

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**
Chapter 21- Luke 20:46-47; 21:1-4
312- Do Not Oppress Poor Widows

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Luke 20:46-47

46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets,

47 who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation."

21:1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.

2 And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins.

3 And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them;

4 for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

To the Glory of God

The God of the Bible is unique from all of the various "deities" of all the false religions of the world from a number of aspects. But none are more vivid than the fact that the Bible clearly and repeatedly reveals a God Who is absolutely Sovereign, and Whose Power and Will cannot be overthrown or thwarted, yet, at the same time, this God is kind and merciful and tender to the weakest and the most insignificant people on earth.

The God that we love and serve is a God of frightening Majesty and awesome Power and breathtaking Glory. He spoke and a world came into existence. He flung stars against the blackness of space and they stuck. The Lord God wraps Himself in light as with a garment; He spreads out the Heavens and walks on the wings of the wind. God

made the moon for its season; the sun itself knows its setting. God looks at the earth and it trembles, and He touches the mountains and they smoke.

And yet this same God hears the cry of the widow and the orphan. He judges kings and dignitaries who oppress the employee in his wages. Our great God commands "just scales", and that we don't lie to the wife of our youth. God says that we should not ignore the plea of the beggar or let a poor man have to beg for a bone.

And with all this power and with all this Majesty and with all this Glory, the God of the Bible is a God Who does not merely *love*, but Who Himself *is* Love. And that makes God to be different from all the other pagan "gods" that cannot speak and that cannot forgive a single sin or save a single soul.

If you want to find Mercy, don't look at the "god" that is revealed in the Qu-ran, because he doesn't exist. You cannot find a kind or a merciful "god" in the Bahagavad-Gita, either. The "gods" of the Budhists and the Hindus and the Muslims and the Taoists are vicious, cruel, mean, unloving and unmerciful "gods", who demand worship and blind obedience, and then may cast you off at a moment's notice, without an appeal.

Truly there is no God like our God. There is none beside Him. He alone can make a Universe, and then answer the unspoken prayer of a troubled soul. He alone can sit on His Throne as the supreme, Omnipotent Ruler of Heaven and Earth, and then condescend to men of low estate and comfort us in times of trouble and despair.

And we are to fear this great God, and we are to honor Him and worship Him and obey Him and respect Him. But we are also told to *love* God and to *delight* ourselves in Him and to *enjoy* Him forever.

Our God demands allegiance and He expects us to put Him above ourselves and our families and our parents and our children, and even our own lives. And yet this same God wants us to find the fullest expression of our joy in Him and that we become satisfied and fulfilled in Who He is.

And so, unlike any of the false, man-made religions of the lost world, Christianity has gone out into the world and conquered the souls of Mankind, not through force, but through love. 9/11 was a vivid example of how Islam has managed to go into the world with violence, because, after all is said and done, 9/11 was an example of Islamic

evangelism. But we seek converts through *persuasion*, and through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel, and by living the life that the Bible teaches. We hold a *superior* thesis and, therefore, the model of evangelism for the Christian Church is carried out through the exposition of the sacred Scriptures. There is only one Absolute Truth and when that Absolute Truth is taught and explained and proclaimed accurately and fully and without apology, it draws God's chosen to the Light of that Truth.

But Christianity is also unique in how its leaders are chosen. The lost pagan world fears power and might and authority in its leaders. The way the world works is whoever has the biggest gun makes the rules. And with that power, might, and authority comes a certain degree of respect. But that respect is never based in love, it is based in fear. People fear what leaders can do to them. And that is why second-term Presidents usually don't get a lot done. Because as their term is ready to expire, people are no longer afraid of what that President can do to them if they disagree with him or rebel against him.

But listen to what Jesus said would be the criteria for picking leaders in His Church from **Matthew 20:25-28**

25 "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them.

26 "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Now this runs *counter-intuitive* to the way the world picks its leaders, which is perfectly normal with Christianity, because *everything* about Christianity runs counter-intuitive to the way the world thinks and operates.

For example, all of humanity collectively and individually thinks the same way about Salvation. And so they all teach a variation of the very same belief, that we humans must "do" something to earn God's Favor. They all teach that we must "do" something or "become" something in order to get God's Attention and make ourselves appealing to Him. So, to the lost world, Salvation is something that we *earn*

through our good works; it is something that we *labor for*, something that God gives to us *in response* to what we do first.

And this false belief doesn't have to be taught, it is engrained within us at the moment of conception. In other words, believing that Salvation is God responding to what we do first is part of what it means to be fallen, to be depraved, to be lost, to be unsaved. It is the very DNA of the unregenerate state of lost humanity. So, we weren't taught this in Church or even out in the world; it is inserted into our nature from our father Adam whose very first response to being fallen was to make himself aprons of figs leaves to attempt to fix his separation from God by what he did for himself.

But Christianity alone teaches that Salvation is the result of what God does *for* us, precisely because we *cannot* do anything to earn God's Favor, we *cannot* labor to deserve Salvation, and God is never *obligated* to save anyone.

No, the sweetest word in all the world is the least understood today, Grace. Grace is more talked about and sung about and less known than anything else in all of Christianity. Grace is God's Power in sovereignly *giving* and *doing* what we do not and cannot earn or deserve. And so by definition, Grace is a powerful force that *overrides* our natural and normal inclination to run and hide, that *overcomes* our natural tendency to rebel, that *overshadows* us when we do not want it and will not ask for it. Grace *interrupts* our plans, it *inserts* itself onto all of our lives, it *violates* our will, and it *superimposes* itself onto our fallen state and to *cause* us to love God. Please turn to **Ezekiel 36:22-27**

22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God, 'It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.

23 "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord," declares the Lord God, "when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

24 "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

So, it is the "putting of God's Spirit" within us that sovereignly *causes* us to love God and that *causes* us to be obedient to Him. But how do we know if that Holy Spirit is indeed in us? How do we know if God has, in fact, put His Spirit within us? Because, in His Wisdom, God has given unmistakable *proofs*, undeniable *signs*, unarguable *indications* that God's Spirit dwells within us. Please turn to **Galatians 5:14-26**

14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

So there are nine "fruit", nine unmistakable proofs, nine signs, or nine tangible indicators that we are indeed indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. And notice that the first one is love. And so, contrary to all of the world's religions, Christianity elevates love more than power. It elevates love more than authority. It elevates love more than possessions. And it elevates love more than rights. And so the hallmark of true, genuine, Biblical Christianity is that those who have been born from above, those who have been forgiven, those who have been transformed, those who have been regenerate, those who have been saved, love. We now love God and we love the things of God, the two things that was impossible for us to love before we were saved.

But it doesn't stop there. The new divine nature that is part and parcel to being born again produces in us a power and an anointing that enables us to no longer have any human enemies. Because, in addition to loving God and loving the things of God, we also love all of those that God loves. And so all genuine believers love all of the other believers. And so there is no such thing as anyone loving God and not loving all of those who are loved by God and have been saved. The Apostle John said in **1 John 4:20-21**:

20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

And just in case you missed what he said here, John later on got even firmer and said:

1 John 3:15

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

... where the word "**hate**" here does not mean that kind of violent hatred that we know so well, but means: *not caring or being unconcerned about your brother.*

But this fruit of being indwelt by God the Holy Spirit goes even further because we cannot even hate our enemies. Now we can certainly hate what they do, and we can condemn it and we can call them to repentance, because true, godly, love always focuses first on loving God and loving what He said rather than merely acquiescing to the carnal whims of unsaved people. But we must always hold out hope that the same Gospel that changed us will change them, and that the same Holy Spirit that convicted us will convict them, and that the same Truth that broke our hearts will break theirs, and the same Love that caused us to love God will cause them to love God, too.

And so the measurement of true spirituality is not in what kind of car you drive or how powerfully you can prophesy or in how many people fawn over you or in how many books you can sell, but is in your ability to love. And so, for example, the most important question that we can ask based on **1&2 Corinthians** is not how or in what manner we can speak in tongues but this:

How could Paul so deeply love the Corinthian Church?

I mean with all their dysfunction, with all their immorality, with all their pagan ways, and with all their misuse of the spiritual gifts, how could Paul make a statement like this:

1 Corinthians 1:4

I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,

How is it that Paul could say this to all the dysfunctional people of Philippi:

Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long *to see*, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

... it is because Paul was endowed with this love. So contrary to so many in the Health, Wealth, and Prosperity cult, true, genuine Ministry is not be carried out on the backs of God's people. The leaders of the Church are not to be catered to, they are not to be served, they

are called by God *to serve*, because true Ministry *is* the people of God, in all their dysfunction and in their immorality and in their troubles and in their weaknesses and in their triumphs.

Now the reason I am bringing this up today is because of what Jesus is saying here in the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you. Now I was like most of you and when I was first saved, and when this Passage was read, it was taught as being an entirely separate Teaching about sacrificial giving. I was taught that Jesus was saying here that we should be as this widow woman and give out of our own poverty, and not be like the wealthy people who give a little out of their abundance. So the gist of this was always that we are to give out of our love and devotion to Jesus and not worry about how much we have left over.

Now let me say this about that. First of all, since I have been going through the New Testament expositionally now for about 15 years, I have discovered that the Old Testament model of giving, which was "paying" a tax called "the tithe", has been *replaced* by an infinitely *superior* model of giving, based on the condition of our heart. So, instead of "paying tithes", we now "give out of the treasure of our hearts". So, instead of paying 10%, we now have the freedom to give to God based on nothing more than how big and how glorious and how valuable Jesus is. And that is based on what God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Apostle Paul to write in **2 Corinthians 9:5-11**:

5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.

6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

7 Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

9 as it is written, "*HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER.*"

10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;

11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

Now most Pastors are terrified to read or preach this Passage because they think that if the people knew that they didn't have to pay 10%, then they wouldn't give at all. But I believe God, and I know that Jesus is the sweetest Name on earth, and I know that truly born again souls who treasure Jesus will give...

just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver

But even more importantly, I think we are missing the mark when we zero in on the subject of giving here rather than on our treatment of the poor and the widows, because that is simply out of context with everything else Jesus has been talking about. All week long Jesus has been confronting all of the major religious groups, and then beginning with **Luke 20:45**, He begins to make His final comments to His disciples.

So in verses 46-47, Jesus tells them to beware of the scribes and then gives them the reasons why. And then right in the middle of warning His disciples, beginning with **Luke 21:1**, Jesus looks over and sees rich people putting money into the Temple treasury, and so, in **Luke 21:2-4**, He simply *continues* His discussion about warning His disciples about how they must treat the poor and widows. And then the rest of Chapter 21 is Jesus dealing with eschatology.

We need to remember that the chapter and verse divisions are not inspired. They were added to the Bible much later to help us read and study better, but there are a few occasions where they interrupt the flow of the conversation. And I think this is one of them.

Remember, Jesus is giving us His last few Statements before His arrest and trial and Crucifixion. This is the last week of Jesus' life. And Jesus is making sure that His disciples understand the terrible price that is paid with false religion by the people who are enslaved by it. And so He sees a perfect example of what false religion does to people, and He uses this poor widow as an example.

Now I am aware that what I just said is at odds with the normal understanding of this Passage, but I beg you to hear me out before you

rule me out. I want to be careful here that we don't add to what Jesus is actually saying here.

First of all, we need to agree that nowhere in the entire Bible does God ever expect you to give 100 percent of what you have so that you have absolutely nothing left. That is simply not taught in the Bible. But that would be the only lesson we could take from this passage, if it was about giving.

But then you would have to explain why in the world Jesus would inject a Teaching about giving in a context about false religion just before His death. It simply makes no sense for Jesus to say, "*Beware of the scribes and here's why...*" and then begin teaching about giving. That would be completely out of context.

Jesus makes no comment about giving here at all, except to say that this poor widow gave more than everybody else relative to what she had. But He never *commended* her for doing that; He never applauded her faith or her dedication or her sacrifice. And Jesus never told His disciples to follow her example. He was simply making an observation about how cruel their man-made religion was that the weakest person in the room was expected to give everything while wealthy people didn't. So, that is a slam against the false religion of the Jews-, because there is something radical wrong with any religion that takes from the weakest. That isn't being spiritual, that is being deceived.

There is something radically wrong with any religion and any god who expects mothers to strap bombs to their children so they can kill Jews. There is something radically wrong with any religion that teaches that killing people is the pathway to heaven. There is something radically wrong with any religion that says that the leaders of the church are supposed to become wealthy off the backs of God's people and fly around in Lear jets while the poor go hungry. There is something radically wrong with any religion that says that if you give money to the leaders, then you can have God's Favor. And any religion that oppresses the poor and widows is an evil religion and deserves the damnation of God.

People in wheel chairs are told by prima donna pied pipers that they can't be healed because they're not good enough. Dying saints who had enough faith to be saved are told that God won't heal them because they don't have enough faith. Sick and discouraged saints are used and

manipulated in their weakness because they are told that they might have sin in their lives. And any religion that has such a low view of the weak and the poor and the sick and the oppressed is evil and is an affront to the God of the Bible.

There are more carnival antics being carried out by big named television preachers who peddle religious trinkets to raise money than you can shake a stick at, such as prayer cloths, water from the River Jordan, anointing oil from Gethsemane, and genuine pages from the original 1611 King James version of the Bible. I got a package in the mail offering to sell me the Power of the Holy Ghost for a seed gift of \$99.99. I'm telling you it is enough to make you cry. So, after 500 years of the Protestant Reformation, this is the public face of the Evangelical Church! Beloved, we need to repent and return to our First Love.

Jesus condemns the religious frauds, and then He sees a perfect example of the fruit of their man-made false teaching; poor, deceived weak widow women being fleeced. And to prove that I'm right about this, notice that Jesus never makes any comment about what this woman did. He never tells His disciples to give like her. And also notice that His disciples don't ask Him any questions either. And that's because they understood exactly what Jesus was saying here.

Now the assumption that is always made here when people say that Jesus was giving us a model for Christian giving is that He was pleased with what this poor widow woman did. But Dr. Luke never said that. Jesus never said that. It doesn't say anywhere that Jesus was pleased with her gift. It doesn't say Jesus was pleased with her attitude. And that is because He was *not* pleased with what this woman did at all. This poor woman was deceived into thinking that that this is what God wanted her to do. Well, where did she learn that from? From those false religionists. So rather than being pleased, this *angered* the Lord.

Remember, Jesus just got through warning His disciples about the scribes, and then He looked over and sees the fruit of their lies. He saw that corrupt system milking the last two pennies out of a widow's pocket. And what was even worse, this poor woman gave, hoping that maybe in that legalistic system, her two coins would buy some Divine Blessing for her, kind of like the preachers on the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television Network say every day.

Now the God of the Holy Bible is very concerned that widows and poor and the aged and the infirm and the weak and those unable to tend to themselves have their needs met. And the main way that God designed for these people to be cared for is through their children. That's why God said to marry and have children. And nowhere is true Christianity seen better than in the way that poor widows are treated. Nowhere is true love displayed better than in how the poor and the weak and the widows and the orphans are treated. The attitude that a religion has toward the weakest person in the room is what shows you its validity. The way a religion treats people who cannot do anything for anyone else is one of the most important aspects of true, godly leadership in the House of God. The way a leader treats people who need him the most is what defines a godly man. And nobody fits all three of these characteristics better than widows.

Now widows are historically older women who are also usually the poorest and the weakest of all people. Widows require more attention and more help, yet they are the ones who can give the least. So how a leader or how a Church or how a religion treats widows is very telling. There is more information about how we are to treat widows in the Bible than almost any other group. So, the God of the Bible, in all His sovereign Majesty, is concerned with the weak and the frail and the poor and the helpless.

Now according to Scripture, the first line of defense for widows is their own children. The God of the Universe has commanded that children honor their mothers and fathers. In fact, this is the first Command of God that has a Promise attached to it.

Exodus 20:12

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

So one of the keys to doing well in the earth is in how you treat your parents, not merely in how much money you make.

Now keep in mind that there is nothing here about whether the mothers and fathers are Christians. The Divine Command to honor your mother and father has no connection to either the parents or the children being saved. Grown children are commanded by the Owner and Creator of the Universe to care for their widowed mothers. And

those children who will not care for their mothers are evil people. In the Bible they are the lowest of the low. And there are many stories all throughout Church history where the leaders of the church paid a visit to the children who were not caring for their widowed mothers and “persuaded” them to obey the Bible.

Now in the case where a widow has no children, then the Church should take them in and care for them. But, the widows that the Church keeps must be meet the criteria that Scripture puts forth in **1 Timothy 5-** so let’s turn there.

1 Timothy 5:3-10:

3 Honor widows who are widows indeed;

4 but if any widow has children or grandchildren, they must first learn to practice piety in regard to their own family and to make some return to their parents; for this is acceptable in the sight of God.

5 Now she who is a widow indeed and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day.

6 But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.

7 Prescribe these things as well, so that they may be above reproach.

8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

9 A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, *having been* the wife of one man,

10 having a reputation for good works; *and* if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, *and* if she has devoted herself to every good work.

But then look at what God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Apostle Paul to write next:

1 Timothy 5:11-15

11 But refuse *to put* younger widows *on the list*, for when they feel sensual desires in disregard of Christ, they want to get married,

12 *thus* incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge.

13 At the same time they also learn *to be* idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper *to mention*.

14 Therefore, I want younger *widows* to get married, bear children, keep house, *and* give the enemy no occasion for reproach;

15 for some have already turned aside to follow Satan.

But Paul was still not finished and gave some final instructions concerning widows:

1 Timothy 5:16

If any woman who is a believer has *dependent* widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

So, for example, for anyone to say that they can't take care of their parents because they have given so much to God, or because God requires so much from them, as the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Scribes were saying, is *exactly* what Jesus was talking about when He said:

Matthew 15:3

Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?

John Mark said it even better when he quotes Jesus in **Mark 7:8**:

Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.

... in other words, Jesus was telling them that the religion that they had invented was encouraging them to *violate* the Law of God, and to violate it in order to be spiritual. And that is the *worst* kind of deception.

So any religion that teaches that you must sin in order to be spiritual is not of God. Any teaching that encourages you to violate God's Commandments is not of God. Any philosophy that says that rebellion to God is the pathway to joy is evil, and is not only *not* pleasing to God, but is destructive to you as well. True spirituality is

being so radically altered that you find the fullness of joy in struggling against the lusts of your flesh by the Power of the Holy Spirit to be found humbly submissive to the Authority of Scripture in your daily life, all to God's Glory.

The religion taught by the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Scribes abused poor people. And it abused them on every level, spiritual as well as materially. Anyone who withholds money from needy parents in order to give it to God is in direct disobedience to God and is dishonoring God's Word and substituting a man-made tradition for God's Word. Basic human needs come first with God *before* religious offerings. Now that is not an out for you to never give to God at all, but it is putting things into their proper perspective.

Nothing God ever did or said in the Bible was done to impoverish people. Only false religion teaches that. Man was not made for the Law, the Law was made for Man so he could joyfully learn what pleases God and what does not please Him, so Man could come into right standing with God.

So this poor widow giving is *not* an example of heartfelt, sacrificial giving that pleases the Lord; it is an example of the horror of being deceived and of being manipulated by a false, man-made religious system that was corrupt to the core. So this is not about Jesus honoring a woman who is sacrificially giving. This is about a victim of a corrupt religious system who is deceived and has literally been made destitute trying to live up to that legalistic wickedness in order to earn a place in Heaven. Now look again at **Luke 21:1**:

And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.

Now what did Dr. Luke mean when he mentions the "treasury" here? Well the court in which Jesus was sitting is a very large open court in the Temple area. And it was called the Court of the Women. There was an inner court where only the men could go, but this is the court where everyone could go, both men and women. And Jesus taught here as indicated in **John 8**. In fact, He taught on being the light of the world on that occasion. And He taught in the Court of the Women, the great open court, because it was where everyone could come.

And Dr. Luke calls it the treasury, because there was a section of it that the leaders had designed as the place where you give your money. They had set up thirteen shofars into which people dropped their money. And each of them had a sign on the bottom of it indicating exactly what that money was to be used for. Old shekel dues, new shekel dues, bird offerings, wood, incense, gold, free will; they all were labeled and people would go by and they would put their giving on display. Now the word "treasury" is actually two Greek words meaning: treasury and prison. So when the money was put in there, it was kept there, kind of like it was in prison.

And this is the real tragedy of all false religion. The center of all false religion is the treasury. So it is always all about money. False teachers say what they say and they do what they do, for money.

The false religious system of the Jewish frauds demanded money so that the guys who were in charge could be comfortable and prosperous and wealthy. And that's what false religion always does.

And this particular religious system cost this widow her life. She's going to go home and die. Do you get the picture? Jesus isn't *commending* her, she's a victim. He's not proud of her. He's not making her an example of sacrificial giving. This is an outrage. This is evil! And I'll tell you something else, this so infuriated Jesus that He links what this false evil religion did to this woman and countless others beside her to the utter annihilation of the Temple. Look at **Luke 21:5-6:**

5 And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said,

6 "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."

Now why in the world did Dr. Luke get into the issue of the beautiful stones and the votive gifts or the ostentatiousness of the Temple? It is because it is all related to what he is talking about here. How do you think the Temple became so beautiful? By fleecing the sheep, like this widow woman here. How do you think that St. Peter's Basilica in Rome is so ostentatious? By telling the poor peasants of Europe that if they want their loved ones to get out of Purgatory, they had to give money to build that monstrosity.

Jesus was looking full in the face at the symbol of a blasphemous religion that stood in opposition to everything God said in His Word, and Jesus says, *"I'm going to tear it all down!"* And in just 42 years from this very moment the Roman army came down in the fury of the Wrath of God and wiped out, not only the Temple, but the entire way of Jewish life, including their worship and their priests proving for all time that the inferior Old Covenant was done and would never be revived.

So Jesus doesn't want you to give up everything you've got and go home and die. This Passage says nothing about percentages, or proportional giving, or about giving with the right spirit, or about the measure of the gift is what you have left, or about giving up everything and living on faith. That's just not in this Passage.

Jesus is simply observing a false religion at work that preys on the weak and the desperate and the defenseless and holds out hope to the hopeless only if they just give their money. And Jesus is condemning that. That is not true religion, never has been. Listen to **James 1:27**:

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of *our* God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, *and* to keep oneself unstained by the world.

So true religion does not abuse the poor. It ministers generously, graciously to their needs.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.