

The Takers and the Givers

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[0 : 00] So after the morning service, the pastor was greeting the worshipers as they came out, and one particular lady, he said, Mrs. Taylor, I really appreciate your devotion.

You're always here every week. You're so faithful. To which she responded, yes, after a long, hard work at week, I love to come to church and sit in the soft cushions and not think about anything for about an hour.

Thank you very much. Oh, it would never happen here, I'm sure. She was devoted. She was faithful. She showed piety, but perhaps not the best kind.

Today we're looking at the subject of piety. Piety means being devout, being devoted. There are two kinds of piety. Sometimes the pious or the piety is looked on kind of in a condemning way, because there is a negative kind of piety, that which is the unthinking kind of religion, devoted to duty, committed to a set rule.

Devotion to doing works. It's an external, outward kind of piety without any reality on the inside. And of course, that is a negative and false piety.

[1 : 44] But there's a true piety that the scriptures speak of. Devotion to God, which is motivated inwardly to please him and not people.

Beginning with a humility, led by a godliness, godliness meaning a God-directedness. It's devotion to a person, not a set of rules.

It's an inward, outworking of faith. This is what Jesus is speaking on here at the end of chapter 12 of Mark. He's presenting to us two kinds of piety.

There is the false kind of piety, shown by the scribes, which is outward and selfish. And then there's the inward piety, which is humble and simple, illustrated by this poor widow.

And Jesus is just presenting them. He's just presenting them for us to look at, to consider. He doesn't tell us, act like one or don't act like the other one.

[2 : 56] We don't see that here. He simply says of the scribes, beware of them. And then he tells us this story, or presents this poor widow.

He doesn't say, be like her. He just says, did you notice her? Did you see that? And he leads it. Again, piety is something inward, not outward.

It is something caught, not imitated. So, last time we were looking at, verses 35 to 37, here in chapter 12, where Jesus was, pointing out the teaching, of the scribes.

So he, he picks up their teaching, and now he's going to pick on their, character. And they're the leaders, so they're the ones who presented themselves, as the know-it-alls, and the be-at-alls.

So, in a unique presentation, Jesus is exposing them. He doesn't do this, often. So this is unique.

[4 : 10] And of course, he's probably sealing the final nail, in his own coffin, because, because, in just a, couple of days from this, they will condemn him, and they will, give him over to the Gentiles, to crucify him.

So Jesus, in one way, is, making sure that happens. if he hadn't got under their skin yet. So we saw, in verse 35, that he, he raises the question, who is the Christ?

Or he says, more specifically, in verse 35, how can the scribes say, that the Christ is the son of David? That's the view of the scribes. That's the traditional view.

So he's just raising the question, to everybody else, how is it, that the scribes have this view, of Messiah? Their view is that, he's the son of David, which implies, that he will be, just like David. That his kingship, that his rulership, will be like David. He will be a warrior king. And so, we're looking for, another David to come.

[5 : 18] According to the Jewish, scribal tradition. That's their view. And when Jesus, of Nazareth comes, he's not a warrior, king.

He's humble. He doesn't call, for the overthrow, of the Roman government. He doesn't lead a charge, against the oppressors. He speaks rather, of humbling ourselves, and denying ourselves, and taking up our cross.

This is not, a David message. So there is that view. So Jesus asked, how is it, that they have that view? And the reason he raises the question, is because he presents, an alternative view.

As he quotes, from Psalm 110, David himself, who said, the Lord, Yahweh, says to, my Lord, Adonai, sit at my right hand, until I make all your enemies, under your feet.

So Jesus says, if, if the Messiah, is the son of David, why would David, call him his Lord?

[6 : 33] What, what father, calls his son Lord? Unless his son, is someone, unique. Someone who's more, than an earthly king.

So we looked at David's view. David's view, is that the Messiah, is, greater, than David. Superior, to David.

Surpassing David. Not an earthly king, at all, but a heavenly king, because he's sitting, at the right hand, of God. That's heavenly. And he is, putting every enemy, under his feet, until the last enemy, is conquered, and that is death.

That means, he's a king, who is, ruling, over all time. Until the end of time. So Jesus raises that question.

What is your, Christology? And we asked you that question, last week. If somebody asked you, your testimony, if somebody asked you, your beliefs, could you tell them, who you believe, Christ to be?

[7 : 39] Would you say, well, you know, the church says this? Well, no matter what the church says, what do you say? What do you know? What do you believe? What have you studied?

What have you come, to understand, as you've, looked at the scriptures, and read them, and studied them, and put them together? Not saying that you have to be an expert, but, do you know, who Jesus is?

Could you answer that question? For yourself. With confidence. Hopefully the church, is following this. It doesn't matter what man says.

It doesn't matter what a church says. It matters what God says. And that's what Jesus is challenging the people with. What do the scribes say? Well, you know what? Scripture says something else, so why are you following the scribes?

See? So now, having done that, now he has called into question their theology, their thinking, their conclusions about the Christ.

[8 : 40] Now he calls into question their character. Well, not calls into question, he exposes their character. Just expose. And we think, you know, this is kind of unlike Jesus, isn't it?

He doesn't pick on people. We certainly never see him pick on the common sinner, because he eats with them, and fellowships with them, and he loves them, right?

So what makes these guys different? How come he exposes them? Because they're the leaders of the people. They are the wolves in sheep clothing, and he will expose them.

And by the way, he's still doing that today. There are wolves in sheep clothing that exist in our world, and they get away with it for a while, but he will expose them. They will be dragged into the light.

Okay? They will. Because he is sitting at the right hand, and he will put his enemies under his feet, in his perfect time.

[9 : 53] Say, well, Lord, let's just do it. Once we, you know, can we purify the church? Well, the Lord has his own reasons, we know. Some of us need to learn under those things.

Whatever his wise ways are, we understand with time to come. So, let's look now at verses 38 through 44, where Jesus makes a distinction.

In religious piety, he's going to show two kinds of piety. The false kind and the real kind. He's going to set forward two examples. In verse 38 to 40, he's going to talk about the scribes who illustrate a false kind of piety.

They're spiritual, and they're looking, dressing right, and looking right, and talking right, and praying right, but they're fake. They're pretenders.

And then he's going to have the disciples sit and watch the givers, and among the givers, he's going to illustrate one particular poor widow who excels above all other givers.

[11 : 10] And he doesn't tell us to emulate her. He doesn't tell us we must do likewise. He just simply wants you to look. And maybe speculate on our own heart.

Is my... Would I do that? Could I do that? Do I do that in some way? Does everything that I have belong to him?

Or is it all mine? And he gets maybe what's left over. So it's just... This is what he does. So let's look at these two examples now. First of all, the first illustration of the scribes who illustrate false piety.

And I would summarize them as pretenders who are takers. Pretenders who are takers.

They're about themselves. They're in it for themselves. You can see the way that Jesus kind of outlines them. He gives them three marks. First of all, in verse 38, they're promoters of themselves.

[12 : 16] Look at verse 38. Beware. Watch out. Be warned of the scribes. What are they like? Well, they like, they want, they desire to walk around in long robes.

What's wrong with that? Well, it's kind of pompous. It's kind of show off. He's not just picking on, oh, they dress up.

That's not it. It's they're trying to set themselves apart. The long road. Oh, I'm very spiritual now.

Look at my long, you can't even see my toenails.

I'm very dignified. It was a way to set themselves apart in those days. It was kind of the fancy prayer shawl.

Most people dressed, the common folks just dressed in various colors of their linen cloaks. But the scribes would wear the white ones.

[13 : 21] White suit. White tie. White shirt. White shoes. Sandals. They would be set apart.

I'm holy. Look at me. I'm better than you. See that? They want to be noticed. He says that I only walk around in long robes, but they like the greetings in the marketplaces.

Like to walk among the common people and dignify them with their presence. Jesus. And as I read about these scribes in those days, they expected people to rise and greet them as they walked through.

So it was kind of, ah, Rabbi. Master. Father. The very titles that Jesus says in Matthew 23, Jesus says, let no one call a man by the term Rabbi, Master, or Father, because those titles belong to God alone.

Of course, Jesus accepted that title. Didn't he? Because they weren't wrong.

[14 : 40] So they want to be seen as important, as dignified. Verse 39 goes on. He says they, they, they love to have, or they like to have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor and the fees.

They desire to be honored. They want first place, best place. to impress and to be set apart, to be respected. See, these are self-promoters.

So the best seats in the synagogue, by the way, were up front. They can sit on their little throne and look around at everybody else. They're up there special.

They're elevated. It's just a, it's just a minor little thing, but it sets them apart. They love those seats. And at the feast, they want the one at the head of the table.

Remember Jesus told the parable about that? Remember he talked about when you go to somebody's house, don't pick the best seat because the owner might come and say, excuse me, you're in the wrong seat.

[15 : 44] You go sit at the inn. I want someone else to sit in the place of honor. Because when you go, sit in the last seat. Because maybe he'll move you up. But these guys always chose the best seat.

They always wanted the place of honor. Because they are the center of attention. So they're self-promoters. But it gets worse.

Look at verse 40. Look at the words that he uses to describe them in the beginning of verse 40.

Who devour the houses of widows.

These guys are predators. They're predators. They devour.

In other words, he uses a strong word to mean that they eat up, they consume, they're preying on victims. They rob these widows, they exploit them, they take advantage on the vulnerable.

[16 : 53] We hear about predators today. They take advantage of the trust. How is it?

I think somebody told me in class this morning it's defined, the predators are defined by they violate a trust that's been given. They violate the trust of the vulnerable.

That's what these guys do. They use their religion, they use their position, they use their status or thoughtful status as a means for their greed and for their covetousness.

They manipulate the hospitality of these widows. They violate the trust of the vulnerable. See, the scribes, the profession of the scribes, they did not inherit it, they chose it.

They are not like the Old Testament priests who get their living from the temple. These are self-study, maybe gone through rabbi school and then appointed as a teacher.

[18:05] They don't have an income. They are dependent on support. They are dependent on gifts. And so Josephus writes to us that a lot of the scribes of the day were very poor and not had much.

And the guys that were more greedy who were in it for themselves would look for, here's a rich widow. Let me get close to her.

Let me pour out how my sad story to her and maybe she'll help me out. I don't know how they did it, but Jesus describes it, God's view of it is that they're devoured, they're predators.

They're in it for themselves. And then finally we see in the second part of verse 40, they are pretenders. For a pretense, they make long prayers.

They pray in pretense. They have an ulterior motive. pretense means to have a hidden motive.

They're acting one way, but their motivation is really another thing.

[19:16] So they're praying long prayers. Why are they praying long prayers? Oh, did you hear how spiritual he is? Oh, he talks about all this theology, he must be really well knowing, and I think I can trust a man like that.

Right? He's so spiritual. I want to follow his advice. He must be so close to God. What did Jesus say about praying long?

He said, don't be like the Gentiles who use a lot of words. They think that God will hear them if they sound real impressive. You don't need to use a lot of words.

God already knows what you need before you even say it. It's not about informing God. These guys aren't praying to God. They're praying to people. They're praying for the crowd to impress, to gain their trust.

They're in it for themselves. See, these are takers, false piety, pretenders who are takers. It's not real.

[20:26] They're self-promoting, predatory, and they're pretenders. Jesus exposed these men in public because they were public leaders, because they had a reputation as a group of people who acted this way.

Now, we know it's not across the board. We know there were exceptions. We know there were scribes that were good guys who were genuinely just teaching and humble. We saw one who came up to Jesus and asked the earlier question about the greatest commandment, and remember Jesus said of him, you're not far from the kingdom.

You're on the right track. You are a genuine seeker. You are a good thinker. God but in general, the scribes Jesus had seen were of this ilk.

Pretenders, posers, predators. Jesus hated hypocrisy and false piety. This is what he rails against. He doesn't rail against any other kind of sin like this. He doesn't rail against homosexuality. He doesn't rail against murder.

[21:51] He rails against hypocrisy and false piety. Isn't that interesting? When you have your sins to pick on, what is it that raises his anger?

Hypocrisy. and false piety. Particularly among the religious leaders. In Matthew 23, where Matthew records Jesus' much longer working over of the scribes, eight times Jesus says, woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.

You do this, you do this, you do this, you do this. You clean the outside of the tomb, but inside you know who you really are? You're full of dead men's bones and wickedness.

Woe to you, scribe, Pharisee, hypocrite, pretender, poser, fake. Here's gentle Jesus, lover of sinners.

leaders. When it comes to spiritual leaders who are false, right now. Do you know that's the difference in terms of church discipline?

[23:20] Remember what Jesus teaches us about church discipline? If a brother of your sins, what do you do? Do you stand up in front of the whole congregation and expose them? No, no, no.

Jesus says, don't do that. No. No, go privately. Protect him. Maybe you got it wrong. Go, right? If that doesn't work, then you take another and the others there not to back you up, but to make sure you're both talking honestly, that you get the facts right, then you take it to the church, not to the public, but to the church, to the membership.

But when it comes to a leader who sins publicly, no process. public exposure. Because it's leadership.

Because it's in front of the people who is influencing other people. Woe to leadership.

Huh? I want to be a leader. Do you? Yeah? By the way, we need leaders. They're not lying enough now.

[24 : 41] It's actually good. It's actually good. I mean, we laugh. But leadership, it isn't about popularity. It's not about being up front.

it's about being responsible for God, for people. It's about a heart we're looking for, a shepherd's heart who cares about people, not about their status.

And I know you know that. Yeah. So, what Jesus says to them is not new. God has exposed spiritual frauds before.

Back in Isaiah, God calls out the leaders of Israel. Because they are man-centered and they are predators as well. And they are fakers.

So, in Isaiah 10, God says, woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees. In other words, decrees that are twisted. And the writers who keep writing oppression.

[25 : 43] To turn aside the needy from justice. And to rob the poor of my people of their right. That widows may be their heart spoil.

And that they may make the fatherless, the orphans, their prey. Predators. What will you do on the day of punishment? In the ruin that will come from afar?

To whom will you flee for help? And where will you leave your wealth? What are you going to do then? Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain.

for all this, his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still. God will call you to account.

And so Jesus says as well at the end of verse 40, these scribes, these men who are self-promoters and predators and pretenders, they will receive the greater condemnation.

[26 : 50] Now notice the distinction he makes there. They will receive condemnation. They will be judged, yes, but they'll receive a greater condemnation. They're going to be held to a higher standard.

They're going to be expected more. Why? Because it's not just about them, it's about who they're influencing. They're leading others, they're influencing others, they're leading others astray, they're preying on others.

So they will be judged great, more abundantly. So there's the false piety, which you know, Jesus doesn't even say, he just exposes them, he just says, beware of it.

Watch out for it. There are wolves out there. You can't tell them right away because they're dressed in sheep's clothing. They talk and dress and look the same, but over time, watch.

You will notice. Not judge and condemn, simply just watch. Beware. Know that they're there. Don't let it ruin you.

[28 : 07] Huh? Those of you who have suffered under spiritual abuse, those of you who have been victims of that spiritual legalism, that kind of come down on you, heavy burden, right?

Recognize God has had you go through that. Why? That you might be able to comfort others who have been through that. okay?

You've survived. You're here. God will heal you. So be aware. I just want you to notice. He doesn't say, oh, don't be like them, you know.

This is the bad guy. Don't be that. He just says, beware. They're there. I will expose them. Beware. Now he comes to a second kind of piety and this is the true kind.

It's not very exposed. It's like there's plenty to see of the other false piety.

[29 : 19] We see the pretenders. The true piety is kind of hidden. It's kind of small. It's not where you would expect it.

It's the poor widow. Not the rich giver. True piety I would describe as people of faith who are givers. They're people of faith who are givers. Piety means that devotion. They're devoted to God. They're devoted by faith. And because they're devoted to God, they give.

So I want you to note some things here. Notice, first of all, verse 41, Mark sets the scene. Jesus is watching. He sits down opposite the treasury and is watching people putting money into the offering box.

Then you have people who are giving. You have many rich people put in large sums. And then you have this poor widow come and put in two small copper coins. So they're sitting opposite the treasury.

[30 : 26] The treasury is actually there are 13 offering boxes in the women's court. Obviously, it's the court of the women because here's a widow coming and is able to give to the offering.

So remember how the temple is set up? You have the spears. You come in the first entrance into the court of the Gentiles. That's where they buy and sell stuff.

That's where the Pharisees and Sadducees have all the money changers and everything. So that's the big court where the Gentiles can even come. Then there's a wall and then you have the court of the women.

So Israelite women can come further than the Gentiles. They can come closer to the presence of God in the temple. So they're able to come here. And then you have the court of Israel where the Israelite men can come. Then you have the court of the priests where they do their work.

And only the priests can go into that level where they're doing the offerings. They're working in and out of remember daily they're going into even the inner part.

[31 : 30] The high priest even goes into the inner courtyard, the holy place. And then there's the holy of holies, the last curtained wall, which is where only the high priest only once a year enters because that is the very presence of God where the ark of the covenant sits.

And remember they're warned, don't go in uncovered. They tie a rope to them and the bells are sitting, you know, if the bells stop ringing, okay, pull the rope.

I'm not going in there. Right? So the sense of holiness, right? And of course, that was that system under the law and the message was stay out and stay alive.

And Christ, of course, broke all those walls away. and we're encouraged to come boldly right through the curtain. And we kind of lose sight of how incredible that is.

But so in the court of the women are these boxes. There are 13 of them. And they're designated for different things.

[32 : 47] There's a box and then they have a ram's horn. It's called the shofar, kind of a ram's horn, which is a curved horn that then opens up. And so people would drop their money into the thing.

And so rich people, you could hear the you know? And then the widow comes to hear this barely hear it.

Because what she dropped in there were the smallest, lowest amount of money possible. It was equivalent, the two coins were equivalent to one sixty-fourth of a denarius.

So, what's a denarius? A denarius is the equivalent of one day's wage. She drops off one sixty-fourth of one day's wage, which we find out later is all she had.

Huh? Remind me of the name that call. You want the Greek of it? It's a lepta.

[34 : 06] It's a lepta. Thank you. Yeah, very good. And then Mark gives the Latin translation.

Our translations simply say which is a penny. But literally Mark is saying the Roman Latin translation is something else. It's codrona.

Chodrontes. My Greek's a little rusty today. Which tells us why does he give the Roman translation or the Latin translation?

Because that's who his readers are. That's how we know, oh, he's not writing to Jews, he's writing to Roman Gentiles. Because they don't know that term.

That's a Greek term. They know the Latin term. they give them Latin. But the significant thing to notice is she drops in these two small coins.

[35 : 09] And the other thing you think about is why did she give both coins? Why not just one? You know? Because maybe she still could buy a slice of bread maybe.

With one. But she puts in both. Jesus. Ting, ting. Not just ting. Ting, ting.

So, now, here's what Jesus does. Look at verse 43. So they see this. Jesus called his disciples to him.

In other words, this is a teaching moment. This is a significant discipleship lesson. He calls his disciples to him and makes a declaration.

Because look at how he starts this declaration. He says what? Middle of verse 43. Truly I say to you. That's one of those phrases. You know, when Jesus says truly, truly I say to you, or amen, amen, I say to you, or verily, depending on your translation.

[36 : 31] Remember the old King James was amen, amen, I say to you. In other words, this is a statement of authority that you can bank on. So in a lot of the other sayings, he's saying something very important about who he is, or about faith, or about the Lord.

And he's going to make a statement about this widow. Truly I say to you, what? This poor widow has put in more than what?

One of the other givers? Than all of the other givers. they're going, no, she put in two little pennies. That's not more. What can you do with that? How is that really going to serve the temple? How many, they're not going to buy, they're not going to get all the oil they need and the frankincense and the, I mean, how are they going to, two pennies?

What's that going to serve? Well, God has a different value system than we do. Huh? She put in more than all of them.

[37 : 52] Because it cost her more. It cost her more. Listen to this. God looks at the giver, not the gift.

He looks at how you give, not how much you give. The value system is different than ours. I remember one time I had my little 240Z and I had a little ding on it.

I went down to the, I heard this guy was really good with his car repairs. I went down to him and he wanted buku bucks. And he had this, this was back when, remember the I Found It campaign? Remember the Bill Bright kind of, you put the bumper sticker on your thing, I Found It and people are supposed to come and ask you what you found. I found Jesus and he gives you opportunity. Anyway, so he had one of these I Found It stickers on his, on his mechanics chest.

I mean, oh, he's a Christian. All right. What do you charge me? \$1,500,000. I don't know, whatever it was. I mean, I was just a 19 year old and I didn't have any money.

[38 : 59] I'm like, no, that's not right. Well, see, the more I have to give God, I can give a better tie.

I said, I didn't have any eloquence back then or anything. It's like, I'm not buying that. Really? That's how you're going to justify that?

He said, I think you ought to remove that I Found It sticker. Because you found it in my pocket. I wish I had those words back then.

It's not how much. It's how you give. Who is a giver? And then he makes this distinction in verse 44. Look, he gives the reason. Why is it that she's given more? In what way? Well, he says, for this reason, for they, and he's not condemning the other givers, by the way.

[40 : 03] That's fine. They give much. That's fine. That's not wrong with that. He's not picking on the rich. He's just making a comparison. They've given a lot, but she's even given more.

Why? Because they contributed out of their abundance. They contributed out of their surplus. They contributed out of what they had left over, what they have extra.

They contributed out of what they didn't need. gave out of their poverty.

Literally, she gave out of what she needed. They gave out of what they didn't need, because I don't need this much so I can give that to God.

She gave out of what she actually needed, which Jesus further explains as she put in everything she had, all she had to live on.

[41 : 20] She made an absolute sacrifice. What would it take to do that? What would it take to do that?

What do you think? Crazy? No. Faith. Faith.

See, her piety is just toward God. It's not about other people. It's about her and God. I would imagine she's done it before and seen that God provided for her.

Maybe she's done one take instead of two before. And this time she's not doing both. All of it. See, even if she just did one, that'd still be 50% of all she had, that was probably still higher than everybody else gave.

Because maybe they're given 10%. Maybe they're given 20%. We're not told. But even if they're given 20% or 30% say, even her 50% is more.

[42 : 39] But she gives, tink, tink. She gives 100%. All that she has. Now, do not mishear this.

Jesus does not then say, you must be likewise. He doesn't say that. He just says, guys, come here. See her?

Wow. Wow. You seen faith like that? Wow. Oh. And he leaves it at that.

He's a good teacher, right? He just leaves it, okay, let that work on you a little bit. Where maybe I think about that later and I go, wow, could I do that?

Would I ever do that? More importantly, is that what God's calling me to do? Because it's not a law. Would God ever call me to do that?

[43 : 42] And if he ever called me to do that, would I do it? That's all I need to look at. When I look at my resources, maybe I don't have a lot of money, but I have time to give, or I have a talent.

do I consider that time of mine or that talent of mine mine, or do I consider it the Lord?

See, that's really the root of it. My money, is that mine or is that his? I give to him first and then I live on the rest. I mean, how do you think of it?

That's not about how much. How? True piety, devotion to God in faith, involves giving at a cost.

Paul teaches the principles of giving. So, if you want to think about, you know, this whole, I'm not making this whole message about giving, but she is giving, and so I want to be clear about the principles of giving.

[44 : 49] In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul teaches some principles on how to give. So, he says to the Corinthians, we want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches.

In other words, there's an offering going around among the churches. And I want you to know about the churches of Macedonia in particular, because they're really good examples of giving.

Why? Because this is what they did. They gave in a severe test of affliction. their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

For they gave according to their means, as I can testify. And you know what? They also gave beyond their means.

of their own accord voluntarily. In fact, they begged us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

[45 : 55] Maybe they were told, no, I know you guys are in affliction, I know you guys are barely getting by, so you don't need to give. And they're like, no, no, no, no, don't take that away from us, we want to give. You know, it's that kind of thing.

Begging us earnestly for taking part in the relief of the saints, so this is for other Christians. And this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord, and then by the will of God to us.

See, the priorities, right? Accordingly, we urge Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace, this act of giving.

But as you excel in everything, Corinthians, you excel in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you, see that you excel in this act of grace also, this act of giving.

I say this not as a command, so here it is. This is not a command. I'm not coming over you to say you must give. No, no, no. not a command.

[47 : 00] But to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, here's the example, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable. according to what a person has, not according to what a person does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness, your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance at another time may supply your need, so that there might be fairness and equality.

he's just saying, I don't want to overburden you, but you're doing well now, so let your blessing go to their need, and then later, when you're hurting, their blessing will go to your need, and we're loving each other.

See? So quickly, I want you to see some principles here about giving. First of all, note that it's even in poverty. Here's people who gave even in their poverty.

It's according to their means and beyond, so in other words, it's a sacrifice. They gave beyond their means. It was an act of faith, an act of devotion, an act of piety.

[48 : 27] Secondly, notice that their motive is about first to give themselves to God, then to others. Well, there's that great commandment stuff again. First to God, love him, then what naturally or supernaturally overflows from that?

I love others. Those always go together. But the Lord first and then others. And then notice, as I pointed out already, the call to give is not a command but an urge to show their earnest love.

It's a free giving. How do you give? Please do not give out of guilt. Do not give out of obligation. Give freely. Give freely.

Which means you give more. No, I might. I don't know. That's between you and the Lord. You'll read our covenant and our statement of faith.

We don't say you give a tithe. It's an Old Testament language. That was under the legal covenant. We say you give whatever the Lord lays on your heart.

[49 : 34] God. And then how much do you give? Paul emphasizes you give according to what you have, not according to what you don't have.

There are times you can give more and there are times you must give less. That was a crisis of my faith some years ago. I had to cut back because I found out I was giving out of my saving.

because I was just doing the and things weren't. I was really, really hard. It's still hard. But Paul says don't give according to what you don't have.

Give according to what you have. So if you want to give regularly you go before the Lord and you figure out how much. So true piety is a devotion to God by faith and it's expressed in how we give and that giving can be costly and sacrificial.

This is what Jesus wants his disciples to see. Watch out for false piety and notice true piety.

[50 : 54] Just notice. Let's pray. Father we thank you for your word. We thank you for Jesus' teaching. We thank you Lord that in a day like today a word like piety or pious gets mentioned most often in a negative way.

But we thank you Lord that in your word we see there is a trueness to it. Just like religion Lord can have a negative tone because of those who have practiced it in false ways.

We know that there is a true religion too. A true religion that is about inward works and love for others. Not about a prescribed practice.

It comes from an empty heart. So Father we pray that you take these words today and you put them on our hearts and you apply them in whatever way you desire for us.

We ask this in Christ's name. Amen.