

What Are We Giving Jesus?

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[0 : 0 0] If you could turn with me now please to Mark chapter 12. Heavenly Father we come to you again in prayer.

We ask for your help as we open your word. We know that we have no understanding if we do not have our minds illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

And so we ask that the Holy Spirit would be active in this place. Working in our minds and in our understanding. Enabling us to speak and to listen and to respond.

And we confess Lord that we are people who have hearts that are hard. And we pray that the Holy Spirit would soften our hearts.

That he would break up the ground of our hearts. So that the seed of the gospel would come into our hearts and take root. We are conscious that we come here week by week.

[1 : 0 4] We open the scriptures week by week. And this is very much part of the routine of many of us as we gather here. But we pray Lord that this would be no routine occurrence.

But we ask that you would work in the power of the Holy Spirit. In our lives. So that some who may not yet know Jesus. Would know Christ before the service even ends.

And others Lord of us who know the Lord. And have walked with the Lord for many years. We pray that our hearts would be touched. And that we would be made more like Jesus.

In the way that we live. So work. In us and amongst us we pray. And what we pray for ourselves. We pray for the Sunday school. The children. We pray for the churches that meet around us.

In different places. We ask Lord that you would be at work for your glory. For the salvation of souls. And for the encouragement of your people. And we ask this in Jesus name.

[2 : 0 9] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. One of the phrases that we invariably hear. At some point over the Christmas period.

Is. It's better to give. Than to receive. I remember back in the days of the case catalog some of you will remember that we didn't have internet we didn't have an abundance of shops that we could go around and so I can remember in Kennedy Terrace and Stornoway with the case catalog taking this huge thing through and slapping it down on the table and going through these 60 or 80 pages of toys and making lists of all the things that I want for Christmas buckaroo, kerplunk, skillectrix, subuteal and you'd be salivating as you went through the pages of this book as you sat there with your pen and you began to make notes that would ultimately become your letter to Santa and so usually it would take two or three revisions before I would have something that I would even think about presenting to my mother but eventually after a bit of tweaking

I would take these three volumes of Santa's letter through to my mother and present it and I would be greeted with a disapproving frown as she saw these numerous items on this page and I would be sent away to make some more changes usually with the words ringing in my ears it's better to give than to receive the familiar words we hear them often they're familiar even in the world generally it's Jesus who first said that we don't find it in the Gospels but we find it in conversation as Paul the Apostle bids farewell to the church in Ephesus in Acts chapter 20 and in verse 35 Paul as he sings goodbyes to the church in Ephesus he writes in this chapter he says and it's recorded for us what he says

Acts 20, 32 you don't need to go there but let me just read this out to you Paul says now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing you yourselves know that these hands of mine Paul was a tent maker remember these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions in everything I did I assured you that by the kind of hard work we must help the weak remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said it is more blessed to give than to receive so that was Jesus teaching Paul remembered it Paul sharing it it's how Paul lived among the Ephesians but it's not how the teachers of the law were living in AD 31 or AD 33 sorry in Jerusalem and that takes us to the first point in chapter 12 and we can we can structure this in terms of four points hopefully the first point is that Jesus warns

Jesus gives a warning here he warns the leaders of the law the teachers of the law and he warns those who are dealing with the teachers of the law as he taught this is verse 38 Jesus said watch out for the teachers of the law they like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets they devour widows houses and for a show make lengthy prayers such men will be punished most severely it's a warning that Jesus issues to them indirectly and it's a warning that Jesus issues to his disciples to watch out for them don't be taken in by them Jesus is saying they might look the part with all their flowing robes they may have all the right religious gear on they may be given the top seats in the general assembly they might be able to speak and to pray with apparent great eloquence but watch out for them says Jesus you know we get pestered all the time today with scammers you can't go through a day if you have an email account without seeing five or six emails which are just scammers they may have the guys of an Apple logo or a PayPal account or the bank details or HMRC but you can recognise them these are scam emails and they're asking you to click on this link and to put in your bank details they're trying to rob you you know or if you don't have an email account the phone the phone's constantly ringing with these cold callers and we hear the background noise and we hear the click and eventually somebody comes on and they're asking us questions and they're trying to get our personal details and we know by now not to trust them they're scammers they're just trying to rob us and many of the teachers of the law that Jesus had clashed with and was warning them of here they were they were

[8 : 29] I suppose sophisticated high level religious scammers that's what they were and Jesus is exposing them as such the devil was using them as his salesmen and if you followed these teachers of the law if you allowed them to have their way you wouldn't just lose your money you wouldn't just lose your house if you were a widow you'd lose your soul if you followed the track that they were trying to take you down see Jesus makes crystal clear in many many places that there is only one way to heaven John 14 6 is the obvious place that our mind goes Jesus says I am the way I am the truth I am the life there is no way through to the father except through me and yet these men these teachers of the law they were against

Jesus they were seeking to take people away from Jesus they were making plans as Jesus spoke these words they were making plans to kill Jesus and Jesus makes very clear that they would they would never enter the kingdom of heaven but rather they would be punished verse 40 most severely not just punished but there seems to be a reserved punishment for these people which was of a greater severity in the depths of hell Derek Thomas when he speaks about this passage he says I'm kind of paraphrasing what he says he says there are depths of hell reserved for those who had so much of the truth revealed to them and yet rejected it and these teachers of the law they were experts in the scriptures they were those who were supposed to know in the greatest detail the Old

Testament prophecies they were those who were best qualified to see and recognize Messiah they had the truth in their hands they were the experts in truth and yet when Jesus came Jesus who was the truth and he spoke to them and he looked them in the eye when they listened to his sermons when they witnessed his miracles they they rejected him they firmly they brazenly they rejected him and there was a most severe punishment reserved for those who have been in that position we can shake our heads at them but much of the privileges that they enjoyed we also enjoy we have the Bible we as a nation historically have been known as the land of the book the gospel can be preached freely many of us sit and we listen to it

Sunday by Sunday but if there is a determined rejection of the truth of the gospel if there is a determined rejection of the offer of salvation through Christ there is a most severe punishment reserved for such it's a warning not just for them it's for us it's also a warning for us in terms of recognizing those who take us off course and what we have to see here is that anyone or anything that takes you away from Jesus whether that is a course of recognizable sin or whether it's a more subtle religious technique it's a danger to our soul and Jesus is warning us against such the devil is clever the devil can dress up as an angel of light he can dress up as a teacher of the law he can use people with clerical collars he can use people who stand on platforms he can use people with religious titles to take us away from the word of

God to take people away from Jesus to keep people off the narrow road to heaven to keep people on the broad road to destruction so Jesus warns us to be alert to such religious scammers so that we will not follow them down the road that leads to hell you know whoever stands in this pulpit or any pulpit make sure you have your bible open as you listen to them make sure you're checking like the people in Berea did that what is being said is connecting with what God has said and anybody who takes us off course we're given a warning against here there's one way to heaven there's one means of salvation it's through Christ it's through his cross that's our focus

[14:17] Jesus warns second point here is that Jesus watches and we move on now to verse 41 now many children in the month of December are told Santa's watching you may look blankly but I know you do it parents Santa's watching you better behave some houses have what they call the elf on the shelf and this elf kind of hops around from place to place and I've been in houses where there's been a bit of nonsense going on and the parent has said to the child the elf is watching it's a kind of threat against being bad what we learn here as we as we see these verses progress is that that Jesus watches and that's not meant in a threatening tone the threat the word of warning has already been issued to the teachers of the law but now there's a word of encouragement for the for the humble believer verse 41

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury seems kind of odd to us we wouldn't stand watching everything that's going into the plate but it was quite common apparently in that context there wasn't a wicker basket but there was a big kind of metal trumpet and people would kind of stand close by and watch and actually listen how many coins are going in there how heavy are they kind of estimated values going into that that plate from this character and so Jesus is found here in that place he's watching the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury verse 41 many rich people threw in large amounts but a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins worth only a fraction of a penny now culturally back then as it still is today the rich people they they held the power because of the finances that were behind them they they were respected they had fat wallets they could throw in wads of notes they didn't throw in wads of notes they didn't have notes they had coins but they could throw in weighty coins and a multitude of weighty coins into the the plate and then we have by contrast this poor widow she's at the bottom of the social scale she has next to nothing and she's coming to the collection play and what she put in the collection play would have been embarrassing for her and for anybody who was watching to

Lepta is what she put in Lepta is the Greek word that we get our word leaf from and the Lepta was the thinnest the flimsiest minuscule little coin it's worth just a fraction of a penny when it was thrown against the metal of the plate it would hardly have registered a sound and we can imagine the onlookers as this poor widow she puts in this pitiful collection you can imagine some of the fat cats shaking their heads disapprovingly but Jesus wasn't shaking his head as he watches Jesus knew what was in our bank account Jesus knew what was in our heart Jesus knew that she wasn't giving just a little of what she had in her pocket like the rich people did but this poor widow was giving everything that she had

Jesus saw her heart and he saw that she didn't give a little of she gave everything and so Jesus in verse 43 he calls his disciples to him he's something to teach them calling his disciples to him Jesus said I tell you the truth this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others they gave out of their wealth but she out of her poverty put in everything all she had to live on nobody else knew that but Jesus knew it and he speaks to the disciples and he gives this word of encouragement as they're looking at this poor widow who seems so insignificant in that culture

Jesus watches what are you and I giving to Jesus that's the question that flows in application here what are you and I giving to Jesus are we giving a little just a small proportion of the plenty that we have or are we like this widow you know are we kind of sort of throwing some loose chains in the direction of Jesus are we giving him the scraps this this is not just about money this is about everything this is about our time and our talents and our energies the gifts that God has given us not just the cash in our pockets are we giving him just the scraps and the leftovers of our time and our energy and our gifts after pouring out almost everything into our work and into our social life or are we like this woman seeking first seeking as a priority

[21 : 03] God's kingdom and God's glory giving our all to Jesus that's the question and it comes directly to us not to anyone else no one else can make judgments about what you and I are giving of ourselves to the Lord we're not in a position where we can see that so we must learn here to resist that no one else can make a judgment about how much of your time and your talents and your money that you are giving to Christ but you and I know in our own hearts what we're giving Sinclair Ferguson writes Jesus explains that divine accountancy works on different principles from the human he can use a small gift for a great purpose and a great gift for a small purpose so with that in mind we're challenged here to think that point through knowing that as we give

Jesus watches and I think that will probably be an encouragement to some as it would have been to this poor widow it may be a challenge to others though Jesus watches Jesus warns the third point here is that Jesus waits and that takes us into chapter 13 and we're not even scratching the surface in any measure of chapter 13 we're just glancing down in the general direction but you can see even from the verses that we read that Mark 13 is about the second coming of Jesus I know there's a whole lot of details in this chapter and there's lots of debate if you read the commentators there are dozens of pages in this chapter there's lots of different ideas about what some of the verses mean in this chapter but the main message and the plain message of Mark 13 is the fact that just as

Jesus came into this world he's coming back did you think about that this morning Jesus is coming back we sang already how silently how silently the wondrous gift is given so God imparts the human hearts the blessings of his heaven no ear may hear his coming that's how Jesus came such humility so little in the way of drama almost the whole world didn't notice the fact that God the son had come into the world it's almost silent but when Jesus returns every ear will hear his coming there isn't one soul you know who is so busy in the stock exchange or in world politics or in the factory or on the croft there isn't one person who is so busy and preoccupied that they will not hear instantly and be arrested by the fact that

Christ he's come back 1 Thessalonians 4 16 says for the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command a loud command with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God that sound will arrest the whole world in an instant Christ has come he's come back and we're told in verse 26 of Mark 13 that every eye will see the son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory everywhere in the world not one person who is living will not see the glory and the power of the descendant Christ not the child but the judge the king

Jesus is coming back but the point to note today is that Jesus has not yet come back which means that Jesus waits why is he still waiting well he's waiting to give some people even in this room the time to prepare for his coming we have lives that are busy got diaries that are full we have responsibilities and priorities and all these things that are congesting our lives and it's caused many of us to be totally unprepared for the second coming of Christ and yet when he comes every priority and every to-do list that we have will be meaningless so he's waiting for some of us to address that he says to us in verse 33 be on guard be alert be ready because some of you are not on guard some of us are not alert some of us are not ready do not let him find you sleeping verse 36 what I say to you I say to everyone watch you know

[27 : 52] Martin Luther didn't have an advent calendar Martin Luther wasn't counting down the days to Christmas with chocolate bites but Martin Luther had a second advent calendar he wasn't looking back so much on the first coming of Christ he was anticipating the second coming of Christ Martin Luther famously said I only have two dates in my calendar this day today and that day the day when Christ will return and we don't know when it's going to be neither did Jesus he says so much in this chapter but he urges us to be ready he urges us to watch and so the question for every one of us this morning as we're here is are we ready are we on this day this day that the Lord has given us are we making preparations for that day the day that the

Lord returns today Jesus waits or at least this moment Jesus is still waiting he's patient with us he's giving us time to get ready and how can we be ready what do we need to do to be ready we need to be trusting in Jesus we need to be worshippers of Jesus as this woman was in Mark 14 that takes us to our final point we're just glancing it the fourth point we see here is Jesus is worshipped things are intensifying for Christ the hostility is growing the prospect of the cross is just almost touchable and this is like an oasis before the turmoil of what he is going into

Mark 14 now the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread were only two days away the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him but not during the feast they said or the people may riot while he was in Bethany reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the leper a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume made of pure an arid she broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head just a note here to in breaking the commentators reckon that this jar was worth about 40,000 pounds this is not a bottle of Chanel number five where she just has a little spray in the direction of Jesus this is probably a family heirloom that's been passed down from generation to generation it was her life savings it was her security if anything went wrong she had this she had this pure an hour this expensive gift that had been passed down it was something that she could fall back on it was her security it was her life savings but once it was opened it couldn't be resealed it wasn't just a spray it was something that if it was going to be used it would be broken and that was it done and yet none of this stopped this woman from acting in worship she broke the jar she didn't hesitate she came to where

Jesus was wasn't an active impulse she thought this through she broke the jar and she poured this highly expensive perfume on the head of Jesus she gave it all to Jesus seems very radical doesn't it 40 thousand pounds in just one moment you might even say well it seems a bit unwise and if we're thinking that way we're thinking the same way as many of the people in the room were thinking some of those present verse 4 were saying indignantly to one another why this waste of perfume it could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor and they rebuked her harshly leave her alone says

Jesus why are you bothering her she's done a beautiful thing to me the poor you will always have with you you can help them anytime you want and we should the Bible's teaching is clear on that but you will not always have me says Jesus she did what she could she poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial I tell you the truth whatever the gospel is preached throughout will be told in memory of her and here we are thousands of miles away thousands of years later Jesus words are true what was she doing what was she thinking of she was thinking of worship her heart had been broken by her sin her heart had been broken in love for her savior and out of it flowed this overwhelming fragrance of worship and even though she didn't know what she was doing she was pointing forward in the breaking of this nard in the anointing of

[34 : 15] Jesus body to the greatest event in all of history the death of Jesus she was worshipping Jesus and the fragrance of that worship filled the room do we have hearts like this woman's have our hearts been broken broken by our sin broken by the love that we have for for Christ and is there the fragrance of worship about our lives you know we can't come to Jesus physically with a jar of 40,000 pound perfume we can't do what this woman did but what she did was simply reflecting on the outside what was going on in her heart in the inside and that's what

Christ is looking for from us our hearts not just a sliver of them but our whole hearts what can I give him poor as I am if I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb if I were a wise man I would do my part yet what I can I give him give my heart that's how we can be ready for the day when Christ will burst into the scene of history again that's how we can be ready and have hearts that will reap for joy when we hear the trumpet call of God and when we see

Christ in all his power glory we need to give him our hearts let's pray our heavenly father we thank you for this passage we thank you for these lessons that Jesus teaches that we are able to hear and to we pray learn from as we listen to the words of Christ we thank you for the encouragement that there is in them and we pray that we would take it we thank you Lord for the challenge that there is that sometimes bites us a little and we pray that we would not ignore it but Lord that we would hear it we thank you for the crystal clear warnings that Jesus gives us about the way of salvation and about the fact that just as he came he will come back to this world and we pray that we would be found ready we have been given so many chances we have the truth in abundance before us and we pray that we wouldn't be like the teachers of the law who looked the truth in the eye and turned their backs may we not experience that severity of punishment that is reserved for such but may we know the hope of everlasting life and for any hearts

Lord we pray that are still unmoved even as we sit here just now for anyone who may have something of the indignation of those who are in the room at how much Jesus asks for we pray that they that we would see even in the verses just ahead of us that the Christ who asks for this from us is the Christ who gave everything to us in the next moments he stands at a table and breaks bread and says this is my body broken for you and he pours out wine and says this is my blood it will be shed for you when we see the magnitude of what Jesus did for us we pray that we would respond in thanksgiving in worship in faith to the call of

Christ upon us and we ask this in Jesus name amen out you to to