’t that. And two, He is a priest, an eternal priest.

Now what do priests do? Well, they intercede for their people. They pray for them. And they offer sacrifices for them. And that’s just what the Lord would do. He would offer the final sacrifice in His own death on the cross, and in so doing make an atonement for sin that would satisfy God’s justice and turn away His wrath from all who put their faith in Him. And that’s the way into the kingdom of God. And reflection upon this Psalm would have helped people understand that in that crowd that was listening to Him. And so as one reflects upon the Psalm, one can see that He is a gracious King to all who willingly submit to Him in faith, but for those who resist Him, there is nothing but judgment.

And the Psalm ends with a description of Him making war on His enemies. “He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath. He will judge among the nations.” That’s the warning that the Psalm carries for those who resist and oppose Him. The warning specifically directed to those scribes and those Pharisees, those opponents who had come with their questions in an attempt to destroy Him. He’s a conquering King. He’s no mere man. He’s a divine King, a conquering King. He is One who will come as Israel’s King – and they were right in anticipating that – but in coming

as a King, He will come as a conqueror. He will come as a Judge and deal with His enemies.

But the hope that is present in that Psalm, as well, is that He is also a priest who has made the ultimate saving sacrifice. And that's the truth that the Psalm opens up for those who seek it, for that scribe, if he was a genuine seeker, and the light was truly beginning to break in his heart, and for those who were listening to the Lord, that whole crowd. And Mark writes in verse 37 that that crowd, which was a great crowd, enjoyed listening to Him. But the Lord wasn't finished with that. He now unmask the character of these men who had attacked Him. These were teachers. These were religious leaders. These were the great men of the nation, the spiritual leaders of the people, and they were men of the law, men who taught that righteousness was earned, that merit with God could be achieved through keeping the law, through obeying the law. And yet, as we see from what our Lord says, their lives, their conduct was all a complete denial of that idea of righteousness through the law.

That's a very telling truth, I think, about legalism, about life under the law. It doesn't produce righteousness. The law, as Paul explains, was never intended to produce righteousness, can't do that. It can expose a lack of righteousness, but it cannot produce it. And yet, that's what these men were advocating.

George Whitfield was a great 18th century evangelist, an associate of Wesley – at least at the beginning of the Great Awakening – and I'm sure most of you are familiar with Mr. Whitfield. He was not only a great evangelist, but he was a man of great depth theologically. And in one of his sermons, he addresses a criticism that was commonly made against the doctrine of an imputed righteousness, of an alien righteousness that it given to us legally upon faith, the whole idea of the doctrine of salvation by faith apart from works. And it's the criticism that free grace is destructive of good works, and it leads to licentiousness. If people don't feel that they have to work for their salvation, if they don't feel the weight of the law upon them and the weight of works, then they won't work. In fact, they'll do just the opposite. They'll take advantage of their good position and they'll live a sinful life.

That's a common criticism, but as Whitfield said, those who generally urge that objection are, in his words, profane moralists, men who speak about morality, but they don't live it. They don't live it because they don't have the power to live it. And

he says experience tends to show that often it's those kinds of men that are the greatest sinners. The men who are the model citizens, the moralists, oftentimes have secret lives. And the lives of these scribes and Pharisees were not so secret. And what Whitfield had to say about the profane moralists of his day is certainly true of those scribes and Pharisees.

They were men of works, but the Lord exposes six abuses that they were guilty of, and in so doing, He showed them to be frauds. Men of pride, men of greed, and perhaps most of all men of hypocrisy. He says, first of all, "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes." In other words, men who like to be seen as scribes, men who like to be noticed as men of learning and men of piety. Watch out for that. These men were easily recognized as such because of their distinctive costumes, those robes that the Lord speaks of. They were white clerical robes made of linen. Must have been very attractive robes with long fringe that almost reached to the ground. Very distinctive. The kind of clothing that set them apart from the crowd, set them off as special people, worthy of respect.

You see something of the same thing today. Maybe not so much in our town, but you can go to other cities and go to places like Jerusalem and you see you have all these clergymen from various religious sects and aspects of Christianity are brought together, and there you see all kinds of costumes, and collars, and hoods, and robes, and caps, and jewelry, rings and crosses. All of that that sets them apart from the common man. And these scribes, they had that, too, and they liked that and that really seems to be the reason that they were scribes.

They also liked "respectful greetings," He says. As they would go to the marketplace, people would address them as "rabbi" and "master" and "father" and titles of honor because it was a big deal to be a scribe, to be a man of learning. And that's what they were. They were genuine scholars. They were legal authorities. And the scribes enjoyed the prestige very much. As I said, that's really the suggestion of what our Lord is saying. That seems to be the motive for they're being scribes. There were a lot of perks that came with that job of being a scribe. Because of their prestige, they enjoyed, He says, the "chief seats in the synagogues." They got to sit up front where the ark was, the scrolls were kept. And they could be seen by everyone. And because of their position as scribes, they enjoyed the places of honor

at banquets, perhaps even got to give a speech at the banquet. They got to be seen by everyone and honored by everyone.

It's not that that's bad in and of itself to sit up front, to be held in honor by people. The problem was that this was what they were seeking. This was why they were scribes. They were seeking honor for themselves instead of the Lord. They were seeking to be served rather than to serve. They were proud and they were greedy. The Lord says they are the ones "who devour widows' houses," that is they enjoyed financial gain at the expense of poor people. Scribes generally were not paid for their services. In fact, there was a rabbinic saying, "Do not make of the Torah a spade with which to dig," which means don't use your opportunities to teach the law for personal gain. Don't try to make money out of your skill as a teacher. And so many of them were dependent upon the gifts of people to support them in their livelihood.

And many would abuse this by taking advantage of widows who were impressionable and who wanted to be of help. And they would con them into giving beyond their means. Literally, the text reads, "they eat up widows' houses." And what makes this so scandalous in the eyes of the Lord is that they did it behind a mask of piety, using long prayers to hide their greed, prayers that the Lord says were for appearance's sake. They were just a show. Nothing but a show for the purpose of winning trust and then defrauding widows. But that hypocrisy carried great guilt with it and with that guilt great condemnation. The Lord says their condemnation will be great. And so He warns the people to beware of such men.

A warning that's just as important for us, as well, because, you see, there's nothing about this that's particularly Jewish. This isn't a Jewish problem. This is a problem of human nature and the same abuses can be traced down through the history of the church. John Wycliffe, known as the morning star of the Reformation, blasted the church of his day, calling the priests, "robbers, malicious foxes, gluttons, devils, and apes." And he had other things to say for those in the church. The church was worldly, very worldly, and that set the stage for the Reformation some years later.

Throughout the history of the church, men have used positions of trust to further their own ends, their prestige and their wealth, and it's no different in our day. We don't lack for men who use prayer and a religious facade to enrich themselves. I

won't develop that. I don't think I need to do that. You know what I'm talking about. It's common in our day as well as in our Lord's day. As I say, it's a problem with human nature. But those, however, are the men that we're to beware of, the Lord says. They're carnivorous. They're dangerous. They eat up widows' houses and everyone who is drawn into their influence.

So the Lord is urging discernment here. He's urging people to be wise about those who teach them under whose spiritual influence they come. And also warning His disciples not to become like those men, not to have their attitude and their disposition, their outlook, not to become men who desire to be somebody, to be prominent, to be honored above everyone else.

And aren't we all a little bit like that? Maybe a lot like that? I know the context here is about ministers, but really the problem goes beyond that. Let's say it's a problem of human nature, it's one that we all have because we want to be exalted. It's a matter of pride. And that's why men want respectful greetings in the marketplace.

I have a friend who, years ago, when he started out in business, had an associate who was promoted in the company. They were about the same age and they were on very familiar terms. He spoke to him according to his personal name, used that when he would talk. It was that kind of a friendship. And one day, shortly after his promotion, he meets this colleague of his on the elevator, and it was filled with businessmen, and he addressed him as he customarily did, by his first name, and right after that, this colleague pulls him aside and tells him, "Probably better if you just address me as 'Mister' from now on." Well, I suppose that in a case like that, as in any case, motive must be analyzed.

And maybe there was a good reason for doing that, but the danger that we face is the danger that He's warning the disciples here of. It's the danger of pride. It's a danger of becoming like those scribes, men who, as one writer puts it, were "time servers and applause seekers." It's a danger, as I say, for all of us, but the warning here is particularly for the religious hypocrite, and the Lord says that their guilt will be greater than anyone else's. These will receive greater condemnation. Of all the sins into which people can fall, the Lord comes down hardest on the sin of hypocrisy,

the sin of a false profession of faith, a sin which involves using God to cover up one's unbelief. And that's as true for us as it was for the scribes.

Bishop Ryle, the 19th century Anglican, wrote, "let us never wear a cloak. Let us be real, honest, thorough, and sincere in our Christianity. We cannot deceive an all-seeing God." That same point was illustrated a couple of years ago by one of America's leading theologians, Woody Allen, who made the point in his movie *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. I say that tongue in cheek, but there's really some truth to it. He has some theological insight. And that was a movie that Chuck Colson recommended to illustrate a particular point he was making in a sermon.

And so I saw the movie and I found it to be very interesting. It's the story about a physician, Judah Rosenthal, and an ophthalmologist and a highly respected man in his community. But Judah Rosenthal was leading a double life. For two years, he had been involved with another woman, and the fear that it might come to light was haunting him at the beginning of the movie when he stands to give a speech at a large dinner that had been given in his honor. As he speaks to this large crowd – it was a very distinguished group of people, much like you, but they were wearing tuxedos and dinner dresses, and very high occasion – he describes himself as a man of science. He said he'd always been a skeptic, but he'd been raised quite religiously. And his father would frequently tell him, "The eyes of God are on us always." And as he says that, there's a flashback to the synagogue. These pious Jewish men are sitting there reading the Torah, and there's the ark in between them. And then behind them is a large portrait of Moses with the ten commandments in his hand and he's pointing to them.

And as we have that in our mind, he says, "The eyes of God – " what a phrase for a young boy. "What are they like?" He asks. Unimaginably penetrating and intense, I imagined. And they were troubling him as an older man. In fact, those eyes were upon him and piercing into his heart and his soul and his conscience. And the movie develops around that idea. The eyes of God are upon us always. Or, as Bishop Ryles said, "He is the all-seeing God." And that is encouragingly illustrated in what follows.

In verse 41, the scene shifts to another part of the temple. The Lord has finished teaching and is sitting across from the treasury, watching the multitudes

making their offerings and contributions. And He noticed something that probably went unnoticed by everyone else. It was the kind of thing that most of us would miss because it was so small and seemingly insignificant, but it's the very kind of thing that God sees and that God delights in. In a person and in a deed that was the opposite of what He had just finished condemning. It was an incident that puts everything in perspective. The treasury was located in the court of women and as He sat there Mark writes He saw "many rich people were putting in large sums."

These were very generous gifts and probably very noisy gifts, as well, because the Mishnah, the Jewish writings of this time, describe the treasury as being made of 13 trumpet-shaped receptacles in which people could put their offerings. And so with all of the many people making contributions and the rich throwing in large numbers of coins, you can imagine that there must have been a great racket as all of this money goes into these trumpets and all of the clanging that must have been heard, and all of the attention that that must have brought to the rich people as they poured their loads of money into these trumpets. And so that was the scene. These magnanimous gifts being given to the treasury. And yet, what catches the Lord's eye and impresses Him greatly is not the rich. It's not their contributions. It's not the swirl of activity around the treasury at that time, but one lone widow who puts in two small copper coins.

The coins she gave is literally a lepton, from the Greek word leptos, which means "small," or "light," or "thin." And we know it as the widow's mite, which the King James Version defines as "half a farthing." Well, it was a small coin. We don't know what a half a farthing was worth. At least I don't. I don't know how to calculate farthings in the 16th century, but obviously a very small coin. And we know that this coin, the lepton, was worth something around one-eighth of a cent. Insignificant coin. She had two of them and put both into the treasury. Two mites, hardly enough to make a sound in the trumpets, but the Lord heard. And to Him, those two little coins so rattled the trumpets that it sounded like an avalanche in the treasury. Why is that? Why was He so impressed by what this woman did with such a small gift?

Well, it's because it's all she had. Her total worth, her complete portfolio was two mites and she gave it to the Lord. And calling her to the attention of His disciples, He said to them, "This poor widow put in more than all the contributors to

the treasury.” More to our Lord, at least, who looks at more than just the amount that’s given, who looks at the ability to give, as well, and this woman gave all that she had. Rich people can give a lot, and this is nothing against rich people. Many wealthy people have given much to the cause of our Lord.

In fact, one wealthy man who did that was R. G. LeTourneau, a man who made a fortune in business and made a fortune as an inventor, inventing giant earthmoving machines, and improving them, and doing great construction. He made a great fortune and gave much of that to the Lord’s cause. And he said, “The question is not how much of my money I give to God, but rather how much of God’s money I keep for myself.”

Well, by that standard, the poor widow gave far more than anyone else in the treasury. She outgave anybody in the temple. They gave out of their surplus, the Lord says, she gave out of her poverty and gave all that she had. And it all goes back to the greatest commandment, to love God with the whole heart. She did that. She did what pleased the Lord. What a contrast to these scribes, these very learned men, these prestigious men, greedy men who devoured widows, and then this poor widow, this nameless widow quietly steps forward and shows what really pleases God. Great learning, respectable titles, long prayers, they mean a lot to men, but they mean nothing to God if the one who holds those titles and has that learning holds back his heart from the Lord or lives for self, lives for the applause of men. For all their prestige, these scribes stood in the shadow of that poor widow because she gave her heart to the Lord. She was devoted to Him.

The Lord gives us what we have. He gives us our gifts. He gives us our abilities. And the question is not how much do we have or how much do we do, but is what we do with what we have. And that applies to everything: to our money, to our time, to our energy, to our spiritual gifts. How are we using the things that we have been given and what’s our motive for using them? To aggrandize ourselves? To bring attention to ourselves? Or to serve the Lord because we love the Lord?

One thing this incident in the treasury shows is that the Lord does see. The scribes were so concerned that men saw them and appreciated what they did and what they were. And then there’s this widow who quietly, anonymously gives what she has, not knowing if anyone was looking, and not caring if anyone was looking at her,

and all the time the greatest eyes of all were on her, the eyes that really count. And they're on you and they're on me at all times. Some of you are very limited in what you can do. That's the way the Lord has made it. That's the situation He's put you in. That's the life that He's given you. You're limited in your time because of very demanding schedules. You're limited financially.

The Lord knows that. He knows your condition. He knows what you're gifted to do and what you're not gifted to do. But it's not how much you do or give that pleases God. It's what you do with what He's given you. And when He sees you giving some of your time in a tight schedule to reading the Bible, or to praying for the Lord's work, or coming home with the few moments that you have late in the evening and instructing your children in the things of God, He sees that and He's pleased with that.

Donald Grey Barnhouse used to illustrate the point with a pitcher of water. He said, "God is more pleased with a small pitcher of water that's overflowing than He is with a large pitcher that's half full. So we can learn from the widow. What pleases God is a heart that's given to Him, and the measure of that is what we do with the things that He's given to us. Our time, our energy, all of it is to be given to Him. As our Lord said, "Night cometh when no man can work." We don't know how much of the day we have left. Night is approaching for all of us. So we're to use what we have, our time and our energies for Him.

And we can learn something else from this widow. She is not only a generous woman, not only a grateful woman – that's expressed in her gift – but she's also a woman of faith. She's giving everything she had, and in doing that, she must have been doing it with the conviction that when she gives everything she has and she walks away from that treasury without anything, she knew God would provide for her. She was trusting Him to do that. Now, when she gave those coins, there must have been something of a test. She has two of them, and she could have said, "Well, I gave one, and that's half of my wealth. That's half of my kingdom to the Lord. Keep the other one to buy some bread, or whatever. I've got to provide for myself."

That was the test she faced. But she didn't do that. She threw both of them in. And that shows the kind of stuff she's made of. She's made of faith and her life was lived in faith. She was a woman who trusted the Lord, and as I said, the Lord saw

what she gave. And He sees what we give. And He knows what we have left over and He knows our needs and He provides for us. And we're to live that same kind of life of obedience, of sacrifice, trusting Him to provide.

So serving with a whole heart means serving with total trust. And what's the greatest motivation for that? Because that's not an easy thing to do. The greatest motivation for that is love. Love that is born of the understanding and conviction that the One whom we serve is the One of Psalm 110, the Lord who sits at God's right hand. He's none other than the second person of the Godhead, the son of David, One who came to earth and became a man, and shares a human nature just as you and I do, but One who's far greater than that. He's the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the eternal Son of God who became a man and became a servant in order to die as a priestly service for sinners, in order that all who put their faith in Him would be saved and enter into the kingdom of God.

Do you know Him? Have you experienced that grace? Have you come to understand and to know the mercy of His forgiveness? Have you come to the knowledge that you're a sinner and that you need a savior, that you can't redeem yourself, that in and of ourselves, we are so in debt to God that the pile of sin is so great that we could never repay it. We could never make up for what we've done. We are eternal debtors to Him. Have you come to that realization? Or do you think that maybe, well, you're all right. No. You're not perfect, but you're okay, and when that day comes when you stand before the Lord if you ever do, if that ever happens, that your works will speak pretty well for you? Well, if that's the case, then you're like those scribes who wore the right clothes, wore the robes of religion, and had all the appearance of being righteous, but underneath it all, they were corrupt.

Don't be fooled. God sees through the cloak. He calls what He sees "hypocrisy" and He judges it very severely, more severely than any other sin. Strip off that cloak of hypocrisy. Come to Christ naked. Confess yourself a sinner. Look to Him as your Savior whose death is sufficient to remove all of the sins you have ever committed or ever will commit, remove them all as far as the east is from the west. Believe in Him and He will clothe you with His righteousness and give you eternal life. May God help you to do that, and may God help each of us to live lives of wholehearted service to Him. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

Our gracious heavenly Father, we do thank You for Your grace. And we are put to shame somewhat by this anonymous poor widow who had very little but gave all that she had. How much do we have, Father? How much of time? How much of energy? How much of money do we have that we could put into Your service and we don't? You're not concerned with how much we give so much as You are with the heart that gives. And, Father, search our hearts. You are the one that does that. And help us to know our weaknesses and strengthen them. As one of the great encouragements we have, Father, you never forsake us. He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus, and You never stop perfecting us, and working with us, and showing us our error, and mending it, making us more like Your Son. Do that work upon us, Father. Make us more like Your Son, who gave the greatest gift of all, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes, He became poor that we, through His poverty, might become rich. Thank You for the gift of life we have in Him, and it's in His name we pray, Amen.