

2026-07-12

Attitude and Actions

Mark 12:38-44

These people are out there. Maybe they are even in here. They are the honorable leaders in the community. These are people we look up to. We want to shake their hand and get a picture of ourselves with them. We are told all the good things about them. We would gladly welcome them into our homes for a meal. We want to rub shoulders with them in hopes that we will benefit from their presence around us. We see them as important and influential people. Remember, Jesus was in the temple with His disciples. It was late Tuesday afternoon. Lots of these scribes were still in the temple listening to everything **Jesus was saying**, trying to find fault with what He said. We would never suspect that any of those leaders in the community and respected people in society would have selfish motives. But they do.

Both Mark and Luke (20:45-47) give a short list of six actions the Jewish scribes were living out. They really do not seem that bad when you first read them, well, except for one. Maybe we have acted this way ourselves at times. Most of us like to be greeted by name by everyone. It makes us feel welcome and part of the community. Who doesn't want the best seats in the church or the best seats at the pot lucks? For Jesus, it is not the action alone that is the concern. It is the attitude and the motivation behind the action that is of greatest concern to God. While Jesus was teaching, He noticed the number of scribes standing around listening to Him.

Mark 12:38-40 *“Then He said to them in His teaching, ‘Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.’”* Jesus cautioned people to *“Beware of the scribes,”* those teachers of the law. What we hear these men say and how we see these men behave can be deceptive. We would never suspect them of doing anything wrong, but their motives are not right. Jesus gives us three pairs of actions these scribes were doing to get what they wanted that the people were not aware of. There are people today just like them. They are in the churches. They are on television. They go around in nice clothes. They love greeting everyone in the stores. Now, on the surface there is nothing wrong with these actions. Jesus sees their motive. They are not looking to help people. They are manipulating people. The people are not aware of it. They are glad that someone rich and important is showing them some interest. If these scribes had a genuine compassion and humble attitude wanting to help people, things would be different. All these scribes want is greater riches and more power. Beware of people like this today in our world.

They are invited to sit in the best seats in the synagogue and sit in the most important seats at the festivals. They get seen by everyone and everyone recognizes them as the most important, influential people. These are people we should be able to trust. So, they are trusted to settle the estates of the elderly. These are people you would hope would have our best interests in mind. Yet what do they do? They take advantage of widows when they are vulnerable and emotional. They will talk widows into donating their houses and lands to a good cause, as they say in their long prayers all for the glory of God. In reality, these scribes are the ones who financially benefitted. They are robbing widows and no one knows it but God. Scribes were from the tribe of Levi. They were not supposed to own property. *“The Lord God of Israel was their inheritance”* (Joshua 13:33). The food they ate came from the sacrifices the people brought to the Lord. (Joshua 13:14). But by the time of Jesus, scribes were the wealthy, powerful leaders in the communities of Israel. By their influence, they manipulated people to give their property away. The scribes were keeping it for themselves. Beware of people like this today in our world.

Jesus did not put a stop to things like this from happening. He did warn those scribes and anyone else who manipulates widows for their own gain that they *“will receive greater condemnation.”* Being in hell is bad enough. Jesus told those who do such things *“will receive greater condemnation.”* What does Jesus mean? We do not know. I do not want to find out what He means by that. We do know that *“the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil”* (1 Timothy 6:10).

Verse 41 *“Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.”* The treasury was located in the court of the women. The area had thirteen trumpet-shaped chests for the deposit of gifts and the temple tax. Jesus sat for awhile and watched as many people made their deposits. Those who could not see could hear the coins clanging against these metal trumpet-shaped chests. Jesus was not the only person watching. Lots of people watched. The rich people knew this. Many of them made a grand display of their big gifts. They wanted to be noticed. And Jesus noticed them. He was not impressed by their giving as we will see in the following verses. He was impressed by a poor widow’s gift. Maybe it was one of those widows who, in the past, were manipulated by scribes to sign over her properties to them.

Verse 42 *“Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.”* A mite was the smallest Jewish coin. Two of them equaled the smallest Roman coin, a quadrans. Our penny today would be a fair comparison. The poor widow threw in a penny, which did not make much sound or look impressive. What a contrast of people who gave.

Verses 43-44 “*So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.’*” It seems as though Jesus had His disciples watch how and what people gave. After they had witnessed many rich people give, they also saw this woman put in her two mites. How did they know she was a poor widow? They probably knew by how she was dressed. They may have seen her before on the city streets. Jesus highlighted her giving. No one except Jesus was probably impressed at the time of her gift. Jesus told the disciples that this poor widow put in more than all those rich people.

Sometimes we think God must be impressed with our giving. I have learned that God is not impressed with Sally and my giving, even though we give about 25% of our income to the Lord. We give out of our wealth. I believe God expects us to give accordingly. He is not impressed and you should not be either. It is expected of us. Our lifestyle is generally not affected by what we give. I hear people talking about giving a tithe, which in their minds means 10%. Then they try and figure out if it should be 10% of their gross earnings or their net earnings. If this was the New Testament way of giving, **Jesus had the perfect opportunity to teach us the truth** as He watched how people gave. If 10% was the standard for God, Jesus should have told His disciples, look, that person is giving more than 10%. That person is giving less than 10%. That person is giving the right amount, just 10%. Jesus did not do this, though He had the chance. Jesus did teach the truth about giving.

He began His conversation with His disciples with the Greek word, “*amen*.” This translation reads, “*Assuredly*.” Other translations use the word, “*Truly*.” Along with the noun and verb it reads, **I am telling you the truth**. You want to know the truth about giving. Jesus tells us. Look at this scripture carefully. Jesus had His disciples watch how people gave so they could **learn the truth about giving to God**. There is no mention about a tithe. There is no mention about any percentage. Jesus describes only two groups of people who gave. Those who **gave out of their abundance** and those who **gave out of their poverty**. I do read into this, that I believe God expects all people to give. Many of us have an abundance. How are we expected to give? There is no percentage requirement. We are simply to give out of our abundance. God is not impressed with the amount we give. He expects us to give generously because He has blessed us generously (2 Corinthians 9:6).

The other group is those who **give out of their poverty**. There is not a percentage requirement. Paul wrote that we should give as we purpose or decide or choose in our heart. Do not give grudgingly or of necessity. You are not required to give a

certain amount. We are to give with a happy heart. *“For God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7). For this poor widow, Jesus must have seen the way she gave, not just what she gave. She gave a penny. It was all she had. She gave away her last meal. What was she going to do for supper, for breakfast and lunch the next day? Then what about after that? I wish I knew the rest of her story, but I do not. Later on, did Jesus tell Judas Iscariot, the keeper of the disciples’ money box, to find that woman and give her some money? (John 13:29). I hope so. Somehow, I believe that God blessed her and provided for her needs. Scripture does teach, *“whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”* (Galatians 6:7 / 2 Corinthians 9:6).

We need to have right attitudes in life, especially about money and possessions. Having right attitudes will be seen in a person’s actions. But a person’s actions will not always reflect right attitudes. Just like the scribes, there are people who pretend to be something they are not. People can be very deceitful. Some people do not want to be seen as bad as the worst. So, they are careful to be seen as good as the best. The scribes fooled the people. It is possible to fool people but we can never fool God. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

These scribes who were the most knowledgeable about their holy scriptures saw themselves as being better and more important than everyone else. They thought they were closer to God and more holy than everyone else. These scribes saw themselves as special. And they were. But they were not more special than poor widows or anyone else. Their view of being special caused them to be arrogant, not humble. It caused them to cheat the poor to become richer. Instead, they should have used their riches to help the poor so that they could become richer (2 Corinthians 8:14). Each person is special because we are all created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27). Man and woman, rich and poor, slave and free, Jew and Gentile are all responsible to respond to God’s revelation of Himself. How will you respond?

Questions to ask yourself: Will you listen to God’s conviction? Will you follow His right way of living and giving? Will you trust Him with your life?

Actions to take: Read Matthew (23:1-36). It gives a greater insight into the corrupt character of religious leaders. Evaluate your life. Confess your sin. Live for Jesus.

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