

The Life God Sees

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[0 : 00] and hide, doesn't it? If I just move my head this way, the teacher can't see me now and so I can do whatever I want. I've thought that before, but when you're up here, I don't know if you've stood up here before with everyone in here, whether you're the teacher or the service leader or whatever, you can actually see everyone.

You can see everything. You can see all of the talking, all of the head turns, all of the passing notes, all of the sleeping.

That's not a challenge, by the way. You think you're having a sneaky whisper? I can see you. You think that note was just between the two of you? Think again.

Well, in previous weeks, Jesus has been teaching the crowds and the Jewish leaders, what have they been trying to do? They've been trying to kill him, haven't they, but without much luck.

Last week, they tried to take him to task on the scriptures, but that failed miserably. Over these passages, we've seen that it's they who don't understand the scriptures.

[1 : 16] And despite their role, they don't know God and they don't know his son. So we shouldn't be surprised that people who failed to recognize the Messiah would also fail to live as God desires.

And so in this passage, Jesus raises that life. And what we'll see is what the blind leaders of Israel see, what God sees and what we must consider as disciples of Jesus today.

Our passage begins with a warning from Jesus to his disciples about the teachers of the law and their failure as leaders. Since they're blind to the Messiah, they're also blind to the people they should be leading.

Look in your Bibles from verse 45. While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets.

As this passage begins, there's been no change in scenery or timing from Jesus responding to the Jewish leaders' questions. In front of everyone, he warns his disciples.

[2 : 47] The first thing he says, though, it doesn't seem that bad. They like to walk around in flowing robes. You might not think too much of what Jesus had just said, except he says, beware of them.

So what is it with these flowing or long robes? Well, these robes are a sign of their position or their authority.

They're recognised by their robes. If they walk down the street or into a room, people will identify them as a teacher of the law because of their outfit.

They can be recognised by them. They can even be honoured just by being seen. And this is true now, isn't it? Who have you recently seen in a uniform that holds authority?

Jesus warns his disciples, don't be like the teachers of the law who like to walk around in flowing robes. They use their authoritative outfit so that people will see them in a certain way.

[4 : 02] Jesus' disciples must be wary of this temptation. And they and those after them were right to be wary, weren't they?

Because this issue was rife in the church, wasn't it? Much of the priestly dress was developed in the church despite this warning.

Special clothing to identify church leaders designed to make clergy stand out. Much of what is used today to identify church leaders by looks before character or conviction.

The teachers of the law weren't able to recognise God's Messiah. Neither his words or his actions in their presence.

They were completely void of God. Yet they made sure to wear their flowing robes so that people would recognise them. Because Jesus goes on to say, they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplace.

[5 : 12] To have the most important seats in the synagogue and the places of honour at banquets. Now again, it sort of doesn't sound that bad, does it? Aren't they just social butterflies?

They just love to have a bit of a chinwag to get dressed up. Hoping to bump into someone at a party. They're just massive extroverts. But no, these people are blind to God.

Blind to the Messiah. They're blind to the people they're supposed to be serving. So what they're really doing is using their position to serve themselves.

Dressing up for recognition. Seeking respect and honour. They want people to look at them and be in awe. They want people to lift them up in high regard.

Do you know that feeling of respect? Or have you seen it? Like when someone enters the room and it goes quiet. Like a bride.

[6 : 16] Or someone famous. Ouchie. They're highly respected. Held up by all.

These spiritual leaders, however, were evil. They didn't serve people. They just wanted to be respected.

They wanted people to hold them up. Jesus says in verse 47 that they devoured widows' houses. And for a show they'd make lengthy prayers.

What does it mean to devour widows' houses? They probably weren't eating them. But it doesn't actually say. It probably means trampling on the most vulnerable people in society for their own gain.

And covering up their evil with lengthy and pretentious prayers. How absolutely evil. What awful people.

[7 : 25] Instead of serving God's people, they're only serving themselves. Aren't you disgusted when anyone in a position of leadership uses their power for greed rather than serving others?

When it happens in schools or governments or churches or workplaces, doesn't it just suck? Should we be surprised that it happens here?

I don't really think so. Why? Because they're blind. They're blind to God. And they're blind to the coming of his Messiah.

And what do the blinds see? Only themselves. The result Jesus says. As a result Jesus says. These men will be punished most severely. Jesus isn't talking about levels of judgment. He's saying. You should know better.

[8 : 28] It's like he's saying. Woe to you. Woe to you. Using your privileged position for evil. But you are blind to God.

You live as though you only see yourself. Jesus finishes talking. And he notices people putting money in the temple treasury.

Second part of this passage shows us what God sees. Take a look from verse 1.2. Jesus looked up. He saw the rich putting their gifts in the temple treasury.

He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. Truly I tell you he said. This poor widow has put in more than all the others.

All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth. But she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on. Jesus sees two groups of people.

[9 : 25] The rich and a poor widow. What's interesting about this comparison and the challenge in the verse. Is that both groups of people are doing right. They both desire to serve and give.

But in verse 3 Jesus says. This poor widow has put in more than all the others. Which is fascinating because in reality she puts in less doesn't she.

So what does this mean. It means that God doesn't see what we see. Because what's two copper coins compared to large gifts.

In the last few years. Elon Musk you know how that is. He donated a hundred million dollars to various charities.

That's a huge amount of money isn't it. That's more money than I will ever make. Very likely. Just imagine. Just imagine who and what that could help.

[10 : 31] Like it's astounding isn't it. Just last year. Just in 2020. Mark Zuckerberg. He gave away to charities three hundred million dollars.

That's also astounding isn't it. And just last year. This one's clearly the winner. Jeff Bezos gave away ten billion dollars.

That's pretty astounding isn't it. How generous. So much money. That one hundred million for Elon. That's about 0.05% of his worth.

So that gives a little bit of perspective. For Bezos a bit more. 5% of his worth. Still small but still significant.

I wonder how you would feel. About giving to church. 5% of your worth. Some of you might have it on you tonight.

[11 : 39] For some of you it might actually be. Pretty challenging. Imagine if everyone. At HCD and St. John's. Gave 5%.

Had to give. And always gave 5%. That would be significant. Wouldn't it. Imagine. What. We could do. Imagine the ministry projects.

The staff. We could put on. Church plants. Mission support. A church. Near where I grew up. Had a rule like this.

But it was 10%. Their gardens were immaculate. Our gardens are also pretty good. Though that comes from a different kind of giving.

And much more than 10%. Now but hold on. It isn't just those. Who give a great deal. That Jesus points out. As having given more.

[12 : 39] But the widow. Who hardly gave anything. Yet at the same time. She gave all she had to live on. Not 5%. But 100%. So what's the difference?

Well they gave out of their wealth. And she gave out of her poverty. Interestingly a moment ago. Jesus warns about the teachers of the law. Looking after themselves.

Rather than the most vulnerable in society. And here we have this poor widow. Who couldn't be more different. Not looking for credit. But just for how she can serve God.

This gift is so special to God. Because it is so costly. She so clearly loves God more than herself. She's entrusting herself to him.

And she's giving all she has to live on. The others who give. Give out of their excess. Their gift will still go to a good place.

[13 : 38] But they will hardly miss it. What God sees. Is what is invisible to us. God sees a heart. Which is desperate to serve.

God sees a heart. Which trusts him. And not money. God sees a heart. Which gives to him. A heart which makes.

Costly sacrifices. For him. Friends. This is what God desires. Not leaders or disciples.

Who only see themselves. Or seek their own gain. Whether recognition. Or honor. Or respect. But humble servants. Jesus has already taught his disciples.

Of the character that God desires. In Luke chapter 14. On the slide. He said. When you're invited. Take the lowest place. So that when your host comes. He will say.

[14 : 32] Friend. Move up to a better place. Then you will be honored. In the presence of all other guests. For all those who exalt themselves. Will be humbled. And those who humble themselves. Will be exalted.

This has more implications. Than going to parties. Jesus is teaching about. A character of humility. The character that God desires. For disciples.

And certainly for those. In positions of leadership. Not like those who abuse. What God has given. And use it for evil. Like the teachers of the law.

Even like King Solomon did. In that reading. That we heard earlier. But like Jesus. Who put his money. Where his mouth is. And gave everything.

Including his life. Paul makes that abundantly clear. In Philippians chapter 2. On the next slide. He says. Do nothing out of selfish ambition.

[15 : 28] Or vain conceit. Rather in humility. Value others above yourselves. Not looking to your own interests. But each of you.

To the interests of others. In your relationships with one another. Have the same mindset of Christ Jesus. Who being in very nature God. Did not consider equality with God.

Something to be used to his own advantage. Rather he made himself nothing. By taking the very nature of a servant. Being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man.

He humbled himself. By becoming obedient to death. Even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him. To the highest place. And gave him the name. That is above every name. That at the name of Jesus. Every knee should bow. In heaven and on earth. And under the earth. And every tongue acknowledge. That Jesus Christ is Lord. To the glory of God the Father.
[16:23] Just as he said. Jesus humbled himself. And he was exalted. And the same will be true. For those. Who listen to him.

And trust him. Those who follow his example. And humbly serve him. This is the life that God sees. This is the life that God desires.

But what does this life look like. For us. We need to think about what Jesus raises. So we can be the kind of disciples.

That Jesus. That God desires. So let's consider Jesus warning for us. While Jesus specifically mentions teachers of the law. He's teaching his disciples.

So there's a challenge to Christian leaders. As well as all disciples. All disciples have something special from God. Don't they? Included in his family.

[17:21] Members of his body. The church. This warns us. Not to use what God has given us. For our own gain. How might we? One way.

Might be relationships. Or friendships at church. You may feel like. You already have your. Friends at church. But Jesus warns his disciples.

Of using. The good that God has given. For our own safety. Or our own comfort. Or our own gain. I'm happy here. I'm comfortable. With my friends.

It may not be as brazen. As the teachers of the law. Or feel evil. But that doesn't mean. We may not still shy away. From certain people.

Or cling to certain people. Forgetting. Who selflessly served. And accepted. Even me. Even you. And there's a warning. For leaders here too.

[18:20] Isn't there? I'm tempted to say. Those. Particularly. Who lead young people. Need to take extra care. Probably because of my job. But I think all should.

Why? Because leaders have. So much authority. We should use it. To serve. And teach. And protect.

Leaders of people. Leaders of young people. Leaders of all people. Need to take special care. Because whether you realize it or not. They give you.

Power over them. Now you might think that. You don't have much power over them. That they don't listen when you speak. Which I'm sure is true. Some of the time. But they watch you.

They listen to you. They become like you. Did you notice that Jesus says. Nothing about what the teachers of the law say. It's how they conduct themselves in public.

[19:23] It's not surprising that the teachers of the law did this. Because it does feel great. When people look to you. And people become like you. And people want to be around you.

But what those we lead need. Just like what you need. Is humble service.

Lead them to Jesus. Not to yourself. Because. Well you know the consequences. Don't be like those who are blind.

To God's word. And only see themselves. Be like him who weeps. Over those who need salvation. Be like him who humbled himself.

Even to death on a cross. So that we could have it. Jesus also presents a challenge. Doesn't he? A challenge regarding. How we give.

[20:21] And how we think about giving. My guess is that mostly people who regularly give. Do so out of their wealth. Including me.

We encourage electronic giving. It's good because without it. It may probably mean. You know nothing. Because of forgetfulness. At least that's the case for me.

So. Definitely for me. It means regular giving. But at the same time. I don't really notice. What I give. Now for my sake. This is for me and my wife. Partly because of the way our pay works. Also because. We made our decisions. With also some changes.

That we make occasionally. What we don't. We don't think about it very much. Now this may not describe you. And in the passage. Jesus doesn't condemn those. Who give out of their wealth.

[21:21] The money that I give out of my wealth. And you may give out of your wealth too. It goes to good things. What does it go to? To maintaining the property. So that we can meet here.

To running church online. Supporting mission. Equipping. Training. Sending. To ongoing. Gospel proclamation. All of the things.

That we do here. And all the things. That we want to keep doing. Your money given automatically. Is a huge help. And makes a massive difference. No one should feel bad for giving.

In fact. You should be encouraged. But there is a challenge. And it possibly is a little bit.

Uncomfortable to hear it. And that is that regular.

Comfortable. Unnoticed giving. Is not that costly. And so. Is there a chance. That your. Regular giving. Doesn't reflect.

[22 : 19] Complete. And utter dependence. On God. This woman gave. All she had to live on. She entrusted herself. To God completely.

She had the same mindset. As Christ Jesus. Who made himself nothing. Taking on the very nature. Of a servant. Would you reconsider your giving.

So that it looked. More like hers. What would that look like for you? Doubling your giving. Giving as much to church.

As you spent on yourself. Giving away a whole paycheck. See what happens. Something so striking about. The woman.

Is her poverty. It means this challenge. Is applicable to everyone. Not just those with. Regular income. Not just those with money.

[23 : 18] Money. This challenge. Is about. The humble service. Of those who trust God. And want to give to him. Not just money. But. But themselves. Their time.

Their life. Not giving God. Only what works. But making. Costly sacrifices. Having the same. Attitude as Christ. Who gave his life. I understand that this challenge. Is huge. It's difficult. Even to think about.

And I know that lots of people. Do give a great deal. Not just money. So much of ministry. Is enabled. And maintained. By the humble service.

Of so many of you. But since. The word has raised it. It is appropriate. To reflect on our habits. And search our hearts.

[24 : 14] So friends. To conclude. Time and again. This week. And previously. Jesus has shown. The results. Of people. Who claim. To know God.

But completely. Fail. To understand. His word. And therefore. Fail. To respond. Faithfully. To it. Don't be fooled. We know.

How God feels. About those. Who use. What he's given them. For evil. We know. God sees. Those. Who claim. To know him. And don't live.

As they should. We know. God desires. Humble service. Don't be like. Those. Who can only. See themselves. Be like him.

Who gave. Himself. For you. Entrust. Yourself. To him. And live. The life. That he. Desires. For you. How would I pray.

[25 : 10] That we would do this. Gracious father. Thank you. For the Lord Jesus. Who gave. His life. For ours. Thanks. For his. Humble. Service. Strengthen.

Us father. To follow. In his steps. Help us. To entrust. Ourselves. To you. And always. Live the life. You desire. Amen.