

Scripture:

Mark 12:38-44

“Grace --- grace ---- grace; It’s always and forever all about grace.”

Today we have before us a familiar passage ---- the widow’s mite ---- as it is often referred to.

The first 3 verses look at the conceit and self centeredness of the teachers of the law.

And how they draw attention to themselves unnecessarily ---- and how vain --- pompous ---- proud and arrogant they are.

And then the next 4 verses show us a radically different temperament.

The poor widow who gives all she has --- off to the side ---- humbly ----- virtually unnoticed --- except for Jesus who points her out to His disciples.

The poor widow gives with little concern for amount and instead gives with total conviction of intention.

“The poor widow gives with little concern for amount and instead gives with total conviction of intention.”

We can look at this passage ---- and draw some fairly simply and faithful lessons based on human behaviour.

Don’t be like the teachers of the law ----- walking around in fancy clothing ---- hoping to be noticed greeted with respect.

Don’t be like the teachers of the law ----- looking to be noticed and singled out in public.

Don’t be like the teachers of the law ----- taking the most important seats and the places of honour.

Don’t be like the teachers of the law --- preying on the poor and marginalized.

Don't be like the teachers of the law who are pious pretenders ----- hypocrites ----- making long and drawn out prayers that draw more attention to themselves than to God.

And instead ----- be like the widow.

Be humble and generous --- and do not seek reward for what you do.

Do what ever it is that you do in genuine service ---- tucked away a bit --- off to the side.

Don't draw attention to yourself or seek to be noticed when you are engaged in what God calls you to --- serve quietly and humbly without seeking reward or accolades.

Have intentions that are pure --- worked out between you and God alone.

When you give to someone else it's not always a bad thing to do so when it causes you to have to give something up yourself --- sacrificial giving instead of just functional giving.

All of these are true ---- and faithful.

But ----- all of these are also secondary.

None of them actually cut to the very heart of the passage.

None of them actually cut to the very heart of the gospel.

And they don't because they are all centered on human action ---- instead of divine action.

And the gospel is always more about God and His grace than it ever is about us and what we are doing.

“Grace --- grace ---- grace; It's always and forever all about grace.”

It --- meaning life.

It ----- meaning our focus in life.

It ---- meaning the gospel.

Are always and forever all about grace.

The more time I spend in the scriptures the more I am convinced that grace is what it is all about ---- God's grace in the person of Jesus Christ ----- and God's grace in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Although I don't typically spend any time thinking about gravestones ---- especially mine ----- "Grace --- grace ---- grace; It's always and forever all about God's grace." ---- may just be what I put on my grave stone.

"Grace --- grace ---- grace; It's always and forever all about grace."

So where is the grace in this passage?

What is the nature of grace in this passage?

What do we learn about grace in this passage?

Again -----

So where is the grace in this passage?

What is the nature of grace in this passage?

What do we learn about grace in this passage?

We are not simply called to be less like the teachers of the law in this passage.

Less self centered ----- less pompous ---- less proud and arrogant.

We are not simply called to be less of pious pretenders or hypocrites.

We aren't even simply called to give as generously and sacrificially and humbly as the poor widow does.

Instead there is something far more powerful ---- true and beautiful that is the very heart of this passage.

And of course ----- it's grace ---- God's grace.

The heart of the story has very little to do with human agents ----- or human behaviours.

The teachers of the law are graceless.

The story isn't just about their totally lacking in grace --- humility --- appreciation ---- and all that is good and faithful and true.

And it's not just about how the poor widow demonstrates grace.

The story isn't about the widow.

The point of the passage is God's amazing grace.

The widow reminds us not just of her gracious actions or attitude.

The widow reminds us and points us to God --- and His amazing grace.

The Bible is never about what Peter did --- or what Zacchaeus did.

The Bible is never about what Moses ----- Jeremiah --- or Paul did.

The Bible is never about what Mary ---- or Martha --- or Miriam or Anna --- --- or anyone else ever did.

The Bible is all about what God did.

Yes ----- often it's about what God did **through** Peter --- **through** Paul --- or Anna --- or Miriam or Sarah.

But ultimately it's always about what God did.

The way the widow gave.

Humbly.

Totally.

Sacrificially.

With little concern for amount and instead with conviction of intention.

Points to and reminds us of the very nature of the love of God.

God didn't give up His Son ----- in a similar fashion to the way the teachers of the law did things in this passage --- drawing attention to Himself.

God gave us His Son ----- in a way that is kind of like the way the widow gave her 2 coins.

The widow is a reminder of what God has done --- not a direction or recommendation to be like the widow ---- as faithful as she was.

That's what truly matters here --- God's saving actions in Jesus Christ.

Not the widow. ----

Not the teachers of the law ---

Not the money ---

Not what we do with our money ----

Not how much we give ---

Not how we give ---

Not when we give --- or even why we give.

Not human activity in any way.

“Grace --- grace ---- grace; It's always and forever all about God's grace.”

Time to put on our thinking caps.

Think about an amazing time in your life.

Think about the most beautiful thing that has ever happened to you.

Think about the most important thing in your life ---- or a couple ---- it doesn't just have to be one thing.

The most amazing thing in your life.

Your most beautiful experience.

The most memorable and important things in your life.

Go ahead take a moment ---- and think ....

Everybody got something amazing ---- and beautiful and powerful that happened to you

Now remember this ----- remember this ----- God is its author.

God is its author.

“Grace --- grace ---- grace; It's always and forever all about grace.” ---- God's grace.

Today is a Sunday --- indeed the next few days in the secular calendar in general are all about remembering --- looking back.

We do well to remember that life is not and never will be all about us.

Yes God loves us such that He does great and marvelous deeds --- salvation in Christ --- rescuing us from this thing we call earthly life with the sometimes presence of evil.

And it happens not because of anything we have done --- it comes not because evil decides it to be so --- these are small things in comparison with God's love.

It happens because of who God is.

It happens because of God's great love for us.

Anybody remember the cartoon Dennis the menace?

I love the one where Mrs. Wilson brings Dennis and his friend freshly baked chocolate chip cookies.

Who doesn't like chocolate chip cookies ----- freshly baked or day olds I'll take them any day.

Anyway Dennis and his friend get a plate of these freshly baked cookies.

And Dennis goes on to his friend wondering what they could have possible done to deserve these cookies.

Finally his friend interrupts him and says something to the effect of ----  
"You know what Dennis we got these cookies not because of anything we have done --- but because Mrs. Wilson is so very generous."

Which of course is true because practically all Dennis ever does is cause the Wilson's grief ----- especially Mr. Wilson.

"You know what Dennis we got these cookies not because of anything we have done --- but because Mrs. Wilson is so very generous."

God is gracious not because of anything we have done --- but because He is so very generous.

"You know what Dennis we got these cookies not because of anything we have done --- but because Mrs. Wilson is so very generous."

"Grace --- grace ---- grace; It's always and forever all about grace."

Amen.