



Lesson 4, December 28, 2025n A Generous Gift, Matthew 23 2-12, Mark 12 38-

44

BIBLE BASIS: Matthew 23:2–12, Mark 12:38-44

BIBLE TRUTH: Jesus denounced the scribes and Pharisees' need for recognition and affirmed the compassion and humility of the poor widow's gift.

MEMORY VERSE: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matthew 23:12).

Lesson Aim -Key Takeaways –

- **Integrity:** God values obedience lived out, not just taught.
- **Humility vs. Pride:** True greatness is not in titles or recognition but in serving others.
- **Heart vs. Appearance:** Outward religious show means nothing if the heart is far from God.
- **Remember God is our ultimate Teacher and God our true Father.**
- **God Values the Heart, Not the Amount:** True devotion is measured by sacrifice, not size.
- **Faith and Trust:** The widow entrusted her entire livelihood to God.

Historical & Scriptural Background

- **Pharisees & Scribes:** Religious leaders who sat "in Moses' seat" (v.2), meaning they taught the Law.
 - **Problem:** They demanded respect and honor but failed to live humbly.
 - **Cultural Insight:** Titles like *Rabbi* or *Father* carried authority. Jesus warns against prideful dependence on titles instead of God.
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The LESSON: Matthew 23:2-12

I LACK OF HUMILITY

Matthew 23:2-7

1Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples,

2“The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses.

3So practice and obey whatever they tell you, but don’t follow their example. For they don’t practice what they teach.

4They crush people with unbearable religious demands and never lift a finger to ease the burden.

5“Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels.

6And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues.

7They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi.’

What’s Happening in the Passage

- **Setting:** Jesus is teaching publicly in the temple courts during His final week in Jerusalem.
- **Audience:** He addresses both the crowds and His disciples.
- **Focus:** Jesus critiques the religious leaders (scribes and Pharisees) for hypocrisy and pride.

1. Acknowledgment of Authority (vv.2–3):

- The Pharisees and scribes sit “in Moses’ seat,” meaning they interpret and teach the Law.

- Jesus tells the people to respect the Law they teach but warns not to imitate their behavior.

2. Hypocrisy Exposed (vv.3–4):

- They don't practice what they preach.
- They burden people with heavy rules but don't help them live faithfully.

3. Showy Religion (vv.5):

- They make their religious symbols (wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and robes with extra-long tassels) extra-large to be noticed.
- Their devotion is more about appearance than genuine worship.

4. Love of Status (vv.6–7):

- They seek honor at banquets and synagogues.
- They crave respectful greetings and titles like "Rabbi."

II Instruction In Humility

8“Don't let anyone call you 'Rabbi,' for you have only one teacher, and all of you are equal as brothers and sisters.

9And don't address anyone here on earth as 'Father,' for only God in heaven is your Father.

10And don't let anyone call you 'Teacher,' for you have only one teacher, the Messiah.

11The greatest among you must be a servant.

12But those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

What's Happening Here?

1. Rejecting Prideful Titles (vv.8–10):

- Jesus warns against seeking honorific titles like *Rabbi*, *Father*, or *Teacher*.
- These titles were used to elevate status and authority in religious circles.

- Instead, Jesus emphasizes that all believers are equal as brothers and sisters, with God as the true Father and Christ as the true Teacher.

2. Redefining Greatness (v.11):

- Greatness in God’s kingdom is not about position or recognition but about serving others.
- The greatest must be the servant—echoing Jesus’ own example of humble service.

3. The Kingdom Paradox (v.12):

- Those who exalt themselves will be humbled; those who humble themselves will be exalted.
- This reverses worldly values, showing that God honors humility and selflessness

III The Greedy Scribes (Mark 12:38-44)

[38](#) Jesus also taught: “Beware of these teachers of religious law! For they like to parade around in flowing robes and receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces.

[39](#) And how they love the seats of honor in the synagogues and the head table at banquets.

[40](#) Yet they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. Because of this, they will be more severely punished.”

[41](#) Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts.

[42](#) Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.

[43](#) Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions.

[44](#) For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.”

What’s Happening Here?

1. Public Warning (v.38):

- Jesus cautions the people to beware of the scribes (teachers of the law).

- They parade around in long, flowing robes—symbols of status and authority.
- They enjoy being greeted with respect in public, showing their desire for recognition.

2. Love of Status (v.39):

- They seek the best seats in the synagogue and the places of honor at banquets.
- This reveals their hunger for prestige and social elevation.

3. Exploitation of the Vulnerable (v.40):

- Despite their outward religiosity, they exploit widows—among the most vulnerable in society—by taking their property.
- They cover their corruption with long, public prayers to appear holy.

4. Judgment Pronounced (v.40):

- Jesus declares that because of their hypocrisy and exploitation, they will face greater condemnation.
- Their outward show of piety cannot hide their injustice from God.

Scene (vs. 41)

- Location: The Temple in Jerusalem, near the collection boxes where people gave offerings.
- Observation: Jesus deliberately sits down to watch how people give.

5. Rich Contributions (v.41):

- Many wealthy people put in large amounts of money.
- Their gifts looked impressive, but they came from their surplus—they still had plenty left.

6. The Widow's Gift (v.42):

- A poor widow drops in two small coins (the smallest denomination in circulation).
- From a human perspective, her gift seems insignificant compared to the rich.

7. Jesus' Teaching Moment (vv.43–44):

- Jesus calls His disciples to notice her.
- He declares that her gift is greater than all the others because she gave *everything she had to live on*.
- The rich gave without sacrifice; she gave with complete trust in God

For us today: APPLICATION

- Giving isn't about how much—it's about the heart behind it.
- God sees and honors even the smallest acts of faith when they come from sacrifice.
- True worship means trusting God with everything, not just what's convenient.