

Giving

The Text: Mark 12: 41-44

The Take Home: God is not as concerned with “how much” you give, as He is with “why” you give.

The Challenge: Plant 5 churches in Northern India by the end of the school year.

OPENING QUESTIONS & THOUGHTS:

- *How much would you have to make financially to live the lifestyle you desire to live when you get on your own?*
- *How much does God ask of you financially?*
- *What will it take to give God what He asks and live the life you want?*
- *Why do we want to handle our finances so privately?*

It has been noted (by counting total verses recorded in the Gospels) that Jesus talked more about money/treasure/finances than most any other topic. Yet Jesus has very little if any personal finances. He responded to someone who asked to follow him that He had “no place to lay His head” (Mt 8:20). He lived at the benevolence or generosity of those who He lived in community with. Yet He lacked nothing to live the best life ever lived. A life we follow and we worship.

An instance happened where Jesus showed us His perspective on money from an every day event.

GETTING TO THE TEXT:

Read Mark 12:41-44

Jesus had just faced the anger and resentment of those who were being replaced by His presence. They knew who he was and their anger and disrespect was met by Jesus predicting judgment upon them.

Certainly weary from the constant stubbornness of those who knew who He was, Jesus left them on the porches, and came down the steps leading into the temple. From these steps He could gain full view into the "Court of the Women," (where Gentiles and women were allowed to gather). He sat down on the stairs to watch the multitude.

The time of sacrifice was past, and those who still lingered had remained for private reflection or to pay their vows and offerings. All along these corridors were the thirteen trumpet-shaped boxes. These "trumpets" all bore inscriptions, marking the purposes of contribution—whether to make up for past neglect, to pay for certain sacrifices, to provide incense, wood, or for other gifts. All of these offerings were used to better other's lives.

It must have been of deep interest to Jesus to watch the givers give. "Many rich people threw in large amounts."—yes, because a law had to be enacted,

forbidding the gift to the temple of more than a certain proportion of one's possessions. It was such an elaborate moment for them to showcase their giving to be seen by men.

As Jesus sat on these steps, He noticed one person, no one else would have. Mark says, "this poor widow". Her conditions and appearance identified her position in society.

She held in her hand only the smallest coins, gave two *lepta*. A *lepton* was the smallest bronze Jewish coin in circulation in Palestine. Two *lepta* were worth 1/64 of a Roman denarius, a day's wage for a laborer. She gave a fraction of a penny. She could have kept back one coin for herself since it was all she had.

Jesus used her example to teach His disciples the value God places on wholehearted commitment. Their own commitment to Jesus would soon be severely tested (Mark 14:27-31).

It was an insignificant amount as related to earthly value and yet even though she never knew He saw it, even though she gave it against the law as an amount unworthy, Jesus saw it and recognized the value in faith, not the value in amount. She never knew what it meant to Him but we all do thousands of years later...faith matters.

RESPONSE:

- ***What does it mean to you to know that there isn't one act of faith that God misses?***
- ***What does it mean to all of us to know that Jesus rested and found solace in watching people invest in the offerings that blessed the community around them?***
- ***What does that do to your desire to never miss an opportunity to exhibit faith regardless of whether or not others see it or acknowledge it?***
- ***How do we now then face those moments where our contribution doesn't seem to be enough to make a difference?***

Jesus never gave us information on how much to give. People debate whether they need/have to give 10% since it is not mentioned in the New Testament. So we can rest assured that there is no law pertaining to "an amount", but that doesn't mean Jesus' expectations aren't clearly seen here in what He recognizes as an act of worship.

- ***How did He identify the value of her gift?***
- ***How much then is a gift of faith?***
- ***Does John 3:16 define more than a memorable verse, if so, how?***
- ***If God is not as concerned by what you give as why you give, what will be your gift & why?***