

Guest - Jeremiah Porter

Jeremiah Porter

March 15, 2026

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Good morning, church. Hey, it's 11, right? It's 11 a.m. Good morning! Come on.

I'm so glad you're here. I'm so grateful to be with you. I'm really enjoying getting to thaw out while I'm down here. I left home with a foot of snow on the ground, and it's cold. So I'm grateful to be here. No rain. It's wonderful.

Man, I'm so excited that we have this opportunity to seek the face of God together. Jesus said:

My house shall be called a house of prayer.

— Matthew 21:13

Now, worship happens in the house of the Lord, right? How many of you enjoy worship in song? Man, we've got a great worship team.

Preaching happens in the house of the Lord, right? How many of you are grateful for your pastor? Amen.

Service happens in the house of the Lord. Giving happens in the house of the Lord. Fellowship happens in the house of the Lord. And Jesus said, "Of all things, My house shall be a house of..." Well, come on. Give me some conviction. "My house shall be a house of..." There we go. "My house shall be a house of prayer."

Jesus loves it when we pray. God has promised to answer when we pray, when we call upon Him. We see this in the book of Acts from the very beginning. Acts 1:14 says they were all gathered in one place together. They were praying, it says there, and then the Holy Spirit led them in that moment.

Then Acts 2:1 says they were gathered together. We can infer there that they were probably praying as part of what they were doing, because that's what we read the last time that statement was used: They were all together. Then, as you know, Acts 2 - Pentecost happens.

We see this over and over again in the book of Acts. God's people pray, and the Holy Spirit responds. Sometimes we wonder in our lives, our own personal lives and our ministries, "Why isn't God moving?" Well, are you praying? And not just you by yourself, but are you praying together as a church?

Corporate prayer is something that God loves, something that God has promised to bless, and that's why we're here this morning: to seek Him.

The best way to begin to apply God's Word, I believe - we believe - is to pray it, to pray it into action by way of Scripture-fed, Spirit-led, worship-based prayer. So that's what we're going to do.

As we do this, I want to encourage you. I want to put you at ease if you're a little nervous about this time and the thought of praying out loud together. We're going to ease our way into this.

We'll start with some prayer that's just you, one-on-one with the Lord. We'll have some prayer where it's responsive, where we're all together praying at the same time with some words that are on the screen. Then there will be some prayer where we get together in groups.

In that moment, I want to encourage you. Maybe right now you're thinking, "I don't know about this." You don't have to. You can stay by yourself if you want. That's okay. But I would encourage you to at least get into one of those groups. Then maybe, just maybe, try praying.

We're going to make it really easy. We'll have some prompts on the screen. It's simply a fill-in-the-blank kind of sentence. The reason for that is that, if you're at all uncomfortable with prayer, we want to make prayer accessible for you.

But it's also designed to level the playing field. Those of us in the room who are very comfortable praying and really comfortable praying out loud with other people, I want you to use the prompts. Why? Because it'll be less intimidating for some others in our group who may not be as comfortable or familiar with prayer.

Can you do that? Can we do that together? It'll really help in the moment.

The Widow's Offering

As we were praying and thinking about this Sunday, knowing the series that you've been in and the Sunday you had last week, we want to celebrate what God is doing, and we want to look forward with great anticipation to what God is going to do through your generosity.

As we prayed, "Lord, what do You have for today?" He brought us to Mark 12. Would you open your Bibles with me, if you have them, to Mark 12:41-44? It's a passage that I'm sure you're familiar with. It says this:

Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums.

And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.

For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

— Mark 12:41-44

All the money she had available for bread that day, some fruit, and some vegetables. All that she had was what she needed, and she gave all of that away.

You can imagine being in her shoes. All you have are these two little coins, and you're watching people dump tons and tons of money into the offering box. Then it's your turn to go. Maybe in that moment you're feeling

ashamed that you don't have more to give. Maybe you're disappointed. Maybe you're worried about what others might think of you as you put yours in, compared to those who've gone before you and those who will come after you.

I love this passage because right before this, Jesus confronts the religious leaders for their hypocrisy and self-centeredness. What they do is for their glory, not really for the glory of God.

Then He comes to this next story, and a widow - the least of these, the vulnerable one, the one who didn't have anything - came and gave everything.

I remember when my kids were younger, my wife and I were getting ready to go on a mission trip to Papua. We had explained to our kids the process and how we were having to raise a little bit of money to go. The next thing we knew, they all came - four kids - from their rooms with all their coins in little Ziploc bags that they'd been saving from the little chores they did. We're talking several months' worth of nickels and quarters and things like that.

They came with all of it. They handed it to us and said, "Here, we want people in Papua to know about Jesus."

It was everything they had. It was really nothing compared to how much we needed, and yet it was an incredible gift. Why? Because it was everything they had.

Jesus points to this widow as someone who has done something incredibly significant.

The God Who Sees

You see, in a world filled with comparison, competition, and criticism, some of us may be like the widow, quietly wrestling with feelings of inadequacy, invisibility, and insignificance. We can begin to wonder whether our lives really matter or whether our efforts are making any lasting difference.

Scripture tells us a different and better story. Today's passage reveals the heart and values of Jesus and how Jesus sees the heart. One of the great things happening here is that even though she was nothing and had nothing, Jesus saw her. Jesus noticed her. He took note of her.

In Genesis 16:13, it refers to God as the God who sees. God is the God who sees. He sees you. You're not forgotten. You don't go unnoticed. Jesus sees you.

Psalms 139:1-3 says:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!

*You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.*

*You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

— Psalm 139:1-3

God knows you. He sees you. He knows your every move. He's with you. You're not forgotten. You are deeply loved. God is close to you, even in the moments of obscurity, in those moments when you think nobody sees you and you wonder, "Does it really matter?" God sees you.

Why don't we praise Him today as the God who sees?

There's a prompt that's going to come on the screen here. We'll begin one-on-one with the Lord, you in the quietness of your heart with the Lord. Pray something like this: "Jesus, thank You that You see, and my life matters to You even when..."

What are some of those moments when you think, "I don't know if this matters. I don't know if this is making any difference. God, I don't know if You see me. Jesus, I don't know if You see or if it really matters"?

"Jesus, thank You that You see, and my life matters to You even when..."

Did you pray that? Just take a minute to pray that, just you one-on-one with the Lord.

"Jesus, thank You that You see, and my life matters to You even when..."

Jesus, I thank You that You see, and our lives matter to You even in the moments when we feel unseen, even in the moments when it doesn't seem that our efforts have any value to others around us, even in the moments when it seems that all we have to give is really so little. It's but a drop in the bucket of what's needed.

But God, You see. And I thank You, Jesus, that You see us. We give You glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

Would you stand as we continue to worship the Lord in song this morning?

The Lord Looks at the Heart

You can be seated for a moment if you'd like.

And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.

And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box.

For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

— Mark 12:42-44

Jesus called the disciples over because here was a teaching moment. Jesus had just pointed out the attitude and motives of the religious leaders, the Pharisees and others of that day. Really, what they were doing was so that they would be seen. They got all caught up in being seen.

Every one of us has an innate need to feel seen, heard, and valued. But for these guys, that totally consumed them. It drove them. It took hold of their hearts. It got twisted and became something they lived for. While they might say, "This is for God," the hidden motive was really that they would be seen.

Jesus says, "Hey, look." If you're the widow putting in the two coins, you probably don't want to be noticed in that moment by other people. You don't want people to see the little you have. But it's everything she had, and she gave it all to Jesus.

Jesus says, "Look at her heart. Look at the motive behind it. She's put in everything."

What motivates a person to literally unload everything? It means she wasn't going to eat. She wasn't going to have dinner that night, unless maybe someone brought her over to their house. She gave it all away. Why?

Second Chronicles 16:9 says:

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him.

— 2 Chronicles 16:9

Her motive was the glory of God, coming from a heart overflowing with worship for God.

First Samuel 16:7 says:

The Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

— 1 Samuel 16:7

Man would look at others who had come with their abundance and wealth and dropped in large amounts of money and say, "Now that's real giving." And it is significant giving. Don't get me wrong. Don't get Jesus wrong here. That matters.

But so does the tiny yet all-sacrificial gift the widow brought. It matters.

The Lord sees the heart behind the giving that we're doing. Whether you give a lot because you can or you can only give a little, what's the heart in it? What's the motivation in it? Let it be for the glory of God, seeking to please Him rather than impress those around you.

A Prayer of Surrender

This provides us a great opportunity to pray - a prayer of surrender.

When Jesus taught us to pray, He gave us a pattern in Matthew 6: "Pray this way." It begins with worship:

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.*

— Matthew 6:9

Then, before we ask Him for anything, it's a response of surrender:

*Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.*

— Matthew 6:10

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, in me, and through me, as it is in heaven."

I haven't asked Him for anything yet. See, prayer is so much more than just bringing our requests, our grocery list of requests, to God. Prayer is worship. The one enduring motive for prayer is worship. Even if we can't think of something to pray for, we have reason to pray because God's worthy to be sought, and He's worthy to be praised.

Then we come to Him humbly, humbling ourselves before Him to say, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

So let's pray this: "Forgive me for trying to impress people instead of seeking to please You, especially when..."

Let's leave that prompt on the screen here for a moment. Again, just one-on-one with the Lord in this moment of confession: "Forgive me for trying to impress people instead of seeking to please You, especially when..."

When is that for you?

Maybe it is in your giving. It doesn't mean you give less, but you change the heart in it. Maybe it's in your serving, your area of ministry, your place of leadership here in the church or in the community. Maybe it's the way you work and provide for your family. What's the motive in it?

"Forgive me for trying to impress people instead of seeking to please You, especially when..."

As we close out this moment in prayer, I want to invite you to stand with me. We're going to pray in a responsive way. In other words, I'm going to pray a line, and then all of us together will pray a line.

This will get all of us engaged and involved, and it'll start to pave the way for us to pray together out loud. In a moment, we'll pray in groups, but this will give us a warm-up to that, if you will.

On the screen, we've got the prompts. I'll read the first line, and then you read the congregation line. Make sense? I hope so.

We confess that our motives can sometimes be a mess.

Forgive us.

Give us wisdom and assurance to know that You see.

For those who feel unseen in their sacrifice, help us.

For those in seasons of scarcity, be their provider.

For those entrusted with abundance, Holy Spirit, teach us to see like Jesus sees.

May our lives consistently declare that honoring You matters.

May our hearts always assure us that You can be trusted and You are enough.

Let's continue to worship the Lord with our song.

Equal Sacrifice

I'd like you to stay standing because in a moment we'll get into smaller groups to pray.

Jesus got so excited to bring the disciples over to talk about what had just happened, what they had just watched. I want you to put yourself in the sandals of the disciples for a moment.

You're there, and you watched the giving happen. Some people put in a lot of money. Some people put in a little less, but it was still significant. Then this widow drops two little coins in, and that got Jesus excited?

But you see, something happened there that's more than the amount given. It's the sacrifice that was made.

Let's just say someone had \$10,000, and they came - the Bible talks about giving a tenth, giving a tithe - and they gave \$1,000. That's beautiful. That's worship. That's obedience. That's good. That's godly. Praise the Lord.

One thousand divided by 10,000 - you reduce that down, do the math - that's one out of 10. That's 10 percent. Significant, beautiful, and godly.

Then there's this widow who only had two coins. She could've just given one, and that would've been significant. I mean, maybe some of you are able to, but what if all of us were able to give away 50 percent of what we made? Man, what else might God do?

But she didn't give away just one. She gave away both of them. She gave away everything. She sacrificed it all.

You see, we do well to remember that God measures giving not by what we give, but by what we keep for ourselves. It's not about how much goes in, but about how much we're hanging on to afterward.

God has promised to meet our needs, but sometimes what we think are our needs are so much greater than what our actual needs are. What if we gave more of that away? What if we were a little more like the widow, willing, ready, and excited to sacrifice all if that's what God asks for?

You see, Jesus' concern is not equal amounts, but equal sacrifice empowered by His grace. And why not? Because Jesus sacrificed all for you and for me. So why not? As He leads and as He calls, why not?

I want to invite you to turn into smaller groups - three, four, or five people around you. Some of you might need to turn around and engage with a couple of people behind you.

Remember again, if this totally freaks you out, that's okay. If you want to stay by yourself, that's okay. But I would encourage you to go ahead and at least get into a group. You're not obligated to pray.

By the way, this isn't a "go around the circle and pray," because that forces people to pray. We're not going to force people to pray, but we're going to allow people to pray.

Just pray one by one. As the prompt is here, pray it one time and let someone else pray. Then you can jump in again.

We're going to pray and make this request of the Lord: "Jesus, because You gave Your all for me, give me grace to..."

What does it look like for you to serve Him today, to sacrifice for Him today? What sacrifice is He calling you to make? Maybe He's been calling you to make it, and you need His grace to finally take that step today.

"Jesus, because You gave Your all for me, give me grace to..."

Would you pray that together for a minute or two? I want to encourage you to go right to prayer as we do this.

"Jesus, because You gave Your all for me, give me grace to..."

How is He calling you to serve, to sacrifice, or to reach out? How will you respond to His incredible sacrifice for you?

Maybe 30 more seconds. Let's continue to seek Him.

"Give me grace to..."

Caring for the Vulnerable

I want you to stay in your groups. Stay where you're at. But let me guide us in one more way.

This passage brings to light the sacrifice of a widow. If you were a widow in that day, you were extremely vulnerable. It was easy to be taken advantage of and easy to be harmed.

James 1:27 says:

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

— James 1:27

Pure, faultless religion is to live a pure and godly life. But it's not just that. It's also to take care of the vulnerable who are around us, those in need. It could be that they're in need because of something physical, mental, emotional, or relational. Maybe they're completely lost and don't know Jesus yet.

Would you pray this together? "Jesus, lead me to minister to..." You can fill in the blank with that individual, family, or group. "Lead me to minister to them this week in their time of need."

Would you pray that together? Who is the Lord putting on your heart this morning to pray for?

"Jesus, lead me to minister to..."

Jesus, thank You for going out of Your way for us, for sacrificing all for us so that we would know You, be brought back to You, have the forgiveness of our sin, and have the incredible hope of eternal life. Thank You that we can live the rest of these days with Your Spirit dwelling in us. Thank You, Jesus.

Lord, lead us to minister to others. Lord, help us to get over ourselves and be willing to sacrifice our time, our

energy, and our resources to be used by You to meet the needs of those around us so that, Jesus, You are known, You are experienced, and You are glorified.

We give You all glory. In Jesus' name, amen.

Let's continue to worship the Lord in song together.

When the Church Prays Together

Amen. Amen. Stay standing for just a few more minutes here. Only a couple of minutes for me, and then we'll sing again.

Real quick, I heard what was happening behind us as we were singing that song. How many of you met someone today in your prayer group whom you had not met before?

Hey, look around real quick at all the hands up. Look around. Raise them up high. This is part of what happens when we pray together as the church.

Maybe I won't make you raise your hand, but maybe you're here and you feel like - maybe you've come a couple of times. I think the greeting team does an awesome job. You've done a great job building a culture that's welcoming and friendly. But maybe, somehow, some way, you've snuck in here.

Maybe even with that, there's someone in here who's still feeling disconnected, not yet really seen and not yet really known. But when we pray, and when we pray together, that starts to change too. Amen?

I facilitated prayer like this for a church this last summer, a large church in the Seattle area. At the end of the service, I had one couple tell me that they prayed, and the people in front of them turned around. They met each other and prayed together.

They said, "We've been sitting behind them for five years, and we never knew their names. We'd never met."

What are we doing in church? That all changes when we pray together. Amen?

Ready to Obey

The way Jesus taught us to pray is a pattern of worship and reverence, then a response of submission and surrender, then making our requests that would glorify Him, and finally a prayer of what we call readiness - getting battle-ready:

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

— Matthew 6:13

The enemy is going to try to trip us up. When obedience to Jesus becomes costly, when it really does feel like it's costing everything we have - not necessarily just in monetary forms, but in our time, energy, and emotions - when it starts to feel too costly, that's when the enemy wants to work his way in and say, "Yeah, that's ridiculous. You don't need to do that."

Then we choose to go our way rather than the sacrificial way Jesus calls us to go.

But on the other side of that sacrifice is incredible blessing - blessings for the heart and soul that no money can buy and that you can only experience in obedience to Jesus. The devil knows that, and he doesn't want you to experience it.

As we close out, let's close with a responsive prayer like we did before. I'll pray the top line, and you pray the bottom line. It's coming up on the screen here. Let's pray this with boldness and conviction.

We praise You as the God who sees.

And we praise You as the God who acts on our behalf.

Lord, by Your grace, make us ready to walk in obedience and faith.

If You call us to obscurity, if You lead us beyond our comfort zone, if You bless us with greater influence, if You ask for more, here we are, Lord.

All of us together: You are worthy. To You be the glory.

Amen. It's been a joy to be with you today. God bless you all.