

Make comments about the June 8th phase reopening plan

- we're grateful to the government for raising the numbers of groups that can meet, and you've likely got a call this week about the plan our church leadership has come up with.
- we'll be meeting in homes in groups of 15 or less, and if are interested in joining a home group, we would love to include you in that! Please call the church office, or call back the person who called you this past week.
- we are really excited about this chance to do church together, and are hopeful that not only will it be a chance to worship together in our homes, but will provide a basis fo a home group network that will continue on past the coronavirus shutdown and become a part of our church that will never stop!

Before Jessica and I came to Melfort about 8 years ago now, we were a part of East Parkland Bible Church, as their youth pastor. We had a fairly decent size group of kids there, mostly high school, but some junior high kids as well. We had a great time ministering to the kids, but there was one thing that got to be kind of annoying fairly quickly - we called it "peacocking". All the times we did youth Bible study in the spring and summer, after it was over, we would head over to a park to hang out. This park had benches and a little lake and a playground and picnic tables, and when we would go to that park, it wouldn't take long, and the boys in the group would start to jump over tables, do chin-ups, race around the park, wrestle each other, scream and yell, and maybe even try throwing each other into the lake. And while they would do that, you would see these little glances back at the groups of girls (**demo the looks**) that were studiously NOT looking at the boys (and yet somehow they always saw what they were doing). I eventually starting calling it peacocking and it stuck and for the three years or so that we were there in Stony, it seemed like I was always telling the girls the boys were

peacocking - showing off. They were always showing off for the girls, trying to impress and make them think they were just awesome, and even though they would never admit to doing that specifically, they were gunning for admiring glances, comments, cheers and compliments about how strong Tom is, or how fast Carlin is, or how cool it was when you jumped off the bridge into the lake Josh! They wanted to be noticed and admired. Life at that point was all about them and all about being noticed, and thankfully, the great majority of those boys grew out of that...though not all of them.

But, what if they never grew out of that? What if those boys stayed that way and were always looking after the affirmation and cheers and respect that they got for jumping over stuff and wrestling? What if they grew up just craving that attention and would now do whatever it takes to get it? You and I might even know someone like this and think that they are simply an immature person who needs to grow up a little, but if this kind of a person gets into spiritual leadership, it's a recipe for disaster. That kind of person will manipulate and take advantage of the ministry that they are a part of and make it more about themselves than about the people that they are ministering to. If they are a smart person they will achieve this without a lot of people even knowing about it, taking the Word of God and twisting it to their advantage, using it to achieve THEIR goals, rather than the goals of God. Those leaders are in our world today and they were also around in Jesus time. Turn to Mark 12:35, and we'll read together about how Jesus handled those kinds of leaders (read til end of verse 37). So, if you've been following with us through Mark, you'll know that this day for Jesus is just full of confrontation with the spiritual leaders in the Temple, and of the Jewish culture. In fact, I think the last couple of weeks of preaching and services have all occurred on the same day for Jesus here in the Scriptures. In our setting this morning, Jesus is still in the Temple and is teaching the people now, referring back to Palm Sunday (which only happened a few days ago in the narrative). What Jesus is talking about might be a little confusing for you, because if you're familiar with Jesus human heritage, you'll know that He actually

IS a literal descendant of David - that He is, in a distant way, a son of David. But that doesn't do justice to Jesus, it's not enough. It satisfies the physical side of Jesus, but He's not just David's descendant right? He's literally the Son of God! There's a *theological* heritage that needs to be talked about, and Jesus wants the crowd - and the scribes and leaders who are likely still listening to Jesus to hear it. The psalm Jesus quotes there is Psalm 110, and Jesus uses it to point to the fact (if anyone is listening carefully) that David was speaking by the Holy Spirit, and that Jesus was David's superior - his *lord*. When you see LORD in all caps there, it always means God - Yahweh. But the other word for lord there in Hebrew is adonai - which is used as a name of God, and also for a king. This is a big deal - because David is the greatest king in Israelite history, there's no king greater than him, no one that David would call HIS lord! This isn't what the Jews would say at all, they would say that David would be greater than the Messiah, because the Messiah is David's son. But by the Holy Spirit's inspiration, David writes this Psalm, showing anyone who would care to notice that Messiah is the Son of David yes, but that isn't it - in fact, there's so much more to it. Son of David just isn't enough, and even the scribes have been teaching this and reading this for a long time, they still haven't either noticed it, or have been getting it wrong for a long time. This again represents Jesus giving an opportunity to these men to repent and believe, even though it may not seem like it to us.

Then Jesus takes the opportunity to warn people about spiritual leaders like the ones that they have. (read 38-40). So, this isn't a long sentence by Jesus, but wow is it ever potent, and when you think about the place that they are in, it becomes even more potent. Whenever someone stands up and publicly calls out the authorities it's a tense and charged event. I know that happens in the media all the time, but many of those people have the safety of writing their "charges" on a computer screen. I talked to a friend yesterday who called it being "keyboard brave", and there's a lot of that out there right? But Jesus is doing it in person, and going for the jugular, even saying that these

authorities will be punished. Imagine how those men felt. I wasn't there, so I don't know, but I can see that could be compared a little bit to what's happening in America right now with the killing of George Floyd. People all over the country and even other countries are calling out police and law enforcement for abusing the authority they have been given, and to say that it's a tense situation isn't really doing it justice right? And this isn't the first time this has happened, it's been happening for awhile now right? I don't know about the details of all of those cases in the States and other places, simply because I don't know the ins and outs of those cases, but we can be sure in the Scriptures that Jesus knows the details of what He's talking about here, and while He does want to see these spiritual leaders of the Israelites repent and believe, they are still leading hypocritical and corrupt lives and that needs to be dealt with and since the sin is so public, so is the rebuke. It needed to be strong, because their sin was serious.

These men were professional biblical scholars, and set the example for the people. Their clothes were fancy and flamboyant and set them apart - **I'll actually show a picture of them to you here** Stands out right? When we were in Israel at the wailing wall, we saw a lot of these men and their son, all with clothes like this. They were touching the wall, writing prayer and putting them into the cracks, studying in an alcove to the side of the wall. They plead with God to give them back their Temple, because right now the mosque known as the Dome of the Rock is built right on the site of the Temple. **(show pic of DotR)**. Back in Jesus day, what Jesus said about them was true. They were peacocks, looking for admiration and affirmation that they were indeed the holy men they were showing off to be. They loved to be seen and admired and put in places of honour. But it was all a sham. They were absolutely loyal in their words to the version of Scripture that the Israelites had - but in their actions, they were hypocritical and disobedient. The example Jesus uses is a scribe who cheats a widow out of her property by some trick of the law or some fee for a service he does for her, and then offers long and eloquent prayers, to make him seem incredibly holy and pious and deep.

He should have had compassion on those kinds of people! The heart that God has for those who are widowed and orphaned is so tender and compassionate, but the scribes don't care - because they believe it's all about them, and so they cheat them rather than be merciful and compassionate. That behaviour needs to be called out, because these are the leaders of Israel! If the corruption is in the leaders, how much more so will that corruption spread to the people under their care? Jesus goes as far to say that these kinds of men will be punished more severely than other because of their corruption as leaders of the people.

This is an incredibly applicable passage for you and me. What's the point of the spiritual life and walk that you have? Is it about you and your personal feelings of peace and happiness and fulfillment, or is it about serving the God of the Universe? Who's this all about? We know the scribes felt the spiritual leadership was all about them and getting them perks and admiration from the people about great they are. Can we take a second and consider this for our own lives? (PAUSE) What level of leadership have you been entrusted with by the Lord, and what are you doing as a leader within that role? Some of us have an individuals responsibility right now, we don't have anyone dependant on us, nor are we leading anyone. Some are older siblings. Some of us are parents, leading our children towards the Lord. Both mothers and fathers have that leadership, and males have a little more because God has designated them as leaders of the families. Some of us lead at work, some at home. A small number of men lead in this Body of Christ, and a very small group are paid to serve and lead. I know that as your pastor, Jessica's husband and Maggie, Evelyn and Henry's father, I have three different levels of leadership, responsibility and accountability that God has given me. What about you? Take some time and reflect on what God has given to you. It's pretty amazing what God has given to us - and now reflect on how you are handling the responsibility that God has given to you. You are a powerful person, created in His image to do good things on this earth, for the kingdom of God, if you belong to it...how are you handling that leadership,

that power and responsibility? I don't want to or mean to imply your handling it poorly, you might be handling it very well! No matter what though, I want you to take some time and reflect on who this is all about, because the answer to that question is where a leader can go wrong. If we think our life and role is all about us, we can go down the path of pride and think that we are somehow better or worth more than others because of the leadership and responsibility that we have in this life. We can choose to make it about us, rather than about the one that we serve and when that happens, a subtle change takes place that eventually becomes something evil, because instead of serving God, we are actually serving ourselves and the things we do in the name of God become things that are designed to make US feel better and make US look better to the people around us, and achieve OUR goals rather than having any legitimate, godly value. What that looks like even on the surface was apparent and Jesus called the Pharisees on it, and as the Son of God, He was a lot more perceptive than most...it could easily be that we don't know what motivates our hearts and the hearts of others these days...and so I'm praying Psalm 139 for us - that God would search us and know our hearts and reveal the subtle evil within.

This time of coronavirus has been an excellent time of fasting and soul searching by the Holy Spirit in my life, and I need to confess that at times my own heart has been corrupted by pride and self interest and that has come out in my relationship with Jessica, my kids and the churches I have been a part of. It's a snare for leaders and Jesus is showing us right here that Israel's leaders are doing it, and practically, it means that in whatever leadership capacity we are in, we must NOT use our spiritual leadership to manipulate people. There's a TV series out there right now call "Waco" that's all about that right? I haven't watched it, but if it's based on the real events that happened in 1993, then it's a chilling series. I'm not saying that's where we're all headed that way if we misuse the Word of God but it can be so easy to take the Word of God and use it to achieve what I desire rather than what God desires and the more you know the Bible, the

easier it gets. It's a subtle and deadly attack of the enemy, made worse by the fact that the more Scripture you know, the easier it can be, and it doesn't take much to use it to your advantage. The world is full of that right? If the enemy uses it then, he's using it now...he knows Scripture too. Pride creeps in, and it's all downhill from there...because it becomes all about us, and not about the God we claim to worship. It's my firm conviction that we need to worship Jesus the way that **He** desires to be worshipped and run the church based on **HIS** directives and not our own. The leaders of the people of Israel were supposed to be the teachers and coaches and guides, helping all the people to get to know and serve God better - they were to be the chief servants...but because they made it all about them, they became hypocritical tyrants, making the people do what they said rather than out of the fear and love of the Lord that was really supposed to motivate them. We must do the same in our lives, no matter what position of leadership has been given to us, we must stay vigilant to keep our egos out of it and serve God at all costs. It's not about us - it's about Him. It must be about Him, ALL of it is about Him, and if we find ourselves looking at the Bible and saying "well that just won't work", or trying to find a verse to advance our goals and agenda, then we need to check ourselves, because we are God's servants, His people, and for some of us, His leaders, He has been very clear in His word about how we are to live, and lead. It's not about us - it's about Him.

And Jesus follows this warning up with an example that is very powerful - the widow who gave two copper coins (read 41-44). This is a pretty familiar account, tons of people who have studied the Bible know about it, and it's such an amazing thing, that this woman came unnoticed and unremarked and did something that wouldn't have affected the Temple treasury in any noticeable way, and yet because of the spirit in which it was offered and because she gave it ALL, this act is immortalized by Jesus and she is made famous for her act of devotion and sacrifice. As we read, the people are putting their contributions to the Temple into the "boxes", which are actually giant rams horns, 13 of them, called shofar stationed all over the Temple. This was necessary, as the Temple and

its staff had huge needs financially as well as supplies, and the money for this had to come from the people - that was the system that God had setup a long time ago, so what's happening isn't wrong, and Jesus doesn't call anyone out in a negative way - but he shows the disciples then, and us now just exactly what God values when it comes to what a person gives, and how who is most important is reflected in that. A widow - the same class of person who Jesus points out as being robbed and cheated by the leaders of the people comes and gives two small copper coins - worth 1/64th of a denarius each. A denarius was one days pay, remember, so this is a fraction of a day's pay. It was all she had to live on, and she gave it all to God. Jesus sees it, knows it and honours her for it, and teaches us about it, and it's the exact same lesson we just learned, but from the other side of the issue. Jesus calls out the Pharisees, but he elevates the widow, because the widow believes that it's all about God and confirms it by her actions, whereas the Pharisees say it's all about God but deny it by their actions.

The widow teaches us something about God - that for Jesus - for God, the value of the gift is not the amount given, but the cost to the giver. This widow could have easily NOT given, or only given half, and been justified in doing so right?! She had virtually NOTHING! but she gave it all, because she knew that her life, her money, her existence was all about Him, and not about her. Because of that, she entrusted herself totally and completely to the care of God by giving Him all of the money that she had to live on. We might call that reckless - Jesus called it greatness. God didn't need the widows money - He doesn't need any of the money in our pockets and wallets - but its the way that we handle our money and the way that we handle our time that shows God the amount that we are devoted to Him. In our culture at least, what we spend our time and money on shows the value that we place in those things, and so again, I invite you to pause and reflect on that. Where does your money and time go? Who are your time and money all about? Are they being invested in your relationship with God, or in something else? Sometimes, when we talk about money, tithing and giving, we just want to know "how

much do we need to give?” That’s not the point though is it? That’s what all the rich people were likely doing - giving what they were supposed to give. In his book *Mere Christianity* CS Lewis said *“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc, is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little.”* Now, that can be an uncomfortable thought right? But why? I think it’s because there might still a small part of us that is like...well that’s good...but is God *really* going to come through for me? Is this actually a good idea? Is it wise? Did you know that finances is one of the only things in the Bible that says gives you permission to test Him on? He says in Malachi 3:10 to *“bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do,” says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies, “I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!”*

I’m not saying all the giving you do should be to PABC, not at all. And while I’m on the subject of giving, I just want to make sure that all of you watching know that we are so thankful for the financial support that you have given during this corona shutdown. You have given sacrificially, during a time of financial and economic uncertainty and I and the leadership want to thank-you for your offerings. What I’m teaching today is not a “guilt-message” but rather a reminder of who this life is all about. And it’s all about Jesus, who shows the leaders for the frauds they are, and elevates a woman who would never have been noticed - but she put God before all things her life, including her own, and gave all she had. What motivates us? Who is this life all about? Us? Or Jesus? For the leaders of the people of Israel, it was all about themselves, and that’s the prevailing attitude in the world - it’s all about me. But not for that widow - and not for the people of God. If you believe in Jesus, you are not a part of the world anymore...As people who have pledged themselves to follow Jesus - this life, your life needs to be all about Him. If

you're watching this and you haven't pledged yourself to Jesus - keep watching, and I'll tell you why this life is all about Jesus. If you have communion stuff with you, get it now, and we'll move into meditating on the Lord's death now.

This life is all about Jesus because He talked the talk and He walked the walk. He didn't just call out the leaders for what they did and didn't do - He did it, and He did it right. He didn't just tell us to give our all and be super generous - He went to the cross to give His life and show the extent of His love for us. That's why we can celebrate His death - because it made all that we are doing possible. Jesus integrity, example and sacrifice make it possible for us to be a part of His Body - which we call the church. He called us to a sacrificial lifestyle, where we give up everything to follow Him, and change our whole mindset to be like His, and submit to the Holy Spirit to be made into something new - but not before He did it and showed us that it was possible.

Jesus is the ultimate leader and I want to follow that leader. He's a leader that does what He says, He's a leader who cares about me, He's a leader that doesn't say one thing or do another and our leader, Jesus Christ has an answer for every question that is asked of Him. He came to deal with our most serious issue - sin. We were dead in our transgressions and sins, and Jesus came and died in our place - to pay that price of death for us, so that for those who believe in Him, will go and live in paradise with Him - forever. That's why this life is all about Him - because without Him, our life isn't worth much. But with Him, our life has meaning and purpose and value, both in this life and in the life to come. Put your faith in Him, ask Him to forgive your sins, start living for Him rather than for yourself! Let's celebrate this new life together.

Bread

Cup

Pray

Thanks for joining us today, we so appreciate you taking the time with your family, or on your own to fellowship with us. We hope that many of you will join our house church network as the restrictions are lifted and we look forward to changing our ministry again to be become a healthier, more intentional, communal and loving church. God bless you, have a great week!