

TWO SMALL COPPER COINS— Sunday April 14th 2013.

And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. ² And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. ³ And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; ⁴ for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.” (Luke 21:1-4)

Beloved in the Lord,

Giving to God’s work has always been an integral part of living the Christian life. Jesus taught:

“Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” Luke 6:38

Jesus is clearly commanding us to give, and He promises that if we do, we will be blessed in return. This is how God’s economy works. God owns everything, it is all His. The whole universe belongs to Him.

We read in Psalm 24:1 ***“The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.”***

Did you get that? The earth is the Lord’s, and all that it contains, the world and all that dwell in it. That includes you. You are His. God wants us to understand this, and He wants us to always be generous in our giving. God’s work can only be done through the giving of His people.

As a Church, we do not receive any outside assistance, not from the government, nor any other institution. We rely solely upon what you give. That is how it should be. This is the way in which the Kingdom of God operates. When we give to the Church, when we give to God’s work, then we are sowing seeds in God’s Kingdom. We are participating in the work of God.

Our text today teaches us about how God views our giving. Jesus is standing by the Temple treasury and He is observing those who are giving donations. Many made a big deal of their giving and made sure that they and the large sums they were putting in were noticed. They wanted to hear people say: “Oh look how much he gave, what a great person.” Along comes a very poor widow. She reaches into her bag and takes out two copper coins and places them in the box. Those who saw it probably thought to themselves: “That doesn’t amount to much. Not really going to make a difference.”

Oh, but they were wrong. God’s economy is different. He can take not very much and multiply it into a whole lot. Remember how Jesus fed five thousand men, plus women and children with five little rolls and a couple of fish? It is interesting to note a conversation that Andrew had with Jesus on that day in response to the question of what was available.

“There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?” (John 6:9)

From a human perspective Andrew was right. Five small barley rolls and a couple of sardine sized dry fish wasn't going to go far. It was a boy's lunch. But Jesus viewed things differently. He ordered that the people be seated in groups of 50, He then took the bread and fish, gave thanks, blessed them and started to hand the pieces to the disciple's to distribute to the people. To their amazement the food just kept coming. Every one ate as much as they desired and there were twelve baskets of leftovers.

You see God took this lad's gift and turned it into a miracle. God's economy is different to ours.

I am telling you this to underline the truth that it is not the size of the gift that matters but the motivation behind the giving.

God looks at our motives in all that we do. Those people who gave big gifts that day at the temple, were mainly motivated by pride. They put in big amounts to receive the praise of men. Jesus said that their gifts were not really that much because they were giving out of abundance. There was no sacrifice, it was the cream off the top of the milk. They felt no difference in their bank account, but basked in the praises and thanks of men.

On the other hand, the poor widow made a great donation, it was a sacrificial gift. The sum of money was small, but the value large in God's eyes.

Listen again to what Jesus said: ***“, Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; ⁴ for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”***

She gave all she had for God's work. She didn't give the leftovers, she gave the lot, and we can be sure that God blessed her for it. This poor woman had a great regard for God's work and so she gave it all. She was happy to do so, because she loved God.

This raises a very important question: Does this mean that if we love God, we must give all that we have to His work? The answer is yes and no. This may seem like a funny way to answer but bear with me.

Let's start with no. God does not ask us to sell all we have, and empty our bank accounts and give it all to ministry. However on the rare occasion He may ask us to do just that. It is not entirely out of the question. There is an example in Luke where Jesus talks to a rich young ruler.

We read in Luke 18:18-25

¹⁸ ***A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”***

¹⁹ ***And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.***

²⁰ You know the commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour your father and mother.’”²¹ And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”²² When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”²³ But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. ²⁴ And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”

So we see, it is not entirely out of the question that we could be called upon to do so, but generally God does not ask that of us.

But, as I mentioned the answer to the question about giving all to God, is also yes. God’s Word clearly teaches us that we are to surrender our whole life to Him in faith. That includes our possessions. We read in Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

To offer yourself to God, means to surrender all to Him in faith. As the old song says: “All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give...”

It is not that hard to do when you realise that everything you have is His anyway. You do not own anything. You are merely a caretaker. You have nothing that did not come from Him in the first place.

Also think on this: He gave everything for you so that you could live eternally with Him in heaven. He gave His only begotten Son Jesus, He shed Jesus blood on the cross to pay for your sin so that you could be saved and live with Him in eternity.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” John 3:16

How much are you prepared to give Him? What are your priorities?

Listen to what Jesus said:

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; ²¹ for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:19-21

This my friends is the key. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where is your treasure? Who do you live for? What is important to you?

I close with some words from Paul:

“6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 2. Cor.9:6-8

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.