GOD LOOKS AT THE HEART  

...How easy it is for us to appear to others to be "more spiritual, more godly" than what we really are. It is so easy for our hearts to be far from where they ought to be, and yet present ourselves as having it all together. Our hearts may be filled with lust, greed, hatred, jealousy, and self, all the while projecting a deep godliness.

...There was a day in Israel when they needed a new king. As the prophet Samuel sought this man he thought he found him, but he was wrong for the Lord told him, "Do not look upon his appearance...for the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:6-7)

...Jesus was in the Temple court in Jerusalem, just days before His death. At this point He offered one final denunciation against the religious leaders of the Jews. Right in front of all, He showed what was wrong with their religion and what was wrong with anyone who tried to impress people by being spiritual.

TWO WORDS FROM JESUS URGING US TO PLEASE THE LORD FROM THE HEART.

I. Jesus Warns: It's Not About Appearances! God Hates Hypocrisy. (20:45-47)

...The Scribes were all about getting. They stood as polar opposites to Him.

A. The spiritual leaders desired praise, honor, and money. They were bound up in pride and greed. Jesus boldly offers a blistering public critique within the hearing of all.
1. They loved to wear ostentatious robes. To draw attention and parade themselves...
2. They longed to be addressed by special titles...somehow they were above others. These self-important thought they deserved better, given their position in the life.
3. They felt they deserved the best seats in both religious gathering and at meals.
4. They felt they could take money from those who had very little...the widows.
5. They prayed long prayers to be well thought of, but Jesus tells God is not impressed!

B. Jesus told that such hypocritical spiritual leaders as these will receive greater judgment in the day when He will judge the world. (v.47) (Rev. 20: 11-15)

...James 3:1 warns us to be careful in our teaching, for teachers will endure greater judgment.

C. How deadly these attitudes are in the church, where we still face many temptations to pharisaical pride. We are called to be who we are in Christ, and nothing more and nothing less.

...Consider Jesus, who did not seek a place for Himself, but set aside glory and praise, honor, and money. They were bound up in pride and greed. They felt they deserved the best seats in both religious gathering and at meals. They were all about getting.

...They felt they could take money from those who had very little...the widows.

...They prayed long prayers to be well thought of, but Jesus tells God is not impressed!

...What matters to our humble Savior, is not what we wear, or what people call us, or what seat we may sit in, but what we are inside. He sees our hearts...His Gospel must change us.

II. Jesus Encourages: It's All About The Inside! God has A Good Word. (21:1-4)

...This poor widow is all about giving. She stands in contrast as the model of quiet faithfulness!

A. Jesus is still in the temple area near the 13 collection boxes, each shaped like a trumpet with a narrow opening at the top. People would walk up and give their coins as an offering to the Lord.

B. Jesus looks up and watches the very rich putting their many coins into the boxes.

...The crowd was very impressed by the large gifts given by the wealthy. But not Jesus!

C. Then a very poor widow gave her gift to the Lord, it was the smallest possible gift, but she gave all that she had to Him. "No reserves, no return, no regrets..." This coin = 1/8 of a penny.

...She demonstrates through her giving that her treasure was in heaven, because that is where her heart was. She displays in her giving God's greatness, His grace, His love and care, and her trust in Him to care for her. She could have given one coin, 50%, and given more than most...

D. Amazingly, Jesus weighs on a huge scale all the gifts given, and the scale tipped in her direction. Jesus tells that she gave more than all the rest. They gave out of their abundance, but she gave with no reserve. She gave her life, "bios." Jesus commends her for her generosity!

1. She gave more, in terms of real cost. She gave the most. What others gave cost them little. The size of a gift doesn't equal sacrifice. God doesn't count. He weighs.
2. Little gifts can be taken for granted or not even noticed, yet sometimes they are in fact the biggest gifts of all. "We always put our money where our heart is!" One of the best ways to tell what is inside us is by what we give to God. Remember Jesus!

E. The point: We must have a heart for God and a heart for giving. Sacrificial grace demands
LESSONS FOR OUR LIVES:

1. Jesus calls us to be men and women of integrity, from the inside out so that what is seen is truly a reflection of our heart. Don’t pretend…

2. The reality is that we cannot do this ourselves. Our situation is beyond hope as we are sinners and need help from outside ourselves. This is the Gospel. For it is not only the power to save us from the penalty of sin and provide for us a home in heaven, but more, the Gospel provides us with the power of God to change us now. This is what God is doing within us. We are His work. He is conforming us to the likeness of Jesus and in doing so is preparing us to live with Him in heaven.

3. The call of God is all-inclusive. If you are saved, you are called to be “all-in.” That is, we are called to live for Jesus in all that we are and do. And when we fail, and we fail often, ask the Lord for forgiveness and move on. Serve Him. It is a radical call to live as a revolutionary in this world. To do so, you must be “all-in.” Are you “all-in?”

4. Remember this poor widow, and give sacrificially to the Lord. Live to give, not to get. God so loved that He gave. This is the way of Jesus. This is the blessed life.

5. Today ask the Lord Jesus to save you from your sin, and He will. Come to the Cross and see what it cost Him to pay for your sin, and receive the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior. “Those who have the Son have life, but those who do not have the Son do not have life, but the wrath of God abides upon them.”