

Mark 12:38-13:2 | The Poverty Gospel

Tyler Velin | April 23rd, 2015

Welcome back to GCF. We have two more meetings after this week, and I said it last week, and I will say it again this week: invite your friends. The gospel of Mark should compel you to do this. These next two weeks we will be looking at the story of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection as we finish Mark, and there is no better story than that story. There is no better gospel than that gospel. In there is no better way to love your friends than to share that story with them.

One of the things I love about being a dad is seeing how differently my son sees things. Now that Owen can talk you get glimpses into his world, and it's a wonderfully odd place. For instance Owen likes to "shoot" people, but rather than saying, "I'm going to shoot you" he says, "I'm going to push you." Sarah and I used to wonder how he got that, but it's because on TV when someone gets shot, it looks like they got pushed.

Also he has a different view of what is fun. We were gifted tons of toys when he was born. Great, expensive, wonderful toys. But Owen is far too satisfied with boxes, sticks and the base of his t-ball set. He loves them. We try sometimes to get him to play with toys, and sometimes he does. But most of the time when he finally uses them, he uses them in the wrong way.

While this was kind of frustrating for me at first, I realized that for Owen, this was the best way to have fun. For him it was deeply real. When it comes to the true reality which God designed, it like Owen's perception, is often backwards from how we think things should be. But because it is God who designed it, it is really the only true way of viewing life.

Tonight we are going to see the backwards economy of the Kingdom of God. We are going to look at three connected teachings of Christ, and this is what we are going to see: **Jesus doesn't see the worldly perspective, he sees the heart and the hope of the individual.**

Let's pray.

Let's dive into our passage today. What we are going to see first in verses 38-40 is that **Jesus doesn't see the worldly perspective.**

Mark 12:38-40

Jesus here rejects the pious, flamboyant external religion of the scribes. And to be honest this type of religion is condemned not only by Jesus, but by culture.

Culture has a nose for this stuff and it is culture who is often turned off to Jesus because of Christian's who wrongly live this manner of life. Maybe this is why you haven't gone to church before. Maybe this is one of the reasons you are skeptical of "organized religion." Because you see the hypocrisy and insincerity of some Christians.

This is indeed the argument that proponents of same sex-marriage levy at us. Why are we so concerned about marriage when our divorce rate isn't that much different than divorce rates outside the church? On one hand, those are not actual states, but a perversion of statistics. But secondly Jesus himself is upset at this type of living.

Get in line. No one is more frustrated at hypocritical Christians, and showmanship religion than Jesus himself.

But let's also be realistic here. Let's define this hypocrisy. Jesus is not upset that people seem religious. Hypocrisy is not preaching the gospel while being a sinner. Hypocrisy is preaching the gospel while thinking you are not a sinner.

This is what Jesus is confronting here. The bold and open confidence in the appeal of man. There are some people who treasure the perception of man more than the perception of Christ. And it is this group of people who live in this way.

They put on shows of faith. They desire to be seen as holy and devout. Maybe they lift their hands in worship not because they feel it as an act of surrender or praise but because they know it looks holy. They like to draw attention to themselves by always talking about what they have done for God. The services they have rendered the church. They promote judgment and self-righteous talk, always finding issues in others while they themselves are above critique.

And this is attractive to many people because it is relatively easy. There is this photographer who has gotten pretty famous because he snuck into Coachella, this big music festival, and took behind the scene pictures even though he didn't have a backstage pass. He and a buddy got some lanyards and threw them around their necks and walked through the security check point with it under their shirt. They acted confident, and they got in.

Then this same guy decided to take it up a level. And using some of the same techniques he actually snuck into a White House party with the president and took pictures in there. Now here is the thing, he was able to sneak into these places because he was able to look the part. But the reality is, he didn't really belong.

He didn't do that background checks, he didn't apply for the permits, he didn't do the leg work, he took the easy path of performance.

The same is often true in our walk. It is easy to look that part. Anyone can sing loud, anyone can draw attention to themselves. But the problem is that if your identity is in your appearance it's not in any sort of substance and there is so little joy in that.

You can't relax because it's all about your look, it's all about fitting in, it's all about toeing that line. Where for the sincere Christian, we belong not because of our performance but because of Christ's performance. And in that we can rest in his work.

For those who seek to belong because of their showmanship, Jesus says they will receive greater condemnation. Greater condemnation. Why? Because they are whoring out the gospel of grace for their own recognition. Jesus is not so fooled by this. Look at what Jesus says in **Matt 7:22-23**.

That is a bold statement. So how do we respond to it.

Jesus doesn't see the worldly perspective, but he sees the heart and the hope. How then are we to avoid being rejected by Christ? How are we to avoid being a gospel poison? How are we to redeem our witness in front of man? Let's read: **Mark 12:41-44**

I find this story wonderfully hopeful for poor college students. Poverty is of no obstacle to God! You are not any less of a Christian because you can't give large sums of money to the church. But it is also very challenging. Because in one sense it is easier to give from a position of wealth.

I have always found it weird that charity banquets are often some of the most fancy and elaborate banquets I've seen. Why is it? It's because the people who run charities are smart and they know that rich people have more money to give, they have a greater capacity of expendable wealth, so they cater their events to the taste of the wealthy hoping to get their donations.

How opposite is the Kingdom of God. Here we see people giving money into the temple treasury. This fund was used to furnish the temple with the gold and silver utensils which were necessary for worship. It also funded temple repairs, maintenance and construction. And Jesus sat opposite the treasure and watched people give.

Can you imagine that? I feel awkward when people watch me tip, let alone when Jesus himself is watching what I give to the church. But he sits there and he sees these rich people depositing huge sums of money. And you can imagine the joy of the temple officials seeing these gifts being offered.

Yet after all these wealthy people have gone up, here comes this poor widow. And probably with much shame she deposits what today would be roughly \$1.09. The temple officials probably were unamused, the disciples probably were unimpressed. But Jesus says something revolutionary: **Mark 12:43-44**.

Now how could Jesus say she gave more? Because here is the thing, Jesus sitting from afar knew exactly how much the widow gave, so he probably knew how much the rich gave. Certainly he knows math? How is the widows offering more? **1 Sam 16:7**.

Jesus Christ saw the seat of affection and that was worth more than the riches of the world. You see this widow gave all of her living, all of her money, to the temple because nothing was worth more to her than the worship of God.

She knew the worth of the temple. It was where God dwelled among his people, it was where sins were atoned for it was where prayers were offered. And she thought it better to enter the presence of God with empty pockets than to have full coffers in the absence of him.

What Jesus is saying here is that the only suitable offering to God is the entirety of your being. Because in giving all she had she not only gave her money, she gave herself.

It is easy to view Christianity as required hours of community service. We can carve out two hours a week for church, four hours if we go to GCF, six hours if we go to community group. We can maybe even give more hours. We can tithe off our meager income. As you grow older you can give more.

But the reality is God is not after the fluff of your life, he's after the heart of it. God doesn't want your affluence, he wants your affection. Affluence, riches and time are safe, the giving of your heart, now that is a dangerous task.

So what does this mean for you as college students? How does this shape your life? Remember this woman is giving all she has in order for the temple to stand. In order for it to be furnished, but look at what happens immediately after this. **Mark 13:1-2**. The disciples look at the splendor of the temple and Jesus says, it's going to be destroyed.

Because there is no temple building the proper application of this is not give more temple tax. But look at what Jesus says in Ephesians **2:17-22**. What Paul is saying here, even while the temple is still standing, because of what Christ has done there is a new temple: the church.

In the church people from all backgrounds are being united in Christ. So for you college students, yes you should give financially to the church, but that is not what Jesus is after. Jesus is after the affection of your heart being won by his gospel of grace and purposed to live for the good of the church.

This is what it costs to follow Christ. We give all that we are to the mission and good of the church and the glory of Christ.

The widow gave the whole of who she was to the former temple how will you give all you are to the new temple? When Jesus called his disciples he called them to give up everything and follow him and this is the mystery of gospel poverty. Jesus isn't calling you to serve him with just your strengths, he want you to serve him and give to him your greatest weaknesses. The whole of who you are.

Because Jesus will take the weak and feeble portions of your life and he will use them to build his church. He wants your all, he died for your all, he deserves your all. Give your life to Jesus.

Are you willing, like this widow, to please Christ by giving everything you have to live on? Here are three diagnostic questions for you to help understand where you are in this: 1. Where do you spend your money? 2. Where do you spend your time? 3. How do you view your aspirations for career?

Why is all of this important? Why does Christianity have to be at such a great cost?

I mean realistically this is asking a lot. Here on earth there are a lot of things we need to consider. We need to consider school, relationships, family, finance, career, health....the list goes on and on. And yet Jesus is demanding a life of self-denial and whole hearted commitment. Why?

Is what God is asking an unreasonable request from someone who has an insatiable desire to be served?

God is zealous for his glory, but he is not a self-absorbed dictator. The reason Jesus is so passionate about calling his disciples to lay down everything and follow him is because he is deeply concerned for your good and Jesus knows two things:

First, **you will be exposed**. For those of you who have your Bible's open look at the headings for the remainder of chapter 13: signs of the close of the age, the abomination of desolation, the coming of the son of man, the lesson from the fig tree, no one knows the day and the hour.

It is of no coincidence that this call for heart felt affection precedes one of Jesus' longest teachings on the end times. And look at what Jesus says in **Mark 13:13**.

Why is Jesus after your heart? Because one day a time will come when all the accessories of your life are taken away and all you have left is your heart. Time and time again in this discourse Jesus prefaces his words with, "I write this to you so that you will not be unprepared, so that you will not be asleep, so that you will not be mindless, the reality of judgment is real. The consequence of a life buried in the praise of man and the comfort of the world is an eternal punishment."

Just this week 30 more Syrian Christians were martyred at the hands of ISIS. At that point, you will not be able to endure in your excess, but you will only be able to endure out of your poverty. For those of us who live long enough to see it, the end times will be a period of trial and suffering those who are accustom to the easy path will take the easy way out. Renouncing the faith and turning from Christ. But those who live in the poverty of Christ will endure and be saved.

For those of us who die prior to that. You also will stand before God and he will see with eyes unrivaled the affection of your heart, and he will judge it, and he will not hesitate to find the ill-equipped heart to be lacking.

But for those who are truly saved. Who like the widow have given all they have to dwell in the presence of God, they will endure. They will consider everything as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus their Lord, they will be content with all things for the sake of Christ for the when they are weak, Christ is strong.

And this is the second thing Jesus knows: **Those who endure will be rewarded richly.**

Now remember the widow was giving her offering to the temple. The money which was taken from that box went to the lavish work of the temple building, but in 70AD, in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, the temple was destroyed. Completely. Totally. To this day destroyed.

So was the widows offering in vain? No. As we already saw, the current temple, the place where God dwells is through his church. But one day, our church buildings will collapse. Someday those who attend our church will die. In our day Christians are being isolated, persecuted, and murdered across our globe. Are our labors in vain?

Let us look at **Revelation 21:1-4.**

God dwells fully and really with man. And in this future dwelling there will be no more tears, there will be no more mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore for the former have passed away.

And what of the temple? **Revelation 21:22-27.**

Why do we give all that we have to Christ? Because one day we will dwell with God, and God will dwell with us and we will look back at this life and see only joy because of what it has merited. That is our true life.

That is what our life here is a contribution to. So look to the widow and give, and look to the Christ and live.