

Sermon Text: Luke 20:45-21:4 False and True Religion

The Lord Jesus warns against false religion and commends true religion.

1) Jesus warns against false religion (20:45-47).

a) False religion is self-seeking (20:46).

- i) “long robes”—represented leisurely life, above the fray of laborers; high social standing
- ii) “greetings in the marketplaces”—honorable titles
- iii) “best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts”—prominent positions

iv) Application:

- (1) “Self-esteem gospel” is not good news.
- (2) God-centered heart

b) False religion neglects love of neighbor (20:47a).

- i) “who devour widows’ houses”—through abuse of hospitality; dishonest stewardship of deceased husband’s estate; dishonest legal advice
- ii) Such injustice represents violation of the command to love your neighbor as yourself.

iii) Application:

- (1) Beware of injustice from both action and inaction.
- (2) Not only are Christians to pursue justice toward our neighbors, we are to love our neighbors (Matt. 25:40).

c) False religion neglects love of God (20:47b).

- i) “for a pretense make long prayers”—using prayer to impress people rather than to commune with God
- ii) Hypocritical prayer represents violation of the command to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

iii) Application:

- (1) Jesus warned that hypocrisy in an individual’s life and in a community (Luke 12:1).
- (2) So, how can we identify hypocrisy (especially, the religious variety)?
 - (a) Check your motive.
 - (b) Check your timing.
- (3) What should we do with hypocrisy?
 - (a) Call it what it is—sin.
 - (b) Repent—turn from that sin to a living relationship with God in Christ.
 - (c) Confess your hypocrisy (James 5:16).
 - (d) Trust that by the blood of Christ even this sin can be forgiven.

d) False religion leads to condemnation (47c).

- i) “They will receive the greater condemnation.”
- ii) “They” refers to complete religious hypocrites—their whole religious life is a sham.
- iii) **Application:** Why does Jesus warn His followers?
 - (1) Some in the visible church are complete religious hypocrites.
 - (2) Most in the visible church will struggle with hypocrisy, because of pride, self-love, and lack of love for God and others. Truth makes free John 8:31-32.

2) Jesus commends true religion (21:1-4).

a) *True religion trusts God with the whole of life (21:2-4).*

- i) The poor widow put in “all she had to live on,” literally, “all the life/living she had”—she not only gave all her money, she gave all she possessed, her whole life.
- ii) “Two small copper coins” would have bought her daily bread.
- iii) **Application:**
 - (1) Poverty is not a Christian ideal. But her condition helps us see the freedom from anxiety that comes from trusting God.
 - (2) Faith is the God-given instrument by which we first receive Christ. It is also the instrument by which we persevere and mature in our relationship with Christ.

b) *True religion loves God with the whole of life (21:2-4).*

- i) “Out of her poverty”—Her giving was not for show, in contrast to the false religion outlined above (20:45-47)
- ii) motive —love for God
- iii) **Application:**
 - (1) Religion is not empty formalism or man-made ritual. True religion is a relationship initiated by God, defined by God’s revelation, and governed by God’s Spirit. It is expressed from man to God in the first and great commandment to “love the Lord” (Luke 10:27), and in the second greatest commandment, “love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).
 - (2) The “love” in false religion grows cold (Matt. 24:12). The love in true religion does not grow cold. Yet, we are warned because we have not yet arrived, so our sinful nature battles against the Spirit (Revelation 2:4; 3:16).

c) *True religion seeks the glory of God above all else in life (21:1).*

- i) “Into the offering box” that is the temple treasury, not alms boxes for the poor.
- ii) This poor widow gave all she possibly could to promote the worship of her God.
- iii) **Application:**
 - (1) Is corporate worship the goal of your existence or is it a means to an end?
 - (2) Christian living and corporate worship belong together.

The Lord Jesus warns against false religion and commends true religion.

How do we cultivate true religion in our lives?

- Remember, true religion is a relationship initiated by God, defined by His revelation, and sustained by His Spirit.
- Treasure God above all other treasure (Luke 12:33-34).
- Set your mind on the glory of God revealed in Christ (Col. 3:2-4).

Doxology: Thanks be to God for His inexpressible gift! (2 Corinthians 9:15)