

INTRODUCTION

We’re in the middle of an exciting emphasis we’re calling “For the Joy of All Generations.” As I’ve been explaining for the past few weeks, our church has embarked on a huge challenge to enlarge our facilities to provide parking and space to reach more people and disciple them to become fully devoted followers of Jesus.

Our theme verse for this emphasis is found in the words God spoke in Isaiah 54:2 when He said, “Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back, lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes, for you will spread out to the right and to the left;” Then in the same context of prophetic encouragement God says, “for I will make you the pride and joy of all generations.”

This expansion project will affect all generations in our church. We’re providing more nursery space, more children’s space, and we’re creating space for our oldest members, allowing them to be only a few steps away from worship and Bible Study. But this project will also affect future generations. The reason there is a place for you to park today, and a place to study and worship is because over the past 51 years members of this church have given sacrificially to buy land and provide buildings to keep up with the growth God has given us.

As I mentioned two weeks ago, our church membership has grown 31% over the past five years, and our worship attendance has grown by 51%. If we hadn’t built this building we’re in now, there’s no way we could provide space for the 5,000 people who will be here this weekend. But we’re out of space of discipleship. That’s the reason why we’re accepting God’s challenge to enlarge the place of our tent.

Next Sunday our children are going to bring their offerings before the Lord. I can hardly wait! The Bible says, “A little child shall lead them.” (Isaiah 11:6) Our kids are going to literally lead the rest of us. Then two weeks from today, November 12, is Commitment Day. That’s when I’m asking everyone to bring a one-time sacrificial gift to the Lord in what we’re calling A Love Offering for Jesus. In addition I’m asking you to pray about making an estimate of what you’ll trust God to be able to give to this project over the next three years.

This morning I want to challenge you to open your heart and mind to seek God about making your sacrificial offering to God. The Bible is full of people who honored the Lord by giving sacrificially to Him. We’re going to meet one in Mark 12:41-44. Let’s consider her as we think along this topic: “Giving That Grabs God’s Attention.”

Mark 12:41-44. “Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.’”

This has often been called the story of “The Widow’s Mite” because the amount of money she

gave was called a mite in the King James Version. I’m not sure what a “mite” is, but this was certainly a mighty gift! As we consider this wonderful, unnamed widow, there are five lessons about generosity we can apply to our lives.

1. JESUS PAYS ATTENTION WHEN WE GIVE

The Bible says in verse 41: “Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury.” The word “watched” doesn’t mean Jesus casually glanced at the people—it’s a word that means Jesus stared intently. He was paying close attention. He sat down and made a study of the people making their gifts.

On the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, there were 1 offering boxes lined up; each with a wide metal opening wide narrowing down into a box. They were even called “offering trumpets,” because of the shape of the opening. These offering boxes were placed in the Court of the Women, a place in which all Jews could gather. Of all the places on the Temple Mount where Jesus could have chosen to sit and observe, He chose to watch the process of making offerings.

If you’ve been around awhile, you’ve probably heard the term “Broadman.” We used to sing out of a Broadman Hymnal and there is Broadman Publishers (now Broadman/Holman). The name Broadman is a combination of the names of two early Baptist leaders. The “man” comes from Basil Manley who was one of the founders of Southern Seminary and the “Broad” comes from the John Broadus who was long time Pastor of Charlottesville Baptist Church in Virginia. One Sunday morning, in Dr. Broadus’ church, he did an unusual thing during the offering. As the ushers walked down the aisle passing the offering the plates, Dr. Broadus walked with them and looked down every pew to see what people were putting into the offering plate.

The members of his church were all surprised, most were irritated and some were agitated by his action. Then after the offering he stood behind the pulpit and said, “My people, if you take to heart that I have seen your offerings this day and know just what sacrifices you have made and what sacrifices you have not made, remember that the Son of God your Savior, goes about the aisles with every usher and sees with His sleepless eye every cent put into the collection by His people.” Then he went on to preach on the widow’s mite and spoke about how Jesus watches us when we give an offering.

He’s braver than I am! Besides, we have way too many aisles and pews for me to walk along and look, but maybe you get the point. The truth is Jesus is *still* interested in our offerings. He is still watching. In two weeks, I’m asking you to make a love offering to Jesus, and I won’t see what you give—but Jesus *will* be paying attention.

2. JESUS NOTICES HOW WE GIVE

Not only does Jesus observe us when we give, He notices *how* we give as well. It says in verses 41-42, “Many rich people THREW in large amounts. But a poor widow came and PUT IN two very small copper coins.” The two verbs describing how the people gave is an important nuance in this passage. Jesus wasn’t the only spectator that day. In fact, the offering process was spectator sport. People watched others give and because they did, it gave rich people an

opportunity to show off their gifts.

In this time, the only kinds of currency were coins. Some rich people made a great show of giving a great deal of money. When they walked up to the boxes, they *threw* their money in—and it made a loud noise. The sound of every “plunk, plunk, plunk” was their way of saying, “Look at me! Look at me! Look at me!” And there was plenty of “ooohing and ahhhhing” from the other spectators.

But when the widow made her gift, the verb indicates she didn’t *throw* the two coins in. She “placed” them in the box. The coins were called “leptas,” literally meaning “thin ones.” These two coins were so small and thin they hardly made a noise. But the sound of her gift reverberated in the heart of Jesus. Nobody else heard it, but He did!

It’s important for us to realize Jesus not only watches us when we give and knows how much we give, He also pays attention to *how* we give. He sees our motive. When we make an offering to God, it’s not a time to show off. Offering should NOT be a spectator event.

Jesus taught when we worship by giving, it’s not a time to show off. Jesus said, “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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:2-4)

In some churches, the offering is still a spectator event. I can’t tell anyone else how they should do church, but here at Green Acres, we believe your giving should be private and confidential. That’s why we have offering receptacles, and offering bags instead of plates. And about 20% of the offerings we receive these days are gifts given online.

During this campaign, we’re not going to announce what any person gives. On Commitment Sunday, I’m going to ask you bring your commitment card forward and place it on these steps as an act of commitment to God, but I’ll direct you to place it in an identical envelope with everyone else, so nobody except you and the Lord (and a couple of trusted workers in our Finance Office) will ever know what you’re committing to give. The reason we’re doing it this way is because we don’t this to be an opportunity for someone to show off.

God not only observes the amount of your gift, but He also knows the attitude of your heart. That’s why the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 9:7, “Each of you should give...not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” The word “cheerful” is the word *hilaros*, which is the origin of our word “hilarious.” You should giggle when you give!

The I.R.S. doesn’t care about the attitude of my heart when I pay my taxes. They don’t care if I pay them grudgingly or willingly, joyfully or angrily. They just want me to pay up. But to God, the attitude of your heart when you give is even more important than the gift itself.

3. JESUS MEASURES THE VALUE OF OUR GIFT

Now let’s see what Jesus had to say about her offering. We read these words in verses 42-43, “Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny... Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put MORE into the treasury than all the others.” When Jesus told His disciples, “She gave MORE than all the others; He was making a comparative measurement.” Using current standards, the value of those two leptas was about 1/16 of a penny. No doubt, some of the rich people threw in the equivalent of thousands of dollars. For comparison purposes, let’s imagine some wealthy Jewish man we’ll call Reggie Richguy tossed in \$10,000 that day.

Here’s the new formula: According to Jesus Christ, 1/16 of a penny is worth MORE than \$10,000. That’s the kind of fuzzy math that makes CPAs scratch their heads. How could He make a statement like that? Simple. Jesus not only measures the size of our gift, He also measures how much is left over after we give. This poor widow only had two leptas, and when she gave them, she didn’t have anything left over. Reggie Richguy gave \$10,000, yet after he gave, he still had thousands remaining.

A few years ago, Microsoft founder Bill Gates received a lot of publicity for giving \$100 million to fight AIDS in India and Africa. That’s wonderful, and it’s a great cause, but He’s still got billions left over. It may be when a widow on Social Security makes a sacrificial gift of \$1,000 to the Lord’s work, God considers that a *larger* gift than Bill Gates’ \$100 million. It all boils down to how much we have left over. That’s the true value of our gift. So, are you curious to know who will make the largest gift to For the Joy of All Generations? Only God will know.

4. JESUS IS IMPRESSED WITH A REAL SACRIFICE

The amazing part of this story is how Jesus reacted when He saw what this widow did. We read about it in verses 43-44, “Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.’” That phrase, “truly I tell you” is “verily, verily” in the KJV. The literal words are “amen, amen,” Jesus reserved that phrase as a prelude to the most powerful statements He ever uttered. He told Nicodemus in John 3:3, “Amen, Amen no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” Whenever Jesus prefaced His statements with those words HE was saying, “Pay attention! Put up your spiritual antenna! I’m about to say something profound.” Here’s the profound principle Jesus was teaching: There is a huge difference between a donation and a sacrifice. That day, the wealthy people were making donations, and this widow made a sacrifice. And a real sacrifice always grabs God’s attention. She gave out of her poverty—she couldn’t afford it. They gave out of their wealth—they could afford it.

There’s a great story in the Old Testament that gives us a definition of a sacrifice. In 2 Samuel 24 there was a deadly plague that killed many Israelites. King David was looking for a place to make a burnt offering to the Lord to beg Him for mercy. He comes to a farmer named Araunah and asked him if he could buy his threshing floor to build an altar to the Lord. Araunah does what most of us would do if a king asked us for something. He said, “King, you don’t have to pay me for it. I’ll give it to you for free!” But David made an important observation about the

importance of a sacrifice. The Bible says, “But King David replied to Araunah, ‘No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.’” (2 Samuel 24:24) If we make an offering to God that doesn’t really cost us, there’s not much value to it.

We’ve all made donations to God, but I wonder how many of us ever truly made a sacrifice? A sacrifice means you give something up for the sake of another. In baseball, if there is a runner on second or third base, the batter may be called upon to hit a fly ball to the outfield. It’s called a “sacrifice fly.” Or he may be asked to lay down a bunt. He knows the odds are he won’t make it to first base, but he makes the sacrifice to bring his teammate home. Could you imagine a batter who receives the sign from the third base coach to hit a sacrifice fly wave it off? Can you imagine him saying, “Not me! I’m going to try to get on base myself. I want to score.” That player wouldn’t remain on the team very long.

God is in the process of bringing men and women, boys and girls home to Himself. There are thousands right here in East Texas who haven’t discovered the joy of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Each of us is up to bat now, and our Father is signaling on us to make a sacrifice for the sake of His team. Let’s look and listen and do what He says.

5. JESUS IS PLEASED WHEN WE TRUST GOD TO MEET OUR NEEDS

I think another reason Jesus got excited about the widow’s gift is because He recognized it was an act of supreme faith. He said in verse 44, “she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

Why do you think the Bible points out she had *two* coins? I think it’s because we’re supposed to think the logical thing to do would be for her to put in one coin and keep one coin for her own needs. Because there were two coins, that option was possible. But she puts BOTH of them in the offering. By doing this she was saying, “God, I’m trusting in you. I believe You can do more for me than this coin.”

As I’ve said before this process is not about fund-raising—it’s about faith-raising. I’m confident God will supply the need we have for this building, but I think He is much more interested in YOU and building your trust level than He is about any physical building. God is constantly trying to teach us to TRUST HIM rather than our own resources. The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

Jesus recognized this widow was not giving to the Temple; she was giving to God. She was placing her trust in God. What do you think happened to her after she left the Temple? Can’t you see her as she smiles and looks up to heaven and says, “Father, that’s all I have. Now I’m trusting totally in You!” The Bible doesn’t tell us what happened next, but I can’t wait to hear the rest of her story when I get to heaven. But I can assure you upon the authority of the Word of God she didn’t starve to death. She didn’t have to become a beggar. When you cast yourself on the Lord, He has promised He’ll take care of your needs. He didn’t promise us luxuries, but He promised we’ll always have plenty to eat, clothes to wear, and a roof over our heads. The Bible

says in Psalm 37:25, “I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.”

You may be thinking, “Pastor, you don’t know my circumstances. If you did, you wouldn’t be asking me to make a sacrifice.” You’re right. I don’t know your circumstances. But God knows your circumstances. It’s interesting to me when Jesus spoke to the disciples about this woman, He called her a “poor widow.” How did He know that? Did she wear a name tag that said, “Hello, I’m a poor widow?” No, He knew her circumstances. He knew everything about her the same as He knows everything about you. He knew how much she had left over after she gave her all. He didn’t stop her and tell her to go back and get her coins. Instead He applauded her faith.

Next Sunday, we’re going to be blessed as our children bring their offerings to God. They have worked hard to multiply their \$5 into a larger gift. Some of them have turned that \$5 into \$200 and \$300. And they’re going to give it ALL to God—just like this widow did!

What do you think about these kids giving everything? I hope you’re thinking, “Of course, they can give all they have. These children all have moms and dads (and grandparents) who are going to take care of their needs tomorrow and the days to come.” Good point. And YOU Child of God have a Father who has promised He will take care of you as well. What’s the difference? Trust. These children really believe you’ll take care of their needs...and some of us big children haven’t gotten to that point yet.

CONCLUSION

One night at a Church Prayer Meeting, people were invited to share their testimony of how God worked in their lives. One man stood up and told this story, “Years ago I was facing hard times. I had lost my job. My wife had divorced me. I was out on the street with nowhere to live. I walked into a church and got on my knees and begged God to help me. I only had \$1 in my wallet—it was my last dollar. But I took that dollar and gave it to the Lord as an offering. So, I walked out of that church penniless. Outside the church, I happened to meet an old friend who offered me a job on the spot. I took it and became successful. Now I’m a millionaire—all because I gave all I had to the Lord that night.” When he sat down, the congregation was silent for a moment. Then a wise godly woman stood up and said, “I dare you to do it again right now!”

It may be easier to give it all when you only have two pennies or one dollar. But the kind of giving that grabs God’s attention is a sacrifice. I won’t know what you give to the love offering for Jesus in two weeks. But Jesus will be watching. He’ll know how you give and the true value of your gift. When you give will He yawn? Will He smile? Or will He say to the angels and saints in heaven, “Hey guys, come here! Look at this! Here’s someone who REALLY trusts in Me!”

OUTLINE

1. JESUS PAYS ATTENTION WHEN WE GIVE

“Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and WATCHED the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury.”

2. JESUS NOTICES HOW WE GIVE

“Many rich people THREW in large amounts. But a poor widow came and PUT IN two very small copper coins.”

Jesus said, “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 men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” *Matthew 6:2-4*

3. JESUS MEASURES THE VALUE OF OUR GIFT

“Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny... Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put MORE into the treasury than all the others.”

4. JESUS IS IMPRESSED WITH A REAL SACRIFICE

“Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.’”

“But King David replied to Araunah, ‘No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.’” *2 Samuel 24:24*

5. JESUS IS PLEASED WHEN WE TRUST GOD TO MEET OUR NEEDS

“she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” *Hebrews 11:6*



DISCLAIMER: These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. There is no legal copyright on this material. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material to stimulate your own Spirit-driven imagination. Additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners. You have my full permission to use any of this material as long as you cite the source for any substantial amount used in your message.

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes