

Giving: Unlocking Contentment

Giving, as an act of worship

December 1, 2019 am

HDBC

In 1991 there was a remarkable survey done in America. In that survey, the question was asked, "What would you do for 10 Million dollars?"

25 percent of those surveyed said they would abandon their family.

23 percent said they would be a prostitute for one week.

16 percent said they would leave their spouse.

7 percent said they would murder a stranger.

3 percent said they would put their children up for adoption.

There are people who will do almost anything for money. Their only perspective on money focuses on getting. Throughout their life they are interested in getting more and more and more, no matter the cost. These are some of the most miserable people on the planet.

Then there are others among us, even some of us, who have learned the principle that it is ***more blessed to give than receive***. This perspective on money focuses not on getting, but on giving. They know it is in giving that we are blessed. We give for all kinds of reasons. Christmas. Birthdays. Weddings and Babies. Random acts of kindness. These are gifts to other people. This is good, but there is a giving that is greater and more important. **Giving, as an act of worship.**

This morning I want to show you a story from the Bible which illustrates this kind of giving. Sometimes it requires deep sacrifice. **Look at Mark 12:41-44.**

1. Notice the Position of Jesus (41)

Jesus is sitting in the temple observing their acts of giving in worship. Don't miss the fact that Jesus has deliberately positioned himself so that he can observe the offering. Don't think for a moment that Jesus does not know your practice of giving. **Opposite** - in sight of.

If I were to position myself to see what you are giving, that would be nosey. I have no business doing so. Not so with Jesus. As the Lord of our lives He has every right to know when we give, how much we give and to whom we give. It may be comforting to know that I don't know what you give. That is false comfort for you are not accountable to me.

2. Notice the Procedure for Giving (41-42)

The scene. Herod's temple, that magnificent building. Impressive sight. Inner room was Holy of Holies, then Holy Place, then a series of courtyards or areas divided by small walls. Prescribed for various groups of people.

In the court of women there were thirteen, trumpet-shaped containers that were receptacles for offerings. Each one was for specific need in the temple. Every Jewish male over 20 was required to give 2 shekels. Expected to give more. Communities would often send their offerings with small group coming to Jerusalem. This is what Jesus was watching.

He saw it all. Groups, individuals. Wealthy and poor. Noticed a number of wealthy who were giving large amounts. Some of these were no doubt going out of their way to make a big show of the amount of their gifts.

Reminded of Matthew 6. *When you give alms do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do.* . . Probably reference to the trumpet shaped jars and the sound of great number of coins being tossed into them.

Wealthy merchants giving offering. Some **farmers** sold crops and are giving offering. No doubt some **scoundrels** who had stolen and were giving offering from it. And then someone caught his eye.

Woman, not a man. Poor person, not rich. Alone, not with a group.

Probably unnoticed by the rest of the people who were shuffling by. Not by Jesus. He saw. He observed. And he used her actions as an illustration for his disciples. Text says she gave two small copper coins which amounted to a cent. Literally she gave two *lepta* which equals a *quadran*.

A *leptan* was the smallest coin in Palestine in that day. Our penny. It was a

small gift in comparison to the others. In fact, probably was the smallest. But when Jesus commented, He claimed it was the biggest gift of all.

In doing so, Jesus gives some insight into the way He evaluates our giving.

3. Notice the Principle for Evaluation (43-44)

The greatness of the gift is not measured by how much is given, but by how much is given in relation to how much one has.

Someone else said it like this. *It is not how much you give that counts, but how much you have left after you give.*

Quantity is not always the best way to evaluate or measure something.

Some people read medicine label and assume if two will make you better, four will make you really better and really faster. But this is not true.

Steve Tran learned that quantity is not everything. He had roach problem in his apartment. Bought some bug bombs to get rid of them. Read labels. Decided two would be enough for his apartment, but he had a lot of roaches. So he bought 25 and set them all off. When spray reached the pilot light it exploded shattering all windows and doing \$10,000 damage. Three days later the roaches were back. Quantity is not always the most important factor!

Jesus looks considers ability of the giver. This is what Jesus is saying. Notice three things about this woman's gift which verifies this principle:

A. Sacrificial

Out of her poverty. She was sacrificing to give. Not from excess. She could not really afford to give big gift. She was poor. Probably could not afford this, from a financial perspective. Sometimes giving is costly!

A pig and a hen were walking down the road, chatting as they passed a church. Looked at sign and noticed the preachers sermon *How to help the poor*. The hen said, *I know how we can help the poor. We can give them a ham and egg breakfast.* The pig thought a moment then protested, saying *that breakfast represents only a contribution from you, but a total commitment from me.*

Dr. Eleanor Chestnut, missionary in China 1893. Built hospital with own money. Operated in bathroom while it was being built. Once amputated leg, which required skin grafts. She was seen limping for several days later. When asked, it was learned she had taken the skin from her own leg with local anesthetic. She was killed in the boxer rebellion in 1905.

B. Generous

It was all she owned. No matter how much that is, that's generous. More than she could afford. She held nothing back.

There are six glass towers at the Holocaust Memorial in Boston. They represent six extermination camps where six million Jews lost their lives. Five towers tell the story of cruelty and unimaginable suffering, but the sixth tower stands as a testimony to hope. Inscribed on it is a short story titled "One Raspberry," written by Gerda Weissman Klein.

She and her friend, Lise were in the same camp.

Ilse once found a raspberry in the camp and carried it in her pocket all day to present to me that night on a leaf. Imagine a world in which your entire possession is one raspberry and you gave it to your friend.

The true measure of a gift is what you gave up to give it. One raspberry isn't much unless it's all you have! Then, **it's everything**. The same is true of two billion dollars or two mites. Big dreams often start with small acts of kindness. It's powerful when we're on the receiving end, but it's even more wonderful when we're on the giving end.

C. Given in Faith

It was her last provision.

One of two things: Either she had lost her vision.

Or it could be that she was trusting God to meet her needs. Her gift was an expression of faith that God would take care of her. I think He did.

Our faith becomes practice when expressed in our giving . . . time, resources our money, our lives!

John Wanamaker had given much money to mission work in China. Went to see how the work was going. Saw old man walking behind plow being pulled by one ox and a young man. Questioned the young man. Church needed money to buy a steeple so people could be drawn to it from miles around. Prayed for money. I volunteered to sell an ox and take its place and give the money to the church.

Lord, let me be hitched to a plow, so that I may know the joy of sacrificial giving.

Giving is an expression of worship. The best worship is when we give all of ourselves to God, not holding anything back. Total surrender of ourselves to God. The greatest expression of our worship is not found in the outward expressions, like singing, lifting hands, bowing our heads, but in giving ourselves first and completely to our God. Then, we express that in singing, lifting our hands, bowing our heads, presenting our offerings. It all starts with giving!