

## Widow's Two Coins

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Mark 12:41-44

### INTRODUCTION:

This morning, I would like to address a question that apparently is something of concern to at least one of our teens here at this congregation.

- I always appreciate receiving sermon requests, because not only does it tell me what issues our members find to be pertinent, but it also shows a desire to more completely understand the word of God.
- If you would like to request a sermon on a particular topic, I encourage you to visit the bulletin board at the bottom of the ramp out here where you will find some index cards that can be used for requests.
- I would like to thank the young person who made the following request for a sermon... it simply says **"Not showing selfishness and giving of your means."**
- And then it gave reference to **Mark 10:25** which says, ***"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."***

Our nation is going through an economically difficult time.

- There are a lot of people who are searching for jobs and there are a lot of people who are feeling a financial pinch.
- It is obvious that these tough times are even affecting those who are not yet living on their own.

I would like to begin this morning with a couple of modern day parables:

- There once was a very successful and wealthy man, named Donald, who was out in his beautiful gardens in front of his magnificent mansion and he was approached by two men representing a worthy cause. He was asked to make a donation of \$50,000.
- Donald replied, **"I may look as though I am very affluent and could easily donate \$50,000 but you do not understand my circumstances. You do not know that my mother is very ill and is in a very expensive care facility. You do not know that my brother died without any life insurance and left a family of five with little provision. You do not know that my son has given his life to social work and that his income is less than the national poverty level. You do not know that my church is in the middle of a major building and remodeling program and is in need of funds."**
- **"No,"** said the inquirer, **"I was not aware of all those great needs."** **"Well,"** said Donald, **"If I don't give a dime to any of those causes what makes you think I'd give you anything?"**

Here's another story...

- One winter storm fell especially hard on the Appalachian Mountains.
- The snow stacked deep and it became impossible for residents to leave their homes.
- The Red Cross mobilized helicopters to fly in supplies to remote mountain homes.
- One crew had worked hard all day delivering much needed relief to snow-bound families.
- On their way back to their base, they saw a small cabin almost hidden beneath snow.
- Because of the steep mountain, they had to land far below the cabin and carry the supplies uphill through waist-deep snow.
- It was almost dark when they knocked on the front door.
- A wrinkled old mountain woman, named Donna, opened the door.
- **"Ma'am, we're from the Red Cross,"** said a crew member.

- Donna said, “**It’s been a hard winter, son. I can only spare a \$5 bill this year.**”

In our two stories, we have two individuals who are both very different from each other.

- A wealthy man, named Donald, and a poor woman, named Donna.
- One in a beautiful estate with lush flower gardens, another in a humble cabin with probably only a vegetable garden during the summer months.
- One so stingy with his giving that he wouldn’t give a dime to his own family, another with no family, but generously giving what she has for complete strangers.

This morning, we are going to be taking a deep look at a number of different passages of the Bible surrounding the topic of selfishness and giving of our means.

- As we take a look at this topic this morning, I would like for us all to consider whether we are more like Donald in our giving. Or are we more like Donna?
- The main passage of God’s word that I would like us to examine can be found in **Mark 12**.
- If you will, please turn to **Mark 12** and let us consider the story of the widow who gave her last two copper coins.
- I am sure that many of us are familiar with this story, however there are a number of things that are important for us to acknowledge by reviewing this passage once again..
- Often times we can read a passage of scripture and come back to it on another occasion and it is amazing to find things there that we never noticed before.
- I believe we can learn a great deal about God’s will from this story.

In the past we have talked a lot about how Jesus was the greatest teacher that ever lived.

- I find it very interesting that in the same way that a good parent will teach their children how to act and how to live a good Christian life, Christ also, always took advantage of opportunities to teach.
- This story regarding the widow was a real life event that was taking place at the temple of the Lord during a period when Jesus had been spending a great deal of time with His disciples.
- Jesus saw something happen, that He felt compelled to share with the disciples.

Please read with me the story of the widow’s generous giving of two coins worth about a penny...

**Mark 12:41-44**

*41 And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums.*

*42 A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent.*

*43 Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury;*

*44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."*

As we examine this passage more closely there are a number of things that we can acknowledge in regards to giving in accordance with God’s will.

- There are three specific things that I would like us to acknowledge, the first of which is the fact that...

**I. Giving is important.**

If it wasn’t important, why would Jesus take the time to watch what is being given?

- Why would He then proceed to point out these things to His disciples...the very men who would soon be establishing His church?

- And why would this story have been recorded in the inspired word of God if it wasn't important?

There are obvious reasons why giving is important, such as the fact that we give in order to maintain the church.

- At this congregation we have recently spent thousands of dollars on new furnaces and air conditioning.
- Bob Reeder does an excellent job of keeping up on replacing light bulbs and putting down carpet strips, and fixing the ramp by the back door and maintaining the baptistery and a host of other things.
- All of these things cost money... not to mention that soon this congregation is going to be spending more than \$30 or \$40K on a new roof.
- We have to pay for all of the utilities and other expenses that the church requires to keep the doors open.
- This is one of the most obvious reasons that we make contributions to the church.

According to our text, Jesus took the time to “*sit down opposite the treasury,*” to observe the people who were giving to the treasury of the church, He then went out of His way to call His disciples together and gather their attention

- Once he had their attention, He taught them that it is God's will for people to generously give to the church.
- Other than the reasons that we have already mentioned, there are a number of other reasons that we are financially generous towards others.
- One of those reasons is that we can make a difference in the world. One soul at a time!

I'd like to tell you a true story about something that happened in NY City some years ago... A little boy about 10 years old was standing before a shoe store on the roadway, barefooted, peering through the window, and shivering with cold.

- A lady approached the boy and said, “**My, but you're in such deep thought staring in that window!**”
- “**I was asking God to give me a pair of shoes,**” was the boy's reply.
- The lady took him by the hand and went into the store and asked the clerk to get half a dozen pairs of socks. She then asked the clerk if he could give her a basin of water and a towel.
- He quickly brought them to her. She took the little fellow to the back part of the store and, removing her gloves, knelt down, washed his little feet, and dried them with the towel.
- By this time the clerk had returned with the socks.
- Placing some socks on the boy's feet, she also bought a pair of shoes for him.
- She tucked together the remaining pairs of socks and put them in a bag for the boy.
- She patted him on the head and said, “**No doubt, you will be more comfortable now**”.
- As she turned to go, the astonished kid caught her by the hand, and looking up into her face with tears in his eyes, asked her, “**Are you God's wife?**”

She was not God's wife, however she was certainly acting like one of His children.

- At this congregation so far this year, we have helped feed or cloth or have provided temporary housing for over 50 families and about two hundred people through our benevolence program.

- When we support those in need, we are doing “*what is good*” as commanded in **Ephesians 4:28**, which also says that those who labor, labor so that “*he will have something to share with one who has need.*”
- In **Matthew 10:8-10**, Jesus told His disciples not to acquire gold, silver, or copper and said, “*Freely you received, freely give.*”
- Giving is something that God expects of us. It is clearly something that he specifically wants us to do.

The good news is... not only does it please Him; but it also pleases us!

- It makes us feel good to know that we are making a difference in the world.
- There is a contentment that we feel when we know that we are helping to support the church because of the improvement we know the church is making in the world.
- At Bible camp this summer, we learned that endorphins are released from our glands when we give to others and that brings us joy.

There are a host of other reason why we give.

- We give as an example of our love and generosity.
- We give, because we know that God will bless us with an eternal reward.
- We give because God is very pleased with generous giving.
- In **Philippians 4:18-19**, Paul described the generous giving of the Christians in Philippi. He said their generosity was, “*a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*”
- When Paul wrote to the **Ephesians** he said (in **chapter 5:1-2**), “*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*”
- We give, because Christ gave!
- We must be imitators of Him by walking in love and sharing our love with the world through our generous giving.
- All of these verses point out that in God’s eyes giving is very important.

There is a second thing that we can acknowledge from the story of the widow.

## **II. God discerns between a worthy sacrifice and an unworthy sacrifice:**

The passages that we just read in **Philippians** mentioned that our giving can be an “*acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*”

- Does this mean that some giving is not acceptable and is not pleasing to God?
- The answer is yes! Not all giving is pleasing to God!

Some of you may already be thinking about Ananias and Sapphira.

- In the first few verses of **Acts 5** we see that they sacrificed what we can assume was a large sum of money.
- As we know today, even a very small piece of property, can be worth thousands of dollars, or even millions of dollars if it happens to be a prime piece of real estate.
- Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property and held back a portion of the price for themselves.
- The fact they didn’t give it all to the church was not the problem.
- The problem was that they lied about it and tried to make the apostles believe that that was what they sold the property for.
- How do we know that this was not an acceptable and pleasing sacrifice?

- **Acts 5:10** says it all... Peter had just said to Sapphira, *“Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?” And she said, “Yes, that was the price.”*
- **Verse 10** says, *“And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.”*
- God was not pleased with their dishonest sacrifice.

When we consider the fact that God discerns between a worthy and an unworthy sacrifice, we come back to our story with the widow.

- **Mark 12:41** says, *“many rich people were putting in large sums”* and yet Jesus said, *“this poor widow put in more than all the contributors.”*
- Jesus was saying that the widow gave more generously than those with large sums of money.
- To Jesus, one cent can be more worthy than several bags of gold, because her one-cent came from the heart.
- Her gift was a true sacrifice. This reminds me of another story about a true sacrifice...

A six-year-old girl became deathly ill and needed a blood transfusion. When her rare blood type complicated the problem, her nine-year-old brother was tested as a donor.

- Though he qualified, everyone was hesitant to ask him because of his age.
- When no other donor was found, they talked to him about it.
- He didn’t understand all that they were saying, but said, **“Sure, I’ll give my blood for my sister.”**
- When the transfusion began, he was very brave and he took the needle in his arm, closed his eyes and lay silently on the bed.
- After it was completed, the doctors thanked the brother for saving his sister’s life.
- The brave little boy began to cry. He asked, **“Doctor, when do I die?”**
- The doctor understood the magnitude of what this boy had done and quickly reassured him that he would not die.
- He was amazed at the boy’s courage and asked, **“Why were you willing to give your life for her?”**
- He said, simply, **“Because she is my sister...and I love her.”**

Jesus pointed out the widow’s sacrifice because she gave what **verse 44** says was, *“all she owned, all she had to live on.”* I would guess that if Jesus had walked up to the widow and asked her why she gave everything to God.

- I would guess that her answer would have been, **“Because I love Him.”**
- Her sacrifice was important because her heart was in the right place!
- When the very first Christians in **Acts 2** had been baptized and were selling their possessions and sharing everything with other Christians, we find that they did these things with *“gladness and sincerity of heart.”*
- In the book of **Hebrews**, the writer advised the Christians to continually offer up praises to God and to not neglect *“doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”* (**Hebrews 13:15-16**)
- Love for God goes hand in hand with doing good and sharing.
- These things are all pleasing to God.
- God discerns between a worthy sacrifice and an unworthy sacrifice based on the person’s heart.

Mother Theresa once said, **“If you give what you do not need, it isn’t giving.”**

- Martin Luther has said, **“I have tried to keep things in my hands and lost them all, but what I have given into God’s hands I still possess.”**

- Sir Henry Taylor was quoted at saying, “**He who gives that he would as readily throw away, gives without generosity; for the essence of generosity is in self-sacrifice.**”

Knowing that God judges our sacrifices, we need to recognize that our giving should be done with humility.

- **Matthew 6:3-4** says, “*But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.*”
- **Acts 11:29** says that the disciples gave “*in the proportion...(to their) means.*”
- In **2 Corinthians 9:13**, Paul commended the citizens of Corinth for giving liberally.
- And in **Romans 15** the Christians in Macedonia and Achaia made a contribution for the less fortunate Christians in Jerusalem and **verse 27** says, “*they were pleased to do so.*”

Giving therefore should be from the heart, should be in proportion to our means, should be done with liberality and should be pleasing not only to God, but also should be pleasing to us.

- There is a third and final thing that we can acknowledge from our text regarding the widow and her one-cent gift.

### III. That is that Jesus observed the giving.

The very first verse that we read this morning says, “*And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums.*”

- It is extremely important for us to understand that Jesus didn’t just make His observations on giving back in the Bible times.
- He took notice back then, because it was important.
- He evaluated the giving to discern if the giving was from the heart or if there were other motives.
- **Hebrews 13:8** says that “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*”
- If He observed their giving from the heart back in New Testament times, does He still discern whether or not His children are giving generously?
- I believe the answer to this question is “yes.”
- Giving is still important, and God is still watching and discerning if we are being generous or not.
- We recognize from the story of Ananias and Sapphira, that there is no deceiving God.

### SUMMARY:

This morning, we have been looking at the story of the widow who generously gave the equivalent of one-cent.

1. The first thing that we acknowledged from this story is that GIVING IS IMPORTANT.
2. The second thing that we acknowledged from this story is that GOD DISCERNS BETWEEN A WORTHY SACRIFICE AND AN UNWORTHY SACRIFICE.
3. The third and final thing that we acknowledge from this story is the fact that JESUS STILL OBSERVES OUR GIVING.

## CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

I appreciate the person who requested this sermon topic.

- The unselfish giving of our means is an important part of our worship service for all of the obvious reasons.
- God has always wanted his people to sacrifice for Him.
- We can look all the way back to the first children born on this planet and see that Abel's sacrifice was acceptable, but Cain's was not.
- As we bring our lesson this morning to a close, let us all ask ourselves about our own giving.
- Are you a Donald or a Donna?
- Do you give in proportion to your means or do you withhold what really is not ours in the first place?

We need to acknowledge that we are only giving back what does not belong to us.

- **James 1:17** says, *“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”*
- And **Matthew 7:11** says, *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”*
- And most importantly we have **Romans 8:32**, *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”*

Christ gave us everything. We owe Him our very lives.

- There may be someone here this morning who has not yet given your life to Christ.
- The most important thing the Lord wants is not your money, but He wants your heart.
- If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and if you are willing to humbly show repentance, and if you've never been baptized, we would like to encourage you to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins right now.
- Or if you are a Christian and you have a confession or would like the prayers of the church, please come forward as we stand and sing.