## Sunday School Lesson #4 A Generous Gift December 28, 2025

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.

The LESSON: Matthew 23:2-12

## I LACK OF HUMILITY

#### Matthew 23:2-7

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

<u>2</u>"The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the law of Moses.

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

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

**<u>5</u>**"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.

**<u>6</u>**And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues.

**Z**They 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.
- o 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.

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

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

**11**The greatest among you must be a servant.

**12**But 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):

- o Jesus warns against seeking honorific titles like Rabbi, Father, or Teacher.
- o 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)

- <u>38</u>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.
- <u>40</u>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.
- 42Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.
- <u>43</u>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.
- 44For 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.
- o 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.
- o 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).
- o From a human perspective, her gift seems insignificant compared to the rich.

#### 7. Jesus' Teaching Moment (vv.43–44):

- o 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

- o 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.
- o True worship means trusting God with everything, not just what's convenient.