

3-10-24 The Greatest Month of Generosity

Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44.

Big Idea of the Message: The widow put the least in the offering, but Jesus demonstrates through her that generosity is not just for those who are wealthy or have it all together.

Application Point: We will be generous even with our small gifts, talents, and acts of service.

How many weeks until Easter? (3 weeks)

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. -Winston Churchill

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

Should you only be generous when have more than enough? Sometimes we think generosity is more the responsibility of the wealthy or those that have the time and resources to spend. But if we wait to be generous until we are ready, we will never be ready.

When we set up our priorities, when we look at our timetables, we do so with an underlying belief, a hidden voice at the heart of us speaks which shapes and influences how we respond.

I would like to say that voice is the voice of Jesus, but often it is the voice of economics,

Money is the unavoidable small voice that probably all of us listen to. The tragedy is that the voice that should speak to us about our priorities is the voice of God.

Probably one of the reasons we don't like to talk about it is because money is at the heart of our society, everything we do turns on money.

Is money the root of all evil?

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 1 Tim. 6:10

Read Luke 21:1-4.

Read Mark 12:41-44.

I. Who was this widow?

- In society the needs of the widow were often overlooked, but God singles them out for special attention; they were outcasts.
- If their late husband's family did not look after them then no one would. Begging or prostitution were realistically the only options for survival.
- No welfare, no social security, no hope. We often associate the widow with being old but let's not forget – that Ruth was a young widow.

II. What was her gift?

- Everything. She came before God and gave everything. She didn't just give some of what she had; Jesus says that from a place of poverty, a place of nothing she gave **ALL** she had.
- It was good to be seen giving. Giving was a spectator sport, it was done in front of everybody, there were no secret envelope numbers, no way to give online, no box in the back of the room where you could conceal your offering.
- There was no paper money so the more noise, the more you were giving, chances are there was a lot of "oohing" and "aahing" over the size of the gifts. Then comes this woman, perhaps with head bowed, seeking to be as inconspicuous as possible.
- Trying to be unnoticed, she places her pittance in the offering chest. Do you suppose there was "oohing" and "aahing" when she made her contribution? Not from the crowd, but from Jesus. He was excited about her giving.
- He was excited about what she gave, all she had, and about how she gave, with a heart toward God. She gave everything, and it didn't even make a sound in the temple collection, it would have largely gone unnoticed by earthly eyes. **BUT** Jesus noticed and because Jesus noticed the sound of these small coin's echoes through history.
- In Mark's account, it states that Jesus sat opposite of the treasury and watched as people put their offerings in.
 - a. Jesus sees what we give. We can fool man, but we can't fool God. He sees where and what we hold of value. Where you place your money often shows where your heart is. (me and the envelope)
 - b. Jesus cares about what we give. Jesus calls his disciples over and tells them that others give from their abundance, but she gave all she had.
- When it comes to our giving, God sees more than the portion; He also sees the proportion. Men see what is given, but God sees what is left, and by that He measures the gift and the condition of our hearts.

III. Giving ALL she had was foolish!

- Just listen to the still small voice inside you, what does it say about the actions of the widow?? Chances are if it's driven by economics then it would say she was foolish.
- When you think about it, by giving all she had she was becoming even more dependent upon others. By doing this she would be even more of a burden to society and her family (if she had one).
- In an economic sense what she was doing was suicide. She may as well have taken her own life because to give away ALL she had was basically signing a death wish. We are talking about a society where people did die on the streets.
- But apart from that she was giving the money to the one institution that she probably shouldn't have given it to.
- **Look at Luke 20:45-47.**
- She was giving her offering to the very people that would rob her and leave her for dead!

- So, she was not only risking making herself more of a burden, or sealing her own fate, but she was also giving ALL she had to an institution that sought out to use and destroy her. (Where do I sign up!)
- Isn't that what some of us think when we are challenged to give back to the Lord what is already His? Our actions speak louder than our words.
- We are or have been guilty of spiritual hitchhiking. We come to church and allow others to pay our part.
- Is there a voice inside of you saying she was crazy, that she wasted her money? Is the voice of the Holy Spirit in you saying it was a beautiful act of for God?
- If it is then you have tension.
- The thing about tension is that when it exists something must give, these two voices cannot coexist, you will either listen to one or the other.
- What I would like to challenge you to do is, to ignore the voice of financial reason and listen long and hard to the voice of Jesus.

IV. The widow chose a new way to live.

- In giving everything, the widow woman is doing something that we are all called to do. To become ultimately dependent upon God. She was sacrificing all to follow God.
- Isn't that exactly what Jesus says all of His followers are to do?

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. Luke 14:33 ESV

It is the same for each of you. You must leave everything you have to follow me. If not, you cannot be my follower. Luke 14:33 ERV

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. Mark 8:34 NKJ

- Now that little voice of economic reasoning probably wants to explain away these verses, and all the other hard sayings about Jesus. But that is precisely what many people now and in the first century are called to do.
- When we make the decision to follow Jesus, we are forced to give up social ties, economic support of extended families to follow Jesus. If we listen to the still small voice of economic reason, then we can't follow Jesus.
- This poor widow represents the Christian church of a large proportion of the world. Jesus pointed to the self-giving of the widow as an example for all Christians to follow.
- For most of us in this room and those watching online, we will never have to give **ALL** we have to God. It's probably a good thing because many of us so called spiritual people would fail.
- But we **ALL** should be living fully reliant on Jesus. We need to place everything in God's hands, our finances, our time, our families, and our lives.

Conclusion

Do you give out of your richness, out of what you can afford, or out of your poverty?

Would any of us be tempted to take part in a religious performance and put our money in the drum as noisily as possible?

The value of the gift is not what is given but what is left in the hands of the giver, it is a sacrifice. For some of us it is far too easy just to give money, it costs us nothing, but time is something that we do not have.

The call of Christ is everything. Self-denial is not a yearly act, a 40 day period of time; it is a daily act. The call of Christ is to constantly deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him; it isn't meant to be comfortable. Cross carrying is hard work, humbling work.

In giving all, she had the widow also gave us something, a hero of faith. Someone to look to. Someone who overcame the voice inside, who ignored and revealed its lies.

Instead of looking down in pity, the widow gives us a chance to look at a world where material goods are not as important, where sharing one's daily bread is a norm.

The widow's obedient faith impressed and moved the heart of Jesus. Wow!

"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." – CT Studd