

Whole Life Living

Mark 12:38-44 (November 7, 2021)

Mark 12:38-44

³⁸As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, ³⁹and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! ⁴⁰They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

⁴¹He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴²A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

Historical Context

Widows are all throughout the Bible. They were a special concern of the prophets, who often noted that one mark of a righteous society is how it treated its widows.

Why? Because in the patriarchal society of Bible times, widows were **powerless**. If they had no children to help take care of them, they often became destitute. And because of their precarious situation, they became prime targets for exploitation.

Theme: Whole Life Living

“Her whole life.” That’s what she gave. The Greek is certain. Clear. Little room for wiggle room. Not a portion. Not a tithe. Not a percentage. But her whole living. We cannot miss that her offering of her life foreshadows Jesus’ own act for us. In her, Jesus sees what he must do.

Jesus will have to give his whole life, his entire life. He already did, in fact, prior to the cross. He constantly embraced rejection. He consistently accepted the questioning of his followers. He confirmed over and over again that following him would mean whole life giving and whole life living. The widow’s example should be nothing new and at the same time should be everything new.

She embodies Jesus’ own ministry. She acts out Jesus’ own call. She believes that what she does will manifest itself in something beyond herself. In the end, that is truly discipleship according to Mark, that is truly salvific according to Mark, and it is what Jesus portrays according to Mark. But more so, according to Mark, this is the essence of God.

God knows nothing else than to give God’s whole life. God has shown that time and time again to God’s people in the Hebrew Scriptures and we should expect no different now. This is the essence of God — to give God’s whole self. And here, now, in this unnamed widow, God is doing it again.

God calls us to whole life living. That’s what discipleship is all about.