

**First Baptist Church Merritt Island**  
**Senior Pastor Titus Green**  
**March 3, 2024**  
**Genuine Generosity**  
**Mark 12:41-44**

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This morning, we are continuing our verse-by-verse study of the Gospel of Mark. We are in the final week of Christ's ministry on His way to the cross. It's Tuesday, and Jesus has come to the Temple to confront the spiritual corruption among the religious elite in Jerusalem. That's really been the focus of the last two chapters. We have seen Jesus turn over the money-changers tables and get into a series of conversations that exposed the wicked hearts of the influential religious leaders.

Just when you think it seems like everyone at the Temple must have been a religious hypocrite, Mark closes this chapter with a final scene that highlights an authentic worshipper. She isn't among the religious elite. She isn't influential or powerful. She's a poor widow who gives a tiny offering that would have gone completely unnoticed by everyone, well, everyone but Jesus. He sees her. And, in His final act at the Temple, He holds her up as an example of the kind of worship that pleases God the Father.

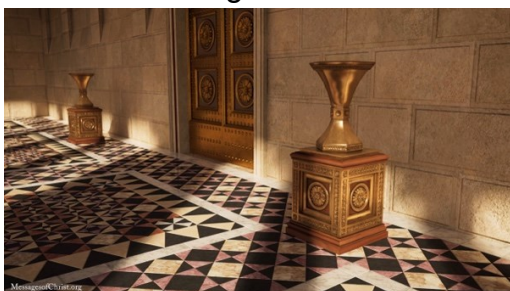
The lesson Jesus teaches His disciples from this poor widow's offering serves as a great lesson to us, as well. We learn what it looks like to give offerings that honor God and please Jesus. We learn what genuine generosity looks like. So, look with me at our text for this morning.

***Mark 12:41-44***

***41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 43 And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."***

After Jesus confronted the religious hypocrites at the Temple, He pulled up a chair across from the treasury. That's the place where giving occurred at the Temple. It was in a section of the Temple known as the Women's Court. That court wasn't exclusively for women, it was simply the furthest point in the Temple that women were allowed to go. There were 13 offering boxes set up to receive the offerings of people. Those boxes had horns or trumpet-shaped funnels, where people could drop their offerings.

Artist's rendering



Since the offerings were metal coins being dropped into a big box with a big horn attached, it made a lot of noise when a big offering fell into the offering box.

Our text says that lots of rich people put in large sums. The sound of their offerings reverberated throughout the Temple and, subsequently, brought a lot of attention to themselves.

Then, a poor widow shows up. All she has to offer are two small coins that add up to a penny. The rabbis had a rule that no one was allowed to give an offering less than a penny, so she literally gave the smallest offering anyone was allowed to make. And it just so happened that her small gift was all the money she had to her name. Her two little coins made almost no noise in the Temple, but the sound of her offering reverberated in the heart of Jesus.

He calls His disciples over and draws their attention to this tiny gift from this poor widow. And what does He say? He says she has just given more than all the rich people combined. Though her all was small, it was great in the eyes of Jesus.

Wouldn't you love to have Jesus feel that way about your giving? As I was meditating over this passage, I couldn't help but envision Jesus watching all the fake, self-righteous people giving their big gifts and being grieved by the whole charade until He sees this poverty-stricken woman make her way through the crowd. And His heart swells with joy at what He sees when she drops her two little coins in the offering box. Wouldn't you love for Jesus to feel that way about your giving?

Well, the good news is Jesus does feel that way about your giving, when it comes from the same heart as this widow's. Genuine generosity that pleases Jesus isn't about the amount of our gift. It's about the condition of our hearts.

As I prayed over this text this week in preparation for this morning, there were several things that jumped out at me about this widow's gift and the heart behind her generosity. Let me share them with you in the form of our big idea and then we will unpack them one at a time.

**Big Idea: Giving that pleases Jesus flows from a heart of faith, sacrifice, and worship.**

It literally does not matter how much money you have. Whether you are the richest or the poorest person in this room, your giving can be as pleasing to Jesus and have just as significant an impact as this widow's. It's a matter of your heart, not your bank account. When you give from a heart of faith, sacrifice, and worship, your giving brings great joy to the heart of Jesus.

Now, let me show you where I get those three descriptions from our text.

1. Giving that pleases Jesus flows from a heart of faith.

***43 And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all***

***contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”***

This widow only had two coins to her name. That was it. Jesus said it was all she had to live on. So, one of the questions that comes to mind is, wouldn't she be depending on those two coins for her next meal?

Let's think through this for a moment. A devoted Jewish worshiper, like this widow, would have known the story of Ruth and Naomi, two widows who put their lives in the care of the God of Israel and were miraculously provided for by God. The widow in our story would have also known the story of the widow in 1 Kings 17 who gave all she had to live on to the prophet of God. And, every day, God miraculously supplied just enough oil and flour to make bread for herself and her son. The widow in our story would have known the story of the widow in 2 Kings 4 whose husband died and left her in crippling debt. She turned to the Lord and He miraculously provided a way for her to pay off her debt so she and her two sons could survive.

On top of those stories, the widow in our text would have known that the Old Testament is filled with references to God's commitment to take care of widows.

*Psalm 68:5 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.*

*Deuteronomy 10:18 He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.*

*Psalm 37:25 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread.*

This widow would have known that God promised to take care of the widows who trusted in Him. She would have known that God had promised to take care of widows and he has a perfect record of faithfully caring for His people.

So, let's revisit the question I asked earlier. Wouldn't she be depending on those coins for her next meal? I don't believe she was. She was depending on God, not money, to provide her every need. In that way, her giving was an act of faith. And that's always that heart behind genuine, kingdom generosity and every other good work that is pleasing to Jesus.

*Romans 14:23 For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.*

Giving that pleases Jesus is always an expression of faith in the promises and provision of God. That means our lack of giving is always an issue of faith. It's not that we can't afford to give, it's that we don't believe God will supply our needs. Listen to the promise of God's word from 2 Corinthians 9.

*2 Corinthians 9:10–11 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.*

Do you believe that's true? Do you give like you believe that's true? And that brings us to our next description of the giving that pleases Jesus.

2. Giving that pleases Jesus flows from a heart of sacrifice.

***44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."***

Jesus contrasts the giving of the rich people and the giving of this widow by saying that they gave out of their abundance. They gave out of their leftovers. They gave in a way that they wouldn't miss what they gave. In other words, there wasn't a sacrifice involved. It was a contribution, not a sacrifice. You know the difference between a contribution and a sacrifice, right?

One day, a chicken and a pig were talking about how their dear old farmer had fallen on hard times financially. During the conversation, the pig said, "You know, I think we should start a business together. That might really help the farmer make ends meet." The chicken agreed that it was a good idea but neither of them knew what business they could start together since they were just a chicken and a pig. Finally, the chicken said, "I've got it. I know a business you and I could go into together." The pig said, "I can't wait to hear about it. What business could a chicken and a pig open up?" To which the chicken said, "We could go into the bacon and eggs business." The pig thought for a minute and said, "You know, I don't think that's quite fair. You'd only be making a contribution, but I'd be making a sacrifice!"

I think you get the point. There's a big difference between a contribution and a sacrifice. And, in our text we find that Jesus is pleased with the sacrifice.

And that becomes a whole new frame of reference for many of us. Many of us learned about financial stewardship through the concept of giving a tithe, or a tenth, of our income to the Lord. I believe the tithe is the starting place for biblical stewardship. So, if you aren't giving at all, I want to encourage you to take a step toward tithing your income to the Lord. But, when you get to the New Testament, you don't find the standard being the tithe, you find the standard being raised to a sacrifice beyond just the tithe.

*2 Corinthians 8:1–3 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord,*

The model for giving in the New Testament isn't primarily the tithe, it's the sacrificial giving of people who joyfully gave beyond their means. The reality is that for many of us it's entirely possible to give a tithe out of our abundance without it being a sacrifice.

So, is your giving a contribution or a sacrifice?

I want to rejoice in the fact that there are countless stories of sacrifice in this this room.

- There are widows in this room who live on fixed incomes that haven't come close to keeping up with inflation, yet they give sacrificially to the Lord...and I believe Jesus sees and is pleased.
- There are people in this room who drive used cars instead of getting new ones so they can give those car payments sacrificially to the Lord...and I believe Jesus sees and is pleased.
- There are people in this room who delayed retirement so they could continue to give generously to the Lord...and I believe Jesus sees and is pleased.
- There are people in this room who don't go to Starbucks and brew their coffee at home so they can give that money to the Lord...if more of us did that, we could pay off the mortgage this year.

So, how might the Lord be stirring you to go from making contributions to making a sacrifice in your giving? Will you pray for Him to lead you into that?

### 3. Giving that pleases Jesus flows from a heart of worship.

One of the primary things this passage of Scripture does is to serve as a contrast to all the hypocrisy and greed that had corrupted worship at the Temple. Look at the verses just before our text.

*Mark 12:38-40 And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."*

The religious hypocrites worshiped themselves. They didn't come to the temple to honor God, they came to the temple so that other people could honor them. Our widow is the contrast to that. She came with a heart that understood the heartbeat of the Temple – namely, God is glorious and worthy of our worship. Her gift was an expression of a heart that treasured God above her money, so she gave it all.

That's always at the heart of God-honoring giving. It's a display of what we treasure most. That's why Jesus says what He says in *Matthew 6:24* "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Money is a way we designate the value of something. If I told you I would sell you my car for a million dollars, I'd be surprised if you took me up on the offer (but, please let me know if you're interested in that deal. I'll be down front at the end of the service). Do you know why I would be surprised for someone to buy my car for a million bucks? Because it isn't worth that much. One of the ways we designate the value or worth of something is by its monetary value.

And, deep within our hearts, there is always something we value, or treasure, most. So, Jesus says it boils down to what we most deeply love, God or money. The only motive for God-honoring giving is love. If we give because we think God needs our money, we are way off base and giving for the wrong reason and a terrible view of God. If we give out of guilt, we are way off base and giving for

the wrong reason and a terrible view of God. But if we give out of love, out of hearts that are captured by Jesus and filled with awe of Him, we don't have to be told to give to His cause because His cause will be the cause that is nearest and dearest to our hearts.

When my kids were small, they would sometimes grab hold of something that Emily and I didn't want them to have. One of the most surprising parts of parenting is the discovery that a 6-month-old has the same grip strength as a lowland mountain gorilla. It was a full day's work trying to pry a plastic fork out of the kung fu grip of my kids.

Do you know the secret to getting a child with superhuman strength to let go of something? Show them something they'll want more. Find their favorite toy or their favorite blanket or their favorite food and let them see it, they'll drop everything for what they love the most.

In a very real way, we never grow out of that. We are always willing to drop everything for what we love the most. Oh, that Jesus would be the deepest love of our hearts in a way that we would gladly drop everything for Him. I pray that our hearts would be captured in love for Jesus.

You see, this passage is really about so much more than money. It's about someone who laid down everything they had as an act of faith-filled, sacrificial, worship. It's about someone who held nothing back...nothing...but laid their whole life down before the Father and said..."Your will, not mine."

So, what would it look like for you to lay your whole life down before the Lord today? Your treasure? Your talents? Your time? That's really the heart of a faith-filled life of worship and sacrifice.

That brings me to the last thing to consider here. As Jesus watches this widow give all she had as an offering to God, as He heard the two small coins quietly fall into the offering box, it wouldn't have been lost on Him that her gift was a small echo of the offering He was about to make. At the cross, Jesus gave His life in our place as a sacrifice for the sin of mankind. He gave all He had so that you and I could receive all that God the Father owns.

The greatest, most generous Giver in the history of this world is Jesus Himself. Though He is rich, He became poor for us. Though He is the Author of Life, He entered death for us. Though He is perfect and sinless, He suffered as a payment for our sin.

He not only gave His life for us, He will give His life to us. If we will trust in Jesus, He will give us His power to live His kind of life. That means, if your heart desires to step into generous, sacrificial giving, you need Jesus to make you a person after His own heart. Remember, giving isn't about the amount of our money, it's about the condition of our hearts.

So, as we close, there are two things I want to encourage us to do in response to the truth of our text.

1. Trust in Jesus.
2. Take a step of faith into sacrificial giving. Three ways to give. Online – [FBCMI.com](http://FBCMI.com) (you can make one-time gifts or set up recurring gifts). In-person – giving boxes in Main Street or at the church office through the week, and through mail.