

Luke 20:41-21:4 **A Humble Faith**

Intro: The closer we get to the cross, the more our hearts are exposed. That's a general truth of Christianity. If you want to keep a veneer, superficial, shallow soul, then stay away from the cross. In our journey in Luke we are getting very near to the cross. And as we do, our hearts get more exposed. The exposure tests our heart to see if we have a humble faith.

—The core idea this morning is a *humble faith*.

There are three short lessons that all center around a humble faith.

1. A humble faith exalts Jesus in all of Scripture (20:41-44)

- First, let's look at the audience. The scribes in v39 said Jesus answered the resurrection question well. So he turns attention to them.
 - He gives a Bible question to them - quote from Ps 110.
 - Interestingly Ps 110:1 is the OT verse most often quoted or alluded to in the NT.
- Also, Jesus's favorite book of the Bible to quote from is the Psalms. I have no doubt he meditated on them day and night (Ps 1).

- The question: How can David talk like this. How can the Messiah be the son of David if he is the Lord of David?
- It seems Jesus wanted to clarify the popular understanding of Messiah. Most Jews had the expectation that Messiah was a military and political figure like David. But Jesus shows the Messiah is so much more...ultimately the Messiah is One to be *worshiped*.

That actually moves us much closer to what Jesus is calling us to: worship.

- The claim of Jesus as Messiah to be worshiped is what seals his death sentence (cf. 22:67-69)

A humble faith is a faith that worships Jesus. Simple and straightforward. That's the vision of Jesus that the Gospel of Luke ends with (24:52) "And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

A humble faith has worship of Jesus Christ at the core.

The point that Jesus makes is that the Messiah (Christ) holds the place of surpassing greatness.

Apply: If we don't see the surpassing greatness of Christ in scripture, we don't really understand Scripture. A humble faith will see Jesus exalted in all of Scripture. It's the main difference between belief and unbelief.

(Jn 5:39) ³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me. The Scriptures, disconnected from Christ don't bring salvation, only condemnation.

- So here, Jesus is testing hearts to see how they respond when he puts himself as the center of Scripture—just like he will do in 24:44
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This also provides a test for our own heart. When we read the Bible, what is our main goal and objective? What do we hope to see? The exaltation and worship of Jesus Christ? Or do we *just* go to the Bible for answers on how to fix our problems? There is a self-centered approach to the Bible some take. What does it mainly say to me? Ask yourself that next time you open this book. If Jesus is at the center, your heart displays a humble faith.

2. A humble faith hates what Jesus hates (20:45-47)

- (v45) Jesus now turns his attention to his disciples, yet others are within an earshot.
- It's a spiritual warning.

The main warning is against pride. But this is not just a generic pride that effects all humanity, it a particular form of pride, *spiritual pride*.

How to spot spiritual pride

—There are 3 categories Jesus deals with: appearance, greed, and hypocrisy.

+Spiritual pride dresses for attention (46a). The flamboyant dress styles of the scribes would cause heads to turn.

+Spiritual pride also loves the social spotlight (46b). When a scribe walked down the street, he expected people who were sitting to stand out of respect (only exemption was if you were in the middle of work); adding a scribe or two to your dinner list gave a few extra points socially.

+Spiritual pride is self-serving (47a). "...Devour widow's houses" — possibly they were trustees of a widow's property and used it as a means of lining their own pockets, at the expense of the most economically distressed people.

**Jesus is also preparing his future leaders of the church on how to act. Don't mimic the patterns of leadership you see.

Do you know who taught me the danger of this? Rob Andrews. When I got my start in pastoral ministry, I called Rob with a question. I don't remember all we talked about. The church I was serving was incredibly small, and the budget reflected that—enough to feed my family and pay for the rental house at the time. I had a friend who worked in personal finance and helped us with some budgeting. He got a peek into our income and said, "you either need to get your church to pay you better, or find another church."

I allowed this to percolate for a while. At some point I called Rob for something unrelated and mentioned how finances were tight. In that conversation he brought up 2 Cor 2:17, “we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s Word.”

I’m thankful that one of my pastoral models has resisted the self-serving side of spiritual pride that takes the form of greed and ministers the word to me in season.

+Spiritual pride is superficial yet buried under the showy (“for a pretense make long prayers”)
+Spiritual pride will have greater consequences at judgment (47b).

Jesus clearly hates all forms of spiritual pride. Spiritual pride can look slightly different today. We might not dress flamboyantly—but we can do things like post on social media that draw attention to our spiritual life in an unnecessary way. Maybe we are tempted to pray before others in a way that sounds like we have deep intimacy with God...but our own prayer closest would reflect the truth we are shallow. God knows our hearts.

We need to remember that Jesus is talking to disciples. Even though he’s condemning the hypocritical teachers—his aim is to *warn disciples*. Jesus is also preparing his future leaders of the church how to act. Don’t mimic the patterns of leadership you see.

Some of the disciples would go on to become great leaders in the church, like Peter and John. God may raise some of you up to be great leaders in the church. Hate what Jesus hates—pride of appearance, greed, and hypocrisy.

3. A humble faith loves what Jesus loves (21:1-4)

- This little story of the widow’s offering is meant to show the polar opposite of spiritual pride. The scribes had a phony faith—this woman has a true humble faith.
- This was a freewill offering that funded temple service. On one side is the rich, putting in very large sums; on the other side the widow.
- The widow is the poorest of the poor in Israel.
- There were 13 offering boxes shaped like ram horns.
- She puts into the temple treasury just two small coins. They are called lepta and would be fractions of a penny.
- Jesus points out that she has given more than all the others, not in quantity, but in proportion. She gave all. She did not hold back for herself.

Illus: In our day it may look like this. There are two checks in the offering. One comes from the Jones family. The Jones family recently inherited \$100,000. They faithfully tithe 10% and give an additional 5% to benevolence, and 5% to missions. But they make some plans for the other 80,000. They are responsible, stick some in investments, buy a new car, pay off the mortgage, and take the European vacation they have dreamed of for years.

The other offering is from Mrs. Wilma. She's an 80 year old widow, lives in a low-income housing and social security. She has to get a ride to church because she owns no car. She has no savings, no home equity, and she's never going to take a vacation again in her life. Her social security barely covers necessary expenses. All of her money is spent on living expense and medication. But she faithfully writes out a check for \$100.

Which gift was more significant? Almost across the board we would say the \$20,000. Jesus's point is not to condemn the dutiful and giving of the affluent—his point is that they did not give the most.

\$20,000 is dutiful and generous. But there is still a safety net when you have \$80,000 to work with *for yourself*. There is still a hefty cushion left. And that summarizes most of our giving. We are like the Jones family—we give, but there is still a hefty cushion left for ourselves.

The widow gave out of her poverty and exercised humble faith - humble in the sense of dependence. The widow will have to depend on God even more; she may have to skip a meal, or not order the medicine. Literally, the text reads, "she gave all of her life". Her giving was 100 percent. It's striking that a poor widow becomes the prime example of a humble faith.

It reminds me of a sermon by Francis Schaeffer *No Little People, No Little Places*. In God's economy, bigger is not automatically better.

The poor widow also, in a sense, foreshadows the Lord Jesus. His entire life was marked by a humble faith. He was dirt poor by world's standards and he willingly gave all of himself to God for us as Gal 2:20 says.

Conclusion:

So, the question of the day that we need to ask is "do I have a humble faith?"
—Do I open the Bible to see Jesus and his glory? Is that my main drive in reading the Word?
—Do I hate all forms of spiritual pride in *myself*? *The easiest thing to do is hate sin in others; it's hardest to hate our own. Make it a prayer. "Holy Spirit quickly show me my spiritual pride."
—Do I want to be more like the widow? Giving more and more of myself to my Savior who gave me his all.