

Luke 20:41-21:4

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. Good morning. How lovely to see you. Thank you so much for coming out this morning. Please, if you've got a Bible, grab it and turn to Luke chapter 20, those verses that Paul helpfully read for us earlier.

And this is where we're going to camp out this morning, Luke chapter 20, as we journey with Jesus as he heads towards Jerusalem. Thank you so much, Fiona and the band, for leading us this far.

And let's bow our heads and still ourselves as we come to God's inspired word this morning. And let's pray. Father, thank you so much for this morning.

Thank you for the truth that your mercies to us are new each and every day. And we ask as we turn to your words now that you would refresh us and you would restore us and you would remind us and you would realign us all for your glory and for the upbuilding of this church.

We ask in Jesus name. Amen. Well, before we, Alex and I, we moved to Edinburgh in 2012, we spent a bit of time working and traveling in Malawi. And I remember meeting this man one day in the marketplace.

[1 : 1 2] Now, back in 2012, I used to think I had a really good camera. And when I dug out this photo, I realized actually technology has come on a long way since 2012. So bear with me. I met this guy. Okay. And immediately his T-shirt drew me to him.

And I went to him expecting to find a wonderful story about how somebody had gone from believing that there was no God to believing that there was a God.

So I ran up to him. They call white people in Africa Mzungus. So this Mzungu ran up to him and I said, my friend, I love your T-shirt. I love your T-shirt. Even let me have a photo of it.

Can you believe? I love your T-shirt. And he looked at me puzzled. And he shouted to his friend over here in Checewa, which is the local language, shouted in Checewa.

And his friend looked at me and translated what he had said into English. And he said, he likes wearing the T-shirt, simply because he got a laugh and he got some people like me coming up to him.

[2 : 1 1] He loves wearing the T-shirt, but he doesn't believe what it means. He loves wearing the T-shirt, but he doesn't believe what it means. You see, what I thought was true about this man from looking at the outside was not true about this man on the inside.

And this morning we're going to see Jesus challenge a people that their outsides and their insides are just not matching up.

Now, as we've journeyed through Luke's gospel over the last recent weeks, we've seen Jesus being put through what you can only describe as an intense examination. Okay. The religious leaders are trying to get him to make a mistake so that they can get the excuse that they need to kill him.

Now, as we've journeyed through this over the last few weeks, I wonder if you've noticed the pattern that I've noticed. What's the pattern? Well, something like this.

[3 : 28]

[4 : 3 9]

[5 : 47]

[7 : 0 1]

So if Jesus has been on the defensive over the past few weeks, here he is about to go on the offensive. And he's going to ask some questions of his own. And the question he asks to the listening crowd is a question that concerns his identity.

[8 : 09] Because he wants them to think through, to take time to consider who he really is. Now can I just say, pause at this point, if that is you this morning, if you are taking time to consider who Jesus is, maybe you've been here over the last few weeks, but you wouldn't call yourself a Christian.

If that is you this morning, then can I encourage you that what you are doing is the most important thing in life. To consider who this man Jesus really is.

In our verses, do you see Jesus ask a question? In fact, Jesus asked two questions to the crowd. Interestingly, none of which he answers.

And even more tellingly, none of which they answer. Now to understand his questions, remember that he's speaking to a generation of people who are steeped in religious history. And not only are they steeped in religious history, but they are steeped in religious expectation about a promised Messiah, about a promised King, about a promised Saviour who God would send to rescue his people from their enemies.

And when this Messiah would come, he wasn't going to come from left field. He was going to come from the line of Israel's greatest and most celebrated king, King David.

[9 : 30] And this king, this Messiah, when he comes, is not going to be inferior to David. He's going to be superior to David. In fact, David himself even says so.

Jesus quotes there, Psalm 110. This great Psalm of David which speaks about God's mighty king. I mean, this Psalm is a big deal in the psalmity.

It's a big deal. Now these men knew their Bibles from cover to cover. They would have known this Psalm. And they would have known that David, as he thinks about God's mighty king, the one to come, refers to him as Lord, Adonai, Master.

That's how David sees this king to come. And they know that David bows the knee to this king even though he is one of his descendants. Now we've seen this over the past few months or so that people have begun to join the dots as to who Jesus is.

If you remember the blind man back in chapter 18, verse 38, as he hears that Jesus is about to pass by, he seizes his opportunity and what does he shout? Jesus, son of David.

[10 : 42] He recognizes who Jesus is. Now what is Jesus' point? that if David saw God's king rightly and the blind man saw God's king rightly, then why will you religious leaders, why will you not see God's king rightly?

And they will not give an answer. And it's not because they can't think of an answer, like the cat's got the tongue or something like that. They just don't want to give the answer.

I read a fascinating quote recently from Winston Churchill as he reflected on his own life and as he reflected on human nature. He said this about what we tend to do with the truth.

We occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of us pick ourselves up and hurry off as if nothing has ever happened. Well, that is these religious leaders.

They will not see Jesus for who he is. I wonder if that's some of us here this morning. Maybe you've never considered Jesus for yourself. Maybe you have not bowed the knee to him as your lord and your king.

[11 : 56] Well, if that's you this morning, I'd love to chat to you. Anybody you've seen up the front this morning, maybe you came with a friend, chat to them about who this Jesus really is. But I also wonder for some of us here this morning whether what is in our heads needs to make it down to our hearts.

You know, I had a friend, one of my best friends actually, he lives in Vancouver in Canada. I remember Alex and I, we went to visit him and his wife three or four years ago and I went to see his study.

So he used to be a pastor and he had a brilliant study full of many, many leather-bound books. But at the top of his study was this old, I want to say the word fusty, that's a Scottish word, you know what I mean?

Bible at the top of his shelf. And I said to him, why on earth have you got that Bible at the top of your shelf when you've got so many modern ones down here? What is going on? And he said, well, that Bible is a family heirloom and it's been passed down from generation to generation of Smith.

So I inherited it from my grandpa. But the thing about my family line is that not everyone in my family line is a Christian. And so when I look at that Bible, it reminds me how easy it is to have a Bible in your hands but not a saviour in your heart.

[13 : 12] It's exactly what Jesus is saying here. Jesus says, you see knowledge on the outside, but on the inside, I see pride.

Here's critique number two, verses 45 to 47. Jesus says, on the outside you see genuine, but on the inside, I see fake. So with all the people listening, Jesus turns to address his disciples at verse 45.

He's been surveying these teachers of the law. He's been watching how they behave. He's been seeing how they tick. He's been seeing what they love. How are they acting?

That's a great description here that Luke gives us. What are they doing? They're wearing religious clothes. They're receiving religious greetings. They're attending religious events.

They're speaking religious language. All of this is supposed to add up to give us the rounded impression of total devotion and absolute piety. And you have to say, do you know, as you read this description here, that this is a religious life that looks extremely impressive.

[14 : 24] Now put yourself in the position of the disciples at this point. Now remember who's in Jesus' little band of followers at this point. It's the sinful, the hated, the broken, the neobodies.

And so as they look at these religious leaders in action, what must they be thinking? Well as I was thinking of that this week, it reminded me of the days when I used to go to the gym.

Days which I'm sure you can tell are long behind me. And I used to go to the weights area of the gym. Again, days which you can tell are probably well behind me. And there was always, and if you've gone to the gym, if you go to the gym, you'll know what I'm talking about here.

There was always that one person. I used to go in, I used to see him. Sweatbands on. Protein shaking hand. Really tight t-shirt that said no pain, no game on it.

Do you know that kind of person? Making really exaggerated noises as I used to go up to the weights. And I used to watch him do this.

[15 : 28] And then I used to look back at me and how did I feel? Intimidated, inferior, useless, out of place.

I'm sure that's how these disciples felt as they watched these religious showmen in action. I mean, who are we in comparison to them?

Well, Jesus steps in and says, let me tell you what's really going on there. these men, they live for the praise of men rather than the praise of God.

These men live to serve themselves, not interested in others, and they will even exploit the most vulnerable in society for their gain.

Disciples, don't let them fool you. Don't let them fool you. It's true, isn't it? As a society, we hate hypocrisy. Hate hypocrisy.

[16 : 30] When people's lives and people's lips when they don't match up. When following the news over the last few weeks, you'll see the outcry that's come in response to some of the findings that went on at Oxfam.

As a society, we hate hypocrisy. But isn't it comforting to know that as we read these verses here that God hates hypocrisy too? God hates hypocrisy too?

And like we see here in Jesus' words, not only does God hate hypocrisy, not only does God see hypocrisy, but God will one day do something about hypocrisy and everything will be exposed and everything will be dealt with.

That's these men here. That's these men here. The consistent truth of scripture that man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart.

Let me ask you this morning, what is the state, the true state of your heart this morning? What is the true state of your heart this morning? So easy, so, so easy to slip into spiritual showmanship just like these people.

[17 : 45] Now I must say, it's one of the biggest battles for me doing this job. One of the biggest battles for me, that I have to constantly be on my guard and make sure that I'm reading the Bible devotionally well before I'm reading it professionally.

That my public prayer life is being fueled by a private prayer life. And we have to say, do we not, we know it to be true as Christians, it's so easy to pull it off.

If you've been in Christian circles long enough, I mean, you know this to be true. You say amen at the right moments. Depending what church you're on, you lift your hands at the appropriate times during songs.

You know the lingo of an impressive prayer. You attend the right meetings. You keep the right circles. But all the while, your outside is different from your inside.

Let me ask you, when today is over and when you go home to your room and when no one else is watching, who are you really?

[18 : 51] You know, Scottish minister Robert Murray McShane used to say to his congregation that what a person is on their knees alone before God, that is what they are and nothing more. Jesus says to this generation, on the outside, you see genuine.

But let me tell you, on the inside, I see fake. Here's critique number three, verses one to four of chapter 21. Jesus says, on the outside, you see cost, but on the inside, I see cheap.

Now, where is he? He's sitting in the vicinity of the temple and he's continuing his people watching. I love to know that Jesus isn't the only one that loves the people watch. Doing his people watching and he sees that people are offering their gifts at the temple treasury.

Now, in the temple treasury, there were 13 boxes in which you could put your money and each box has a brass trumpet-shaped opening which was narrow at the top and wide at the bottom.

Now, in this day, remember that we're not talking about banknotes. We're not talking about contactless technology. People would give coins. Have you sat there for long enough as people put their coins in these boxes?

[20 : 05] Not only would you hear the sound of the coins going in, but it wouldn't take you long to distinguish the sound that the different coins made as they went into these boxes. So you can imagine, can't you, these rich people that Jesus observes, they walk up to make their offerings at the boxes.

They look around to see if they are being watched before dumping a full bag of coins into the box. Now, imagine that satisfying noise that it would make as they hit the bottom of the box.

Clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink. Clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink. People would love you. People would love you. You'd walk away thinking to yourself, isn't God lucky to have me or she on his team?

Isn't God not lucky? But Jesus looks at these people and he says, their hearts are all wrong. All wrong.

It was Valentine's Day and Wednesday. For some of us, I'm sure that was an expensive day. I looked up some stats this week on Valentine's Day. Did you know that it was estimated that Americans spent \$19.6 billion on the 14th?

[21 : 23] I mean, that is a lot of flowers, is it not? \$19.6 billion. It's an expensive day. But, if you were to walk into any kind of shop post-Valentine's Day, you'll notice that stuff is heavily discounted.

Roses are going for 50p, chocolates are reduced to clear. Remember one year for a joke, I popped out for a pint of milk and what did I see? I saw a cuddly toy lobster for 50p that said, pinch me, I love you on it.

So I bought it for Alex. She wasn't too impressed. But men, imagine if to our loved ones what we said is that because we were so, so busy on Valentine's Day, actually what we prefer to do is give our loved ones our presents on the 15th, the day after Valentine's Day.

All the while knowing that your plan in your head was to go to these shops and just, I mean, take the whole lot that were just to clear items. Discount I.O. was getting hit hard before returning to your loved one and saying, Happy Valentine's Day.

What kind of gift would that be? It would be one that wants all the credit but wants none of the cost. All the credit but none of the cost.

[22 : 42] That would be cheap. That would be cheap. And as Jesus observes what's going on here with these rich people, what he says, that gift is something where they're wanting all the credit but it's something where they're paying none of the cost.

And he's not even making a dent on their bank balance, that gift. It's cheap worship. But, someone else comes up to the temple treasury and whereas before the coins and the offering went clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, clink, now all you hear is just the faintest, faintest little tin tin, tin tin, tin tin.

It's a poor widow. Love this poor widow. Isn't it amazing how often we've seen widows in this gospel? She offers two small copper coins. And to put that into context, a copper coin in this day is worth one one hundred and twenty-eighth of a denarii.

Now if a denarii is roughly a day's wage, her coins are worth one one hundred and twenty-eighth of a day's wage. Okay? And she's put in two of them.

So, in monetary terms what she's put in there is barely anything. It is barely anything. And Jesus sees her and he says to his disciples, look at her.

[24 : 06] You can imagine the disciples at this point, can't you? What do you mean? Do you mean her? Do you mean two coin Carla over there? Totally agreed Jesus. We were hoping you'd point that out. I mean, she is absolutely pathetic, is she not?

Will we go and have a word? Jesus says, no, don't lynch her. Learn from her. Learn from her. Learn from her.

Look at what he says at verse four. The rich may have put in more, but let me tell you it cost them nothing. But this widow, she might have put in less, but let me tell you, it cost her everything.

Now that's what I call a sacrifice. Do you know what I'd never noticed before reading this this week? This widow gave two coins. Now it's not like when you go to a restaurant and you leave a tip and you go into your pocket and you pull out a two pound coin and you think to yourself, I would only normally give one because I can't be bothered asking for change of this two pound coin, I'll just give two.

It's not like that. This woman has got two coins. She has legitimately got the option of holding one of them back.

[25 : 20] And we have to say if there was anybody who we've met in this gospel so far that we would think is legitimately being able to hold one back, surely it's this woman. Just in case.

Just in case the unfortunate happens. Just in case I need it, maybe I'll just hold one of them back. But you can imagine, can't you, she walks, maybe she's leaving the house that day, going to the temple treasury and she's got her two coins in her hand.

And she looks at the first one and she thinks, yep, I'll give that coin. And she looks at the second one and she thinks, but I really need it. I really need it.

I could really do with it just in case something happens. But do you know what? God, I love you. God, I trust that you'll provide everything that I need. I'm going to give that one as well.

That is a sacrificial heart of faith. She walks away from that temple treasury probably thinking to herself, God, I've got nothing else other than you and so I'm fully reliant on you to provide everything that I need.

[26 : 24] So friends, we have to ask ourselves in application, as Jesus contrasts the hearts of these rich people with that of this woman, is are we being sacrificial? sacrificial? As God's people, are we being sacrificial?

Not just with our money, but with our time and with our energy and with our diaries and with our resources and with ourselves. Are we being sacrificial as God's people?

Are we playing it safe? Are we holding it back? Are we storing up treasures on earth for ourselves? Are we treasuring comfort?

Jesus says, on the outside you see cost, but on the inside I see cheap. And just as we work towards a close this morning, remember that the one who is in Jerusalem, commenting on sacrificial giving, has travelled to Jerusalem to offer his own sacrifice.

And his sacrifice is not two copper coins. He has not gone to Jerusalem to show us what sacrifice looks like. He's not gone there to demonstrate sacrificial giving.

[27 : 35] He's gone there to be the sacrifice. This is the gospel. This is this king who we are following. He's not giving two copper coins.

Jesus is in this city set on offering his very life as a sacrifice. As he pays the price of my sin on the cross.

As he pays the price of your sin on the cross so that you and I could be forgiven of our sin. And through Jesus come to have life with God.

What amazing grace is right at the heart of this sacrifice that Jesus is about to make for you and I. You see right at the heart of the gospel is a saviour who epitomises sacrificial giving.

Meanwhile Jesus exposes this generation of worshippers and says, On the outside you see knowledge but on the inside I see pride. On the outside you see genuine but on the inside I see fake.

[28 : 37] And on the outside you see cost but on the inside I see cheap. What does he say? He says your outsides don't match up with your insides. Let me close just by telling you a story I was reading this week of a man for whom the opposite of that was absolutely true.

Many of you have heard of William Booth the founder of the Salvation Army. Salvation Army which started out in 1865 as one man's vision for the people of the East End of London and that now vision has turned into a thriving charity the Salvation Army that's doing great work the world over.

And William Booth was once asked what the key was to the success of the Salvation Army and here's what he said. I'll tell you the secret God has had all of me.

Now there have been men with greater brains than I men with greater opportunities than I but from the day I got the poor of London on my heart and caught a vision of all that Jesus Christ could do for them on that day I made up my mind that God would have all of William Booth that there was.

And if there is anything of power in the Salvation Army today it is because God has had all the adoration of my heart and all the power of my will and all the influence of my life.

[30 : 08] William Booth So let us let me challenge us in fact let me let God's word challenge us this morning as a church. Does he have all the adoration of our hearts?

And does he have all the power of our wills? And does he have all the influence of our life? Does he have our outsides?

as well as our insights? Let me pray. And maybe just in the silence now, maybe it's just a time to offer your own prayer to God off the back of everything that we've seen and sung this morning.

take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee.

Take my moments and my days, let them flow in endless praise. Take my will and make it thine.

[31 : 20] it shall be no longer mine. Take my heart, it is thine own, it shall be thy royal throne.

Father, thank you so much for your precious and life-giving words. Help us this week to be people, to be a church who strives for your glory and renown, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.