

Sincere Giving – Mark’s Gospel Chapter 12:41-44

This morning, in studying God’s Word and leading up to the section on the widow’s offering, this had been an eventful day for Jesus as he and his disciples returned for the third time to the Temple in Jerusalem. By this time, Jesus had dealt with confrontations regarding his authority, questions about paying taxes, whose son he was, his teaching on resurrection, and then, finally, a scribe questioning him about the greatest commandment. What does Jesus do? He asks those in the Temple the question of the ages and what they thought of Him, and who they considered him to be. Both the scribes and the people believed that the Jewish Messiah would come from the royal line of David, for David was human, so would the Messiah be human, or so they thought. Still, at this moment, Jesus knows the cross is just three days away—the moment of truth answering the compelling question about who the Messiah is. Everything we see between chapters 11 and 15 transpires in Jesus’ final week before being crucified.

I spoke last week about Jesus’ humanity, and I think by now we would all agree seeing Jesus most likely tired and frustrated with the attitudes and accusations, debating attacks from the religious leaders he encountered within the Temple. We find Jesus sitting down near the treasury, and we see an eventful moment for the disciples, using the events that transpire to teach an obscure yet valuable lesson considering three principles from four verses where Jesus reveals within the text an outcome the world would not expect from a “Sincere Gift.” But before we dig into the lesson, let’s take a moment to pause and pray.

Father, thank you for this time in your Word, reminding us your mercies are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness, Lord, and thank you for a fresh dose of your mercy today. We pray you will use this passage to speak to our hearts. Lord, you know what each of us needs to hear. Take the words of this passage and speak to our hearts in the way we each need it today. We love and praise you with thankful hearts that you first loved us, giving your Son Jesus to die on the cross so that you would be glorified. In this, we pray in Jesus’ name. And everyone said, Amen.

Fast forward to verses 41-42. In these verses, we observe Jesus seated near the treasury within King Herod’s Temple, and the situation begins. At first, the situation appears insignificant until we consider the overall context of that day. The treasury was not located within the main Temple but instead up two sets of stairs into divided areas. This passage occurs within the large area of the Court of the Gentiles to the smaller Court of the Women. The Court Women was located within a sizeable divided area about the size of ten football fields with pillars 37 feet high where people could hear his teaching. Although the text does not explicitly say that Jesus was tired and weary, he sought a place of solitude with the Temple complex for a moment of rest to clear his mind in the company of his disciples, watching money changing. Again, we get a glimpse of the humanity of our Lord. Just like us in moments of life, we need a place to get away from the distractions of life and rest for a while.

As Jesus sat over against the treasury, He watched those who came to cast their money into the treasury. Unlike the offering plates of most American churches, the treasury area held thirteen trumpet-shaped brass boxes along the wall, and each of these boxes would have had an inscription revealing the purpose of the gift and a designation. Nine boxes were for legal dues, such as the temple taxes, and four were for voluntary offerings. Jesus sat there, purposely observing the coins cast into the boxes as the coins rattled against the sides as they slid down inside the trumpet walls. Those who wanted to be recognized for their giving would have thrown

their offering into the trumpets with force to make enough noise for their giving. We can see Jesus watching under his supernatural knowledge of their motivation for giving.

The principles we see in this setting remain today, and while we do not give our offerings in brass boxes, and most give checks or paper currency, the Lord knows the motivation behind our giving. No doubt some give happily, while others provide grudgingly. However, we are expected to share with a pure heart, happy to support the Kingdom's work without the fanfare of human recognition. In 2 Corinthians 9:7, we read, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Again, we read in Matthew 6:2-4, "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. When you give to people in need, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Heavenly Father, who sees what is done secretly, will reward you."

As Jesus sat in the treasury, attentively observing the casting of offerings, a certain unnamed poor widow entered, and he noticed a difference in what He saw. First, the wealthy, many of whom were identified only as the rich, offered much, and this was nothing out of the ordinary, for it was expected, especially at the time of the Passover. Then, as Jesus continued to watch, something unique caught His eye when this poor pauper widow living in extreme poverty came into the treasury, throwing in two mites, basically the smallest of Jewish currency of little value, less than one penny in the American sense of worth—everything she owned not out of her abundance. Seeing the poor widow throw in her two mites, Jesus called the disciples unto Him and began to teach them about his observation of her gift of abundance, dependence, and confidence simply out of her love for God.

Jesus observed many gifts being cast into the treasury, not mentioning the amount others gave, but none exceeded the gift she gave. He knew she had given two mites a meager monetary amount, but it was the sincerity of the gift. Although small in man's eyes, she gave all she had, even in poverty. Human standards cannot correctly measure our gifts and service unto the Lord, for the Lord does not look at the dollar amount, only the heart's intent. The Lord will bless what we do for Him, even if the world does not recognize the value of our gift. This message is not solely about money; although the church's finances count, it is the sincerity of our heart's motives to give time, our talents, and our treasures. Remember, Jesus is always observing, and from my observation, there is plenty of room to serve in many areas of this church's life cheerfully and voluntarily.

The second principle we see Jesus teaching the disciples is that she gave every bit of money she possessed. She did not have much when she came, yet she gave it all to the Lord. I do not doubt that she was a woman of faith, determined to live her life depending on the Lord to provide. We see nothing from the text revealing any anxiety as she gave freely. The Lord does not expect us to become foolish with our money; however, trying to bargain with God is unwise. It is unreasonable to think if we give five dollars today and expect God to provide ten dollars for us tomorrow. However, if we deliver to God from a pure heart, he will provide if we fellowship with love and devotion. God will provide for those who seek Him, and we need faith like this widow to trust the Lord with our lives. He provides the opportunities, the strength, and the wisdom we need to work and earn wages. Every blessing we receive comes from the gracious hand of God, and as one of my dear colleagues always says, we cannot out-give Him.

We cannot consider the abundance of the widow's gift and miss her confidence in the Lord. She felt compelled to give all she had without worry. She lived her life depending on the Lord, fully confident that He would provide. It was the evidence of her faith that caught the attention of Jesus. We talk often about faith, but do we possess that type of confidence and trust that the Lord will meet our needs, knowing He is able and willing to provide? I know it is difficult when facing life's adversities, especially during financial hardship. The hard part is learning to trust the Lord, who will honor your faithfulness. This poor widow is a challenge for all of us in our commitment to God, to rely upon and serve in every aspect of our lives.

I have read stories about prisoners in concentration camps, death camps, and POW camps who were given scraps of bread and watery bowls of soup, and that is all they had to survive. But they found a way of tithing from it. One man took a tenth of his bread every day and gave it to a fellow prisoner, and another fasted every tenth day, giving his full meal to someone else. The principle of the Bible is proportional giving. The passage reminds us we are to give "as God has prospered us."

In today's economy, every penny counts, and generosity is not measured by the amount but by the sacrifice. I remember my grandmother, and in her last years on earth, she had cups placed on her windowsill, and she would put whatever penny, nickel, or dime she had left to give away. She was flat-out broke, and my father would ask her, "Mom, why do you have no money?" However, Let's say the CEO of Apple comes to worship, and he drops a million dollars in the offering plate. The million dollars for Tim Cook is pocket change and out of his abundance. But if a single woman is here trying to stretch her money, living off a limited income, putting ten dollars in the offering will be felt. Ten dollars is gas or grocery money for someone trying to make a budget stretch. Have you seen the price of gas and food these days? You see, generosity is not measured in the amount; it is measured by the sacrifice. By the way, Mr. Cook, if you happen to see a replay of this sermon on the Facebook page and want to unload a couple million, I don't want to discourage you.

In closing, while this passage focuses on the sacrificial giving of a poor widow, we cannot overlook her attitude of faith to trust in the Lord without worry. Let us remember, too, that God always has a particular eye on widows and orphans, and what does it cost us in a practical way to follow Jesus? The Lord knows our hearts and the motivation for our actions. He knows why we serve and why we give. We must also remember that the degree of one's sacrifice does not equate with the certainty of one's salvation. We must also remember not to seek the praise and recognition of humanity but to aim to honor the Lord and please Him. Jesus gave his all when he took our place on the cross. He gave his life so we could be forgiven and reconciled to God the Father. Living a life for Jesus as followers of Jesus will cost us something when we understand that Jesus is Lord, and as citizens under his Lordship, we should use our gifts to give back in our love for others. The least we can do is give of what He has blessed us with. With a willing heart, we shouldn't wait for prompting but instead be ready to give our time, talents, and financial gain openly. Jesus is worthy of all we can offer. All glory laud and honor, to our Redeemer King, Thou David's Royal Son, The King and Blessed One. Amen.