

Sunday, September 22, 2024 | Holy Week

Week 5 | Luke 20:41-21:4 | "On the Offensive"

Last week, we answered, "Is there an afterlife?" And we asked this question because the Sadducees thought the resurrection was a fantasy. But Jesus showed that the resurrection is a certainty. He then explains that this life has far more in common with the afterlife than the afterlife has with this life, particularly concerning marriage. The Lord revealed that assuming you are counted **worthy** to attain the resurrection of life, you will have a relationship with your spouse for all eternity, but you will no longer be married. Marriage is a part of this age and not the age to come. While that may be a shock, don't miss the point Jesus was trying to show: *God is a God of the living, not the dead.* And while eternity is coming, only those who call Yahweh their God, as the Patriarchs did, will receive eternal life. **God will resurrect all those who make Him their God. Is the LORD the God of INSERT YOUR NAME HERE?**

READ: Luke 20:41-21:4 (ESV)

⁴¹ But he said to them, "How can they say that the Christ is David's son? ⁴² For David himself says in the Book of Psalms, "'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, ⁴³ until I make your enemies your footstool.'" ⁴⁴ David thus calls him Lord, so how is he his son?"

⁴⁵ And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, ⁴⁶ "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁷ who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

^{21:1} Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box,² and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³ And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Up to this point, the religious leaders have tried everything. They've tried questioning Jesus' authority (cf. 20:2), getting him in trouble with the government (cf. 20:22), and discrediting him by dismissing the resurrection (cf. 20:33). But each attempt failed. And now it is the Lord's turn to go on the offensive.

In today's passage, Jesus quickly covers three topics: the Messiah's *divinity*, the religious leaders' *hypocrisy*, and the poor widow's *generosity*. By doing this, he establishes his credibility, discredits the religious leaders, and credits the woman's unassuming piety. As Lord, Jesus has much to say about the state of religion in his day, and most of what he says is not good. Thus, it is to our detriment if we ignore these passages. Christendom is not above becoming as bad as Judaism. The only way to avoid repeating their mistakes is to embrace the teachings of the Messiah, no matter how difficult it might seem.

There are **two** takeaways from this passage:

i. Vs. 41-44 – The **Son** of David was also the **Lord** of David.

No Jew would deny that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. So much so that the phrase "Son of David" did not only refer to Solomon but was also synonymous with the title "Messiah" (cf. Lu. 18:38).¹ Such a principle is well-attested by Scripture (cf. 2 Sam. 7; Ps. 89:29-37; Isa. 9:5-7; etc.). By quoting from Psalm 110, a messianic psalm written by David, Jesus showed that David referred to the Messiah as the "Lord," a title reserved for God alone.

But how could David refer to the Messiah as "Lord" if the messianic was supposed to be one of his *descendants*? A child was forever *under* his father's authority in some sense. No son, even one that becomes a king, would ever be considered above his father in the pecking order. Yet, here in Psalm 110, David talks about the heir to his throne as "*my Lord*." No father, especially a Jewish one, would ever refer to their son in this way. When you stop to think of it, the phrasing is quite jarring. As Bock puts it, "Jesus' point is that how can the great King David reflect such submission to a descendant? Who can be greater than Israel's great[est] king?"²

Jesus' question is so obvious that he does not need to answer it. The only being who would've been greater than David was God. This is why David himself, in this psalm, talks about the one who would inherit his throne as "my Lord." David knew that the Messiah would be God; He was the only one that made sense. "If Messiah is David's Lord rather than his "son," (vs. 44), then Messiah is the Son of God and transcendent Lord who sits at the right hand of God (vs. 42)."³

Therefore, anyone who willingly accepts the title "Son of David" is not only claiming the throne of the Davidic dynasty but also claiming to be God himself. When Bartimaeus, in Luke 18:38, called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me," the Lord did not deny such a moniker. Far

¹ Edwards (2015), p. 582.

² Bock (1996), p. 1640.

³ Edwards (2015), p. 585.

from it, by healing that man of his blindness, Jesus accepted such a title. The **Son** of David was also the **Lord** of David.

- ii. 20:45-21:4 – A **modest** but **sacrificial** donation eclipses a **majestic** but **superficial** devotion.

Because the Greek word for "beware" is in the present tense, it is more literally translated as "beware constantly."⁴ The Christian must always guard against the tendency to look good while doing bad.

The problem of the scribes was two-fold:

1. Vanity

The scribes liked to “walk around in long robes.” They were believers in the motto “the close make the man.” This is not to say wearing nice close is a sin. Neither is Jesus saying we shouldn't care at all about our dress. Clothes become a problem when they become a tool for vanity. The scribe's dress distinguished them from others, and they loved to make a scene. They put too much stock in their appearance.

READ: Proverbs 31:30 (CSB)

Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised.

READ: 1 Timothy 4:8 (ESV)

for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

The scribes loved “greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts.” In first-century Palestine, it was not only expected but required to formally greet teachers of the Law. If a scribe walked down a busy street, everyone not immediately engaged in work was supposed to rise or stand still.⁵ And, as respected members of the Jewish faith, they wanted the “best seats” in the house. Thus, the scribes loved to put on a show where they were the center of attention. Again, this is not to say that saying hello to someone is wrong. Neither is Jesus saying we should not give proper respect and honor to certain people, putting

⁴ Bock (1996), p. 1642.

⁵ Edwards (2015), p. 587.

them in seats of honor. As with the clothes, the issue is that of vanity. The scribes expected these things and even demanded them simply by virtue of being themselves.

READ: Philippians 2:3-4 (ESV)

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

2. Hypocrisy

Though they put on a good show, the Scribes were scavengers preying on the most vulnerable. Jesus said that they "[devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers.](#)" The word "pretense" means charade. They were well-practiced hypocrites. They were such good actors that they could pray with the best of them and, without skipping a beat, rob a widow blind.

How the scribes devoured "widow's houses" isn't said. But historically, there are four probabilities: 1.) widows who'd dedicated themselves to the Temple would have the funds liquidated by the authorities under some false pretense; 2.) religious leaders would take advantage of a widow's hospitality; 3.) scribes would take property as collateral, knowing the widows wouldn't be able to pay their debts; 4.) they'd charge exorbitant fees for managing a widow's estate.⁶

READ: James 1:27 (ESV)

Religion that is [pure](#) and [undefiled](#) before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

[Charity and piety ought to go hand in hand.](#) Otherwise, you've become like those vain, hypocritical scribes. And you do not want to be a scribe on judgment day. Jesus says, "[They will receive the greater condemnation.](#)" [There is nothing worse than a religious leader who puts on a show and uses his people.](#)⁷

⁶ Bock (1996), p. 1643.

⁷ Edwards (2015), p. 587, "Some people, however, harm others rather than help them, and the worst of these use religion as both a means and justification of their harm. The judgement of Jesus on those who traffic in piety for the purpose of self-aggrandizement is uncompromising: they will be "punished most severely" (v. 47)."

Okay, so who should we emulate if we're not supposed to be like the scribes? **A poor widow.**

Interestingly, this is Luke's fourth and final example of a person who does not speak but whose actions speak louder than words.⁸ Though the warning about the scribes and the scene with the widow are separated by a chapter division, they really ought to be together. You see, unlike the scribes, the poor widow was deserving of emulation. If the disciples were looking for an example to follow, they ought to watch the widow and ignore the scribes.

The "offering box" in the Temple had a trumpet-shaped opening.⁹ There were thirteen of them, and they were all made of brass. As people put in their donations, all could hear the sound of metal on metal. One can imagine that the "gifts" of the rich made such a clang that the sound of the "two small copper coins" given by the widow was drowned out by the commotion. After all, the woman gave only two lepta, equivalent to about 1/8 of a penny or 1/64 of a denarius, therefore a sixty-fourth the value of a day's wage.¹⁰

No one would've noticed such a small offering. But someone did notice. To Jesus, those two small coins dropping into the offering box sounded like two great crashes from a cymbal.

"Truly, I tell you," Jesus said, "this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Though two pennies don't seem like a large sum when compared to the gifts of the rich, to the widow, she gave a tremendous amount because she gave everything she had. **As Edwards puts it, "Others gave what they could spare; the widow spares nothing."**¹¹

The poor widow only had two pennies to her name. She had every excuse not to give to God. She could've even saved one penny for herself and given the other. But no. She gave both! **God does not measure the value of one's giving based on *the amount of money* given but on the *amount of faith* it took to give.** In other words, a *large* offering does not necessarily indicate *great* faith. It can. But how large is large? In fact, the smaller offerings cost the most because they often come from limited funds. **Aristotle said, "One's generosity is to be evaluated in terms of one's resources."**

Amounts matter little to a God who owns everything. The Lord is looking for people to put their all in the offering. **This is *not* to say we ought to give every last penny we have to the church (cf. 2 Cor. 9:7).** But it does mean our giving reflects how much we trust God. God praises an offering that says, "Lord, my giving is proof that I'm putting my security in your hands

⁸ Bock (1996), p. 1645, the others are the woman who anoints Jesus, Mary, and Lazarus.

⁹ Bock (1996), p. 1645.

¹⁰ Edwards (2015), p. 588-589.

¹¹ Edwards (2015), p. 590.

and not trusting my bottom line." Or, as Bock concludes, "God does not look at the number contributions we make or the amount contained within them, but at the way we make them. He does not count, he weighs."¹²

¹² Bock (1996), p. 1648.

Video Description:

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SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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