

Title: THE BAD, THE NOT SO BAD, THE GOOD, MARK 12:38 – 44
(Chatham, NJ; 11/08/15, AM) [E – Exegesis]

Theme: Three classes of people are portrayed here as Jesus discusses who are bad, who are not so bad, and who are good.

Purpose: To recognize certain characteristics we should imitate, and to realize that the less powerful people of the world are truly loved by God.

Introduction:

1. Jesus expounds on an economic lesson in giving, but in doing so, he also describes three classes of people.
2. The bad are the self-righteous and hypocrites.
3. The not so bad are those with money, the rich. (Jesus does not demonize them here.)
4. The good are the ones who give of themselves in proportion to what they have not according to how much they give.
5. What can we learn from the profiles of these classes of people?

I. The Scribes: the Bad, 38-40

- A. The people we love to hate
 1. We demonize them, and rightly so: Jesus says, "Watch out!"
 2. However, do we ever entertain the thought that "we are glad we aren't like them?" (what the Pharisee said of the Publican in Luke 19)
 3. We can become self-righteous in our demonizing them and lose sight of our own lack of righteousness
- B. Characteristics: scribes weren't particularly rich
 1. Long robes – something to call attention to themselves
 2. Greetings – they love when others call attention to them
 3. Best seats in the synagogues – calls attention to their religious importance
 4. Places of honor at feasts – not wrong in itself, but with them it seemed like an expectation; again, called attention to their social importance
 5. YET they devour widows houses: now we have an abuse of their office; some suggest they took advantage of the hospitality of people of lesser means
 6. Or perhaps, acting as lawyers, cheated widows out of their estates
 7. They make long prayers: "for a pretense" – this is all designed to enhance their image while masking evil deeds
 8. This gives an evil twist to the proverb: Don't judge a book by its cover.
 9. Jesus says their works will demonstrate who they really are
 10. Don't listen to what people say; watch what they do.

II. The Rich: the Not Necessarily Bad, 41

- A. More people we love to hate—or are we just envious?
 1. Politicians score points by simply saying, "The rich are not paying their fair share."
 2. It doesn't matter that they don't define "rich" (many of those same politicians are worth hundreds of thousands of dollars) or "fair share" (how much is that?).
 3. They are playing to a crowd's envy
 4. Khan Academy (non-profit foundation) founder: I got out of the business of making a lot of money and now I'm doing something important – yet he depends of corporate sponsors: all non-profits depend on people who money
 5. Be very wary of the sort of self-righteousness that says I am better because I don't have money

6. Be just as wary of the envy that says, "We should take what they own and give it to others." This is justifying stealing under the guise of social justice.
7. Jesus makes no comments about the rich; he merely observes them

B. Advice to the rich

1. Mt. 6:19-21, lay up treasures in heaven; where your treasure is there will your heart be also
2. 1 Timothy 6:10 echoes a similar theme: the love of money, etc.
3. This craving to be rich has ruined many people
4. 6:17-19, he charges the rich not to be proud, but to be rich in good deeds and store up treasures for themselves

III. The Widow: the Good, 42-44

A. Imagine the scene with Jesus (act it out)

1. Sitting with the disciples
2. Note how the rich might put their money in
3. A poor widow walks in and gives a small amount of money
4. He draws attention to her
5. How much she gave was a matter of how much she had to give: not a particular amount but a percentage amount
6. She gave all she had to live on; more than the rich who gave out of their abundance, 44

B. Jesus gives recognition to those who don't get it or look for it: all the deference and attention that the scribes wanted goes to the allegedly insignificant person

1. He elevates her gift
2. He recognizes the sacrifice it was for her despite the small amount
3. Though the world looks at outward appearances, Christ sees the heart

Conclusions:

1. Beware of all kinds of self-righteousness.
2. The kind that seeks recognition despite an evil heart (scribes) is no worse than the kind that masks its envy, jealousy, and evil feelings behind a mask that parades as economic justice.
3. Give what you are willing and able to give; God judges you based on your joy in giving, not on the dollar amount.
4. Feel insignificant? Come to Christ.
5. Feel like you haven't much to give? Come to Christ.
6. He accepts all gifts from a good and upright heart.
7. Come to Christ today.