

August 19, 2007

**The Riddle of Righteousness**  
**Mark 12:35-44**

What I've observed among Christians and in **my** life is that there is great inner frustration – and it grows out of the struggle to understand what it means to live in Righteousness.

The Passage – Three Parties – A group of Religious Leaders, the Masses, and a Widow

They represent three responses in this struggle:

**1. Cover Up** – The Teachers of the Law

‘Watch out...’ – ‘look with discernment’ – past the surface.

Those who cover are all about appearances and don't believe that God loves sinners.

**Friend, have you been covering up?**

**2. Give Up** – The Masses

A whole lot of people are hurting – a whole lot of people are hiding – the Church isn't a ‘safe’ place. So they just give up.

**Maybe you have given up...**

**3. Own Up** – The Widow

- **The Religious Leaders:** ‘We are righteous’ – they hide their true condition.

- **The Widow:** ‘I am poor’ – she hides nothing.

Why do we hide? We don’t understand the true source of Righteousness – Luther:

“Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours; rather, he himself becomes ours.”

Does this leave us with an excuse to sin? Luther doesn’t stop there – he offers that our attempts to obey are responses to His perfect righteousness.

In other words, for the Christian there are no excuses for disobedience but there is Grace for obedience’s imperfect expressions in our lives.

### **Four Encouragements for the Journey**

- Stay in the Fight – Paul to Timothy – “I have fought the good fight...”
- Stay in the Word – Don’t leave your faith to guesswork – God has spoken by His Spirit in His Word
- Stay in the Community – 1 Corinthians 10:13 – your struggle is common to all...
- Stay in the Gospel – Galatians 6:14 – “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Those who own up have figured out the Riddle of Righteousness – that when you finally realize and admit that you aren't, you are – in Christ...