



"Jesus Sees the Sacrifice"

Luke 20:45 - 21:4

May 10, 2020

We are going in Luke Chapters 20 and 21, with a short portion of Scripture that straddles both chapters. The title of this morning's message is *Jesus Sees the Sacrifice*. It was going to be the perfect sermon title too with what we were planning to give as the Mother's Day gift. What Mother's Day gift could possibly have gone with the sermon title *Jesus Sees the Sacrifice*? Yes, of course, Sees Candy!

This week I was interacting a little over email with our sister in the Lord, Emily Kam. I mentioned to her Sees candy is the gift we had been planning to give but, obviously because of Covid-19 circumstances, that fell through. Emily replied, *Oh, Pastor Jeff. That's okay. We will take a raincheck and pick up that chocolate on Father's Day.* Well played, Emily!

In the meantime, women of Bethel Grace, I hope that you are encouraged by the message you hopefully found in your email account this morning. If you did not receive a message, please email me and I will send the message your way, hopefully to give you some joy on this very special day.

As for now, I want to bring us a reminder. I want this reminder to fill the hearts of the moms of Bethel Grace and the sisters in the Lord. This is really something for all of us who are in Christ by His grace through faith. This is something for all of us to take to heart. I want for us to really, really think about the fact that Jesus sees us.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus sees us. Truly and deeply. He knows us. He is concerned for us in particular, knowing all the things that we face in this life, in this fallen world that has its difficulties. Jesus sees us!.

He knows us inside and out. His love is unconditional. He is there for us to see us through the things that we face in this life. Jesus also sees the sacrifices that we make in Christ by faith to bring glory to Him and good to other people. Jesus sees us.

Before we dig into to Luke Chapter 20, before we prepare our hearts for what is there, I am reminded of a story that is recorded for us in the early pages of Genesis—back in Genesis Chapter 16, where we read about a woman named Hagar.

Hagar was the Egyptian handmaiden or household servant for Sarai the wife of Abram in the days before they were renamed Sarah and Abraham. Hagar was on the very short end of a very bad plan to bring the child of promise, the child that was promised to Abram and Sarai, the child that the Lord would bring into the world, even in their old age.

God promised Abram and Sarai that they would in fact have a child. God promised that somehow through the offspring of Abraham and Sarah, all the families and nations of the earth would find blessing. However, according to Abraham and especially to Sarai's thinking, the Lord was slow in fulfilling that promise. Years and years, even decades went by and Sarai had a moment of frustration in the midst of that time.

Sarai was to at the end of it and she said to Abram, *Maybe the child of promise is not going to come through me after all. Maybe this will be your child and not mine.* So she told Abram to go to her servant Hagar and have the child with her. In his supreme wisdom, Abraham said sure! Okay. Not wise. Not wise!

The plan went south. They sobered up pretty quickly. Hagar was with child. There became this bitterness that was found between Hagar and Sarah and Sarah and Hagar. It came to the point where Hagar was forced to flee from Abraham's camp, and off she went into the wilderness.

She was with child and on her own. We can just imagine the disillusionment that was filling this women's heart. But then we read in Genesis Chapter 16 that the angel of the Lord appeared to her. In the Old Testament that language of the angel of the Lord is like code language the preincarnate Christ.

This angel of the Lord figure is always spoken of with the language of deity. The angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar. He gave words of instruction to her. He spoke words of amazing truth about the child that was growing within Hagar, who would be named Ishmael.

He gave her words of great promise and instruction. In response to it all, Hagar said this. Genesis 16:13

¹³So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "You are a God of seeing." for she said, "Truly here I have seen him who looks after me."

You are a God of seeing, she said, calling on the name of the Lord. This is such an amazing moment in the pages of Scripture, because here we have this Egyptian servant of Abram and Sarai and she gave a name to the Lord. The Hebrew of Ishmael is El Roi. You are the God of seeing.

This is so unusual because Hagar referred to Him with this name and it stuck. Typically, it is the Lord who reveals names to His people. He reveals His name. This time it was turned around and this woman gave a name to the Lord. Hagar was saying, *You are the one who looks after me. You are the one who sees me. You are the one who knows me and what is happening in my life.*

Hagar called upon the name of the Lord and called Him El Roi. So we see this very unique moment in Scripture where it is a human being rendering a name to the Lord, and it came from this woman who was precious to Him. She was struggling. Feeling alone. Being abused. Tired and worn out.

With this encounter with the Lord, Hagar said, *He is the God who sees. He is the God who sees me. He is the God who knows everything about me; my struggle, my sin, my pain, my heartache, everything, and He is the God who looks after me.* What an amazing moment that was!

Brothers and sisters, we go forward into the days of the New Testament. Now we are at that wonderful period in the earth's history when the seed of Abraham, when the promised seed was here in our midst. According to Galatians 3:16, Christ is that seed of Abraham.

He is that one and only through which blessing comes to the planet earth. The Christ is here. The seed of Abraham is in our midst. With a full New Testament and biblical theology of who He is, this is God walking upon the earth that He created.

This is the Living God now in flesh appearing and true to His character, He was and is the God who sees. All throughout the account of the life of Christ, we see how perceptive He was, how observant He was, how He noticed things and how He saw things, and how He saw things deeply

This morning we are going to be given yet another example of that as we go in the Gospel of Luke to the days preceding His crucifixion, then His resurrection. There He was in the Temple courts teaching. He perceived and noticed things. He gave expression to the things that He knew and saw.

Let's see how this is laid out before us in Luke Chapter 20 and Verse 45 through Chapter 21 and Verse 4:

⁴⁵And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples, ⁴⁶“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁷who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

¹²Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, ²and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³And he said, “Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

We read this text and we have Christ revealed to us in it. What we see here is that Jesus is the Lord and He is the God who sees. Here in this text we find that He perceived human sin. We see here in this text that He also saw sacrifices driven by faith.

In the time before us, we are going to see two things that Jesus saw. First, He saw the selfishness that is natural within the fallen human condition, and He warned against it. Second, Jesus also saw the sacrifices that rise up by faith. He values it and draws attention to it.

Do you see how His eyes are drawn with favor upon this widow? He saw and he perceived, and it is just a beautiful picture of the Christ and His attentiveness.

I want for us to notice the section starting with Verse 45:

⁴⁵And in the hearing of all the people he said to his disciples

There were plenty of people listening in. Based on His observation, Jesus instructs His followers. He teaches His church. He gives warning He draws attention to something beautiful.

What we have here, brothers and sisters, is Christian character 101 based on what Jesus sees. So let's dig and see with Jesus what He points out to us. Let's pray that the Holy Spirit will make us aware of our own areas of sin. We are sinners, after all. It runs deep. It pervades everything. However, there is redemption in Christ. There is newness in Christ and, by the work of the Spirit, we can go from selfish to self-sacrificial.

Moving forward, let's start with this. What does Jesus see? Here is what we notice first:

1. Jesus sees the selfishness and warns against it. (20:45-47)

Let's take a look at this as we move into Verses 46 and 47. Verse 46:

⁴⁶”Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts

Jesus was seeing something and we also need to see the human heart and how it longs for prominence and eminence and how there is something within all of us and if we are not careful, it can get the best of us. There is the tendency in the human condition to want to be considered a cut above the rest.

We see this here in the behavior of these scribes. What caught my attention is that the first thing that Jesus did after issuing His warning, saying beware, is that He drew attention to their attire. Did you notice that here?

⁴⁶”Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes

That is the first thing that Jesus pointed out. What is so interesting to me is this: You look in the Old Testament and what you find is that in their service in the temple, priests were required to wear white linen garments, robes that symbolized the purity of their service when they were engaged in temple duties.

They did not necessarily wear those garments all the time. They were allowed to wear street clothes when they were off duty, so to speak. But here in this text, we are not even talking about the priests. We are talking about the scribes.

The scribes and the Pharisees took it upon themselves to wear these garments on their own to show that they were to be distinguished for their position. So, as we see here, they did not just wear these garments when they were copying or teaching Scripture. They wore these garments everywhere—to the marketplace, to the dinner parties, going everywhere. They were drawing attention to themselves as Jesus saw and pointed out.

I began thinking about a medical doctor. These are people that we need to appreciate and respect for their deep studies and the ways they treat people. Doctors often wear white coats that are associated with the practice of medicine. They wear those coats when they are practicing medicine. For the sake of an illustration, imagine with me a doctor who wore a white coat everywhere he went. He goes to Starbucks for some coffee and, behold, he is in his white coat with his pen and his name tag. He goes to Super Mex for some lunch, he is wearing his white coat. He is taking a walk up the Huntington Beach Pier, he is wearing his white coat. Why would he wear it everywhere? He is trying to draw attention to himself.

That is what Jesus discerned with these men and He pointed it out and said to watch out for that. We need to be careful, brothers and sisters, because there is something within us that wants to be distinguished from others; to have this view of ourselves that we are above the rest and we deserve special honor and treatment above other people.

Jesus was telling His disciples to be humble. That is what is at the heart of what is here. Jesus was saying don't be like that, but see yourself on the lower level. All work is important. There are so many different callings that God calls people to pursue in life.

In the things that we do serving the Lord and going about our routines, we must be humble-hearted people there to serve others in Jesus' Name, not looking for people to give us eminence and preeminence or anything like it.

Jesus told His disciples not to let people call them father. I am thankful that in the Protestant tradition, nobody is ever tempted to say hey, Father Jeff. I know a lot of people like to say Pastor Jeff. That's fine. I get it, but I respond to Jeff just fine. If John was good for John, and Paul was good for Paul, Jeff is good for Jeff. Certainly, please, never ever call me Reverend Saltzmann, because that will make me very uncomfortable.

Jesus, He wants us to remain on the lower level in humility, considering ourselves servants of other people, not walking around with our garments and drawing attention to ourselves. Look at me. I am an extra super holy person, in the language of Sally Lloyd Jones as she rendered the heart of the Pharisees in the Children's Storybook Bible.

We continue and we see that the scribes loved the prominence and all the attention. But we see that they also loved money. What else did Jesus say? Look out for the scribes! Verse 47:

⁴⁷who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

It says that these same scribes in all their holy attire were guilty of devouring the households of widows, their financial estates.

Brothers and sisters, I have been known to devour Peanut M&Ms. I have been known to devour cheese enchiladas. I have been known to devour smoked meats, particularly tri-tip and pulled pork. You devour those things that you have an appetite for. These men had a hunger and

appetite for wealth and the things that money could buy, and Jesus saw what the real deal was in them.

To understand what is going on here where it says these scribes who devour widow's houses, and what is in the next portion of the text we will get into soon, understand that in addition to their scriptural duties, the scribes also had certain clerical and even financial duties as well.

The scribes were the ones who were equipped with scrolls and with the stylus and with the jar of ink. These were the men who had a great eye for detail. So, they had all the skills and the resources that would help them to serve Israel in the financial realm as well. They would act as bankers. They would help administer people's estates.

Often Jewish fathers would create something similar to trust funds to help their daughters in case their husbands died. If the father and the husband died, it would be a scribe that worked like the banker who held on to the funds, administered them, and gave them out portion by portion to women who would be in need.

So the scribes would be the ones who distributed the funds kind of like a pension. They would give them out incrementally. In serving God, they would have done this with the best interest of the widow. That would be the purpose, but sin rose up and found an opportunity for the greed of the fallen human nature.

So often these scribes would dip into the trust funds and purchase things for themselves. Additionally, it would seem that they would distribute the fund in the smallest possible increment so that when the widow died, guess what? They would be able to keep portions of the funds for themselves.

Jesus saw this. Jesus knew what was happening, and Jesus issued a warning against it. Jesus condemned it. Notice here in this text. Not only did Jesus see their sin, but He also saw their future. At the end of Verse 47:

⁴⁷...They will receive the greater condemnation.

In other words, there is a hotter place in hell for people who do these kind of things. That is what Jesus was saying. Yes, there is a place called Hell. It is a place where divine justice will be administered to sinners who have not come under the cleansing grace that God gives through Jesus Christ. These men were going to have justice served to them in due time.

If you are somehow responsible for other people and you are taking advantage of them, if you are keeping for yourself what was intended for them out of greed, I call you to find grace in the Lord. Ask for Him to grant you repentance. Look to Jesus for forgiveness, not only for that sin but for all sins. This is just one manifestation of it.

If you are a person who has been taken advantage of by another, if you have had somebody else take advantage of you, child of God, look at this text and see your Lord and Savior, He is El Roi.

He is the God who sees. And one way or the other, justice will be served whether in this life or the next or a combination of both.

When we look at what is here in this first portion of our text this morning, and see how Jesus was perceptive of human selfishness and self-centeredness, we understand that it was manifesting in different ways. It brought condemnation.

I hope we are preaching this weekly. Sin is serious. It is multifaceted. It starts with a sinful nature within that comes out in so many different ways—from our speech, from our hands, from our minds, from our attitudes. There is sin and that sin violates the holiness of God. There is condemnation to come. It is already hanging over those who do not repent and turn to Jesus.

We are messengers and heralds of good news here. The good news is that God forgives sinners. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Condemnation will occur in the afterlife in Hell. Condemnation also occurred on the cross. Our sins were placed upon Christ.

He paid the price as justice was served upon Him in our place. When we come to Jesus in faith, our sin is washed away and we are covered in His righteousness as a gift. That is the good news of the Gospel. Have faith in Jesus Christ.

For those who are in Christ, we know that there are all kinds of self-centeredness that still gets so manifested in our lives. We need to be going back to the Lord daily, saying, *Lord, transform me from the inside out and help me not to work in idolatrous self-love, but help me to work in selflessness in the Messiah to live a life of service. Help me to take up my cross daily, denying myself and following Christ and in that, find the way of life and joy.*

As we are filled with the Spirit of Jesus Christ, He helps us to live sacrificially. He helps us to give of our hearts, to give of our hands, to give of our lives for the glory of His Name. As we continue on in this portion of Scripture, we see what else Jesus saw and His heart was drawn to sacrifice. It pleases Him when He sees His people giving out of self-sacrificial hearts.

Let's see what happened next as we continue. What did Jesus see? First, we see that He saw the selfishness and He warned against it. Next:

2. Jesus sees the sacrifice and greatly values it. (21:1-4)

Jesus sees the sacrifice that comes of faith, and He values it. He draws attention to it. Let's see this as we continue. Chapter 21 and Verse 1 through 4:

¹Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, ²and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. ³And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. ⁴For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Here was a time of giving that was taking place in the Jerusalem temple courts. There in the courts of that temple, there were thirteen great collection boxes. There were large chests to collect the offerings for the work of the Lord that was taking place at the temple.

These collection boxes did not have narrow slits to drop envelopes in like we might be familiar with today. Instead, they had openings that might have been shaped like a trumpet. They had these openings so people could easily throw their offerings in. The offerings would slide down into the chest.

So Jesus was watching this all unfold. That always gets my attention. He was watching how people were giving their different offerings. At this particular time, He saw a number of people who had wealth coming and giving their offerings. Then He noticed on their heels this widow who was coming to bring her offering.

Let's think about the difference between a clank and a clink. The wealthy people came to give their offering, maybe even in a way that drew attention to what they were doing, given what we know about the human heart. Clank, clank, clank as the coins went into the box. Then came the widow, clink, clink. A much softer sound.

And Jesus drew His disciples attention to what was happening. He did not draw their attention to the larger monetary offering that were given by the people of wealth, He drew their attention and said, *Did you see what just happened there? Did you hear those clinks? Did you see what she gave.*

Then Jesus said something astonishing. He said, *I tell you, that woman with her two small copper coins, she gave more than all the rest.* This captured the heart of our Messiah. Jesus memorialized the woman who gave a miniscule amount, the copper coins that the bookkeepers might not have ever missed.

What's the difference? Jesus discerned as it says in the text that some were giving from their abundance, but she was giving out of her poverty. They were giving out of their surplus. She was giving out of her want.

Reading this, some have drawn a distinction in giving to the purposes of the Lord, between contributions and sacrifice. It is possible for some to give contributions but they have so much that they never feel the pain of what they have given, because they can still have all that they desire to have.

Others have so little that when they give even a small amount, they give out of what they otherwise would have had and now they can't have. So, there is an element of sacrifice in the giving that Jesus is drawn to and that He points out and that He is pleased with. It is an amazing picture.

I have read this story many times over the years, and I will tell you how I have read it so often. Many people read this way too. Many will look at what was going on here and will say, *Whoa, whoa, whoa! Wait a minute. What was going on? What happened to that woman next?*

For decades I have read this story and got a picture in my mind of a frail little old woman, approaching the offering box with her black funeral garments on, putting the last of her savings in the box. Then walked home to die because there was nothing left. But I don't think that is the case with what was happening there.

Remember what we just talked about that many widows had trusts funds. If there were not trust funds, yes, Israel did have a welfare system. So it is much more likely that this woman was giving what she had to live on for that day, maybe for the end of that week.

With all that going on there in the land of Israel with the approaching of the Messiah, maybe there was just an elevated sense within her soul, where she said, *Lord, You are at work and I don't know what else to do to contribute to this, so I am just going to give what I have left to give.* And she made this offering. Jesus saw it and He was pleased with it.

Now with that in mind, what if she did not go away with slumping shoulders and a doleful, downcast attitude at all. Maybe she did. Maybe she didn't. But a doleful, downcast attitude is not consistent with the biblical vision of giving to the work of the Lord at all. I can tell you that!

The biblical vision of generosity is joy in giving. 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is the great portion of New Testament theology on giving and in that text, we find that God loves a cheerful giver. He is not drawn to those who give out of compulsion or they are driven by guilt. Instead, God loves a cheerful giver, those who purpose in their heart what they will give and they give it joyfully.

What if this woman came sensing the work of God in her midst and she came in giving with the generosity of her heart, and instead of walking away dejected, she went skipping away with expectation? I don't know.

Admittedly, I'm speculating here. But for so much of my life I have speculated one way, why not just entertain thoughts another way? What I know is that biblically speaking, worship in giving is something to be done with joy. Jesus was drawn to what this woman gave.

As I was reviewing my notes, I was kind of imagining the response to this message. Some might be thinking it was cool. We got to dig into this portion of Scripture and that is exactly what we want to do, but it is not much of a Mother's Day sermon though. What did this have to do with Mother's Day?

Here is what resonated within my heart so much as I saw the calendar and the Scriptures just lining up. Brothers and sisters, Jesus sees the sacrifice. He sees the offerings of faith. Those sacrifices aren't just monetary.

There are sacrifices of time, of energy, of emotional investment. Sacrifices come in so many ways. I was just thanking God for godly women who give of themselves in so many ways; ways that so many of us dense-thinking men don't even recognize.

But Jesus sees it. Not only does He, by His Spirit, work in you to produce it, but He is also delighted in it. Jesus sees the sacrifice. As far as mom's go, He sees the sleep that is sacrificed, the peace and quiet a lot of the time. What's alone time for a lot of young moms with kids in the house? The energy, the health, the personal space.

But so much more than this, all throughout life the emotion that is given by mom's, the heart that is given, the thoughts of the mind. So many things are involved and Jesus sees the sacrifice and He is pleased with it.

Last night I was checking out Facebook and I saw that a sister in our church, our dear sister Shawnee Noble, she posted something on the Bethel Grace page and I wondered if she read my sermon notes, because she had caught the heart of what I wanted to finish up with. Jesus sees the sacrifice.

Here are the words of encouragement that was posted:

Hi Ladies, just a gentle reminder for Mother's Day. You may have the best day of your life tomorrow...lavished with gifts, completely pampered, etc. Or you may wake up feeling completely unappreciated and forgotten. But any accolades that you receive on Mother's Day or any other day of the year, don't really matter in the end. Our treasures are in heaven! God sees you. He sees your faithfulness, selflessness, sacrifice, and hard work. Being able to hear "Well done good and faithful servant" should be our goal. So, please don't focus on what you receive or don't receive for Mother's Day, because honestly, it's not even our day. Every day belongs to the Lord. He is the one that blesses us with these children and we cannot do anything in our lives (especially parenting) without Him. We should spend our day praising Him and thanking Him for bestowing on us the amazing honor of being a mother.

I think that comes from a heart of a sister in Christ to the sisters in Christ.

Brothers in Christ, let's remember also you are to love your wife as Christ loves the church. You out do her in showing honor. You have eyes to see what she is doing. You have ears to listen and to understand her. You lay down your life as a living sacrifice for her. Be filled with the Spirit that she might know the affections of Jesus Christ through you. Children, the same.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit, Church, and let the marks of that love be evident in self-sacrificial service all the way around. Men serving their wives. Wives serving their husbands. All throughout the family and all throughout the family of God, this is the vision. Jesus sees this and He is pleased with it.

I also wonder if Jesus saw what this woman was doing, giving in a sacrificial way, giving of herself and her need, and His heart resonated with her because He was just days away from a sacrifice of His own.

Jesus came into this world and He laid down His life that we might live in and through Him. He is the one and only way that you can escape the wrath to come for the sin that is everywhere and in each one of us. He is the One by which you can truly live and live forever and live with a distinction that will bring glory to His name and good to the people around you.

It is all about Jesus. It is all about Jesus! It all comes from Him and through Him and to Him. With that, let's close in a word of prayer.