

The Widow's Mite / A Lesson on Giving

Mark 12:41-44

This is a touching story that took place during Christ's final visit to the Temple before His crucifixion. The scene involves:

- A destitute and simple LADY.
- A demonstration of sacrificial LOVE.
- A delighted and smiling LORD.

➡ During Jesus' visit to the Temple He was asked four questions leading up to the incident involving the offering of this poor widow.

1. A question of AUTHORITY (11:27-28). Authority is the main issue.
 - Three issues of philosophy: (1) Where did I come from? (2) Why am I here? (3) Where am I going? But _____ of philosophy is AUTHORITY. These questions require an authority to be answered. The answers depend upon what authority is speaking.
2. Question of CIVICS (12:14).
3. Question of SOCIOLOGY (12:19-23). Two big mistakes: (1) Ignorance of the Bible; (2) No power of God
4. Question of THEOLOGY (12:28-34). This is where all questions must ultimately lead.
 - v. 31—One of the greatest missions texts in the Bible

Following all the argument in the Court of the Gentiles, Jesus walked by the Temple treasury.

I. **Where Jesus SAT** (v. 41—"*Jesus sat over against the treasury.*").

- According to some Bible historians there were 13 funnel shaped receptacles at the treasury for people to give their offerings. Each receptacle was marked where the offering would go—Five designated for the Lord; Four designated for the poor.
- Jesus is still just as interested in the treasury of the church as He was in the treasury of the temple.

II. **What Jesus SAW** (vs. 41-42—"*Jesus... beheld HOW the people cast money into the treasury...*").

- The word "**beheld**" is from the Greek word "theōreō." This is where we get our English word "theater," suggesting Jesus was

watching people give their offerings like He would watch a dramatic play—Intently and deliberately.

- The operative word in verse 41 is the word "**HOW**." The Lord was not as interested in what people gave, as He was in the way they gave. He was looking at the motive behind their giving. 1 Samuel 2:3 says, "*By him [God] actions are weighed.*"

➡ ILLUS: The man who gave \$10 thinking he was only giving \$1.

- The Lord still observes how we give. The IRS may not get an accurate report about your giving, but God sees it all. If you are stingy, God sees. If you give sacrificially, God sees that, too.
- A. He saw the WEALTHY — "*cast in much*." This is not a statement condemning the rich, for the rich ought to give "much." Thank God for "big givers" like R.G. LeTourneau, Stanley Tamm, and Russell Anderson. Many large ministries owe their growth to Christian millionaires who give generously.
- ➡ However, the "much" of the rich is not always "much" in God's sight.
- B. He saw the WIDOW cast in her two mites.
- ➡ A mite was a small, thin, copper coin that had the least value in the Palestinian economy. Two mites made up "*a farthing*" which was worth half a penny—Not even a full day's wage.
1. He saw her (v. 42). She was poor, destitute, in deep poverty. The coins were all she had, yet she gave them. She did not use her poverty as an excuse not to give. She could have easily said what so many often feel:
 - "My offering is so small, it won't matter. It won't make any difference."
 - "I have so little. God will understand if I don't give. He doesn't expect me to give it when I can't even buy food."
 2. He saw her (v. 42)—Widows in those days were especially in difficult situations regarding money. There was no social security or pensions or government welfare that could support them when their husbands died. Without a husband, she had little means of support. Yet she gave.

3. He saw her (v. 42). The widow did not give much in terms of amount. But Christ took note of it, for He looks at the heart.

- The rich cast in MUCH (v. 41). She cast in **ALL** (v. 44). *"She of her want did cast in **all** that she had, even **all** her living."* She gave her living—not just part—BUT ALL!
- The rich cast in out of their ABUNDANCE. She cast in out of her DEFICIENCY.
- The Lord measures the offering, not by it's SIZE, but by it's SACRIFICE.
 - Sacrificial giving costs something. What the rich gave did not cost them nor hurt them. But not the widow. She gave up something in order to give.

4. He saw her (v. 44). She literally gave all that she had to live on. She gave to the point that required her to trust God to supply her needs. If God didn't provide, she would starve.



(1) The needs of God's temple. The widow gave to help carry on the ministry of the Temple.

(2) The needs of the widow. She took her need (money) and gave it to supply the needs of God's temple. By giving her all she was trusting God to supply her need.

a) By giving all she had she was saying, "God, I have a need... its money. I don't know where my next meal will come from. If I am to eat, You have to provide. Here is all I have. Take my small offering for the needs of Your temple. Now I'm trusting You to take care of my needs." She gave, believing God's promise to provide (Phil. 4:19 - context is giving an offering).

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- *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).*

- "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6).
- "The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Prov. 11:25).
- "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor" (Prov. 22:9).

- b) She believed the principle that you cannot outgive God. Paul wrote, "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" (Rom. 11:35). God will be no man's debtor (Job 41:11).
- c) She knew that if she put God first in her giving, God would provide (Mt. 6:33).
- ILLUS.—This is what the widow of Zarephath did in 1 Kings 17.
 - I wonder what she found when she returned to her home?
5. He saw her . . . Just a few hours earlier, Jesus summed up the two greatest commandments in the word "love" (vs. 28-31). Perhaps this poor widow put one mite in a chest marked for God, and the other mite she put a chest for the poor, expressing her love to God and her love to her neighbor.
- The QUALITY, not the QUANTITY, of a man's offering is the true measure of his love for the Lord. "**Prove the sincerity of your love**" (2 Cor. 8:8).

III. What Jesus SAID (vs. 43-44).

- A. He spoke of the SOURCE of her offering (v. 44). Two sources:
1. She gave from her . . . "Of her want." She gave from an empty well. Her source was not a fat bank account but an empty bank account.
 2. She gave from her . . . "All her living." She gave from what she needed to pay her basic living expenses. All the excuses people use for not giving go up in smoke when one considers this widow's giving. What a rebuke to our giving.

B. He spoke of the SUPERIORITY of her offering (v. 43). God assesses our giving far different than man. Man looks at how much is given. God looks at how much we keep for ourselves.

➡ Those who only give a tithe will fall short in this respect, for that leaves 90% for the giver. This widow had 0% left. If a person with a thousand dollars tithes, he still has nine hundred dollars left. A person who tithes on ten dollars only has nine dollars left. In God's assessment, the person who gave a dollar gave more than the person who gave one hundred dollars.

: How does God assess your giving? God considers what we keep for ourselves, not what we give. He counts the amount of _____, not the amount of money. The offering that matters is the offering that **costs** the giver to give.

Frances Haverhill wrote "Take My Life, and Let it Be" (#39) in 1874. It was not until 1878 that the lyrics were put into print. When she read the second stanza—"*Take my silver and my gold, Not a mite would I withhold,*" she was suddenly convicted of her failure to do just that. She had an amazing collection of exquisite jewelry, most of which she received as a gift or inheritance.

Immediately, she packed the jewels and sent them to her church as a missionary offering. Then, just to be sure, she included a check to cover the monetary value of some jewels she had chosen to keep. She wrote this note with the package: "I don't think I need to tell you I have never packed a box with such pleasure!"