

The Widow and the Secret of the Thirteenth Trumpet.

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BIG IDEA - It's not about money, it's about participating with God!

scripture focus - Mark 12:41-44 NLT "Jesus **sat down near the collection box** in the Temple **and watched as the crowds dropped in their money**. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. **Jesus called his disciples to him** and said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on."

People watching, is one of my favorite pastimes. Since I was very young, I have been an observer of people. **When I'm not rushing to hunt for groceries or that perfect birthday card at Target, I move slowly through the aisles and just watch folks. Oh, I said hunt because I don't usually shop. I get my list, I plan my perfect route in the store thanks to apps that tell me the aisle number and I stock my grocery prey.**

But when I'm feeling leisurely curious, I people watch.

I watch old married seniors shuffle down the way holding hands and going about their day. I watch babies and make smiles or funny faces at them. I watch groups of teen boys or girls and listen to their chatter. I watch for folks who struggle and see if I can help them.

One time, in a small, crowded grocery store on Catalina Island, the kind with the shelves stacked way too high, I saw a height challenged woman staring up at a product high up, out of her reach. I looked at her, she looked at me and I instantly knew what she needed. I reached up and brought down her need. She thanked me and said, "I'll bet people often use your height for that." "They do," I said.

People watching is one of the last holdouts from my introvert life of the past.

Do you ever find yourself just watching people? Aren't we an interesting bunch?

One of Jesus' followers and author of the gospel bearing his name, **writes about Jesus doing some "people watching."**

In Mark 12:41 he says, "Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and **watched as the crowds dropped in their money.**"

Mark writes, "**Jesus sat down.**" The apostle John constantly reminds us of this truth in John 8:19, "If you knew me, you would also know my Father." If you've seen me, you've seen the Father, Jesus says.

When Jesus sat, the writer want us to be **keenly aware that God sits. He not only sits, God observes!***

You know there's a theme in the Bible all about "The eyes of God" - Proverbs, Chronicles, Samuel, Psalms, Peter, Job all write about a God who watches, who sees.

- **Proverbs 15:3 NLT** "The Lord is watching everywhere, keeping his eye on both the evil and the good."
- **1 Samuel 16:7 NLT** God told Samuel, "The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
- **Job 34:21 NLT** "For God watches how people live; he sees everything they do."
- **2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT** "The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."
- **1 Peter 3:12 NLT** "The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil."

What was Jesus watching? What fascinates and captures God's attention?

Mark tells us a couple of things that caught Jesus' eye.

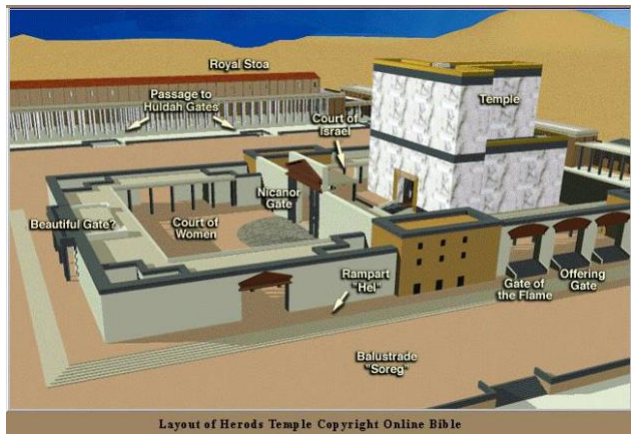
The crowd dropping their money!

There's a whole sermon right there. **God watches people dropping their money.** Gods on Amazon? Yep. God's at Nordstroms? Uh huh. Wait a second, **God's also at the Casinos and Racetracks and 7-11's watching people hoping to get lucky or win the lottery? You betcha.** And God, apparently shows up at church watching as well.

Robin and I went to Las Vegas quite a few years ago, right after 911. I was invited to speak at a church in Henderson. The church put us up in a really nice hotel somewhere on the strip. It was fancy. We went to go see a **cirque du soleil** show at the MGM Grand while we were there. **You can't go anywhere in Vegas that doesn't lure your eyes to see things you shouldn't see!** You can't look up,

can't look down, can't look at the side of Taxi's or Ads on the shops. And you can't go anywhere without passing through a casino and seeing a One-Armed Bandit! That's right – in casinos there are no clocks, no daylight, and no straight paths as you make your way through the maze of slot machines. Even though my family was really into gambling, I was overwhelmed by all the zombie-looking faces dropping coin in the machines! **Yes, God even sees what happens in Vegas.**

Back to what Jesus saw.



In the temple, Jesus is kind of where we would consider it to be the foyer. It's a fairly large space called the **court of women**, dedicated to the Judges hearing cases **as well as a row of special contribution boxes.**

Jesus is sitting by the “collection box” and watching people drop money, but he's **watching a couple of very specific groups of people.**

Mark writes, that Jesus saw “Many rich people put in large amounts” of money into these contribution boxes.

What is this “collection box” Mark writes about?

When I discovered this, **I had no idea that the Jewish people had so many ways to give their money to God.** Well, not really giving it to God because He didn't need their money.

They were giving it to the needs of the temple and for all kinds of ways to both pay a sin-tax as well as give a voluntary gift to several causes that the Jewish people were very fond of.

Where was this box?

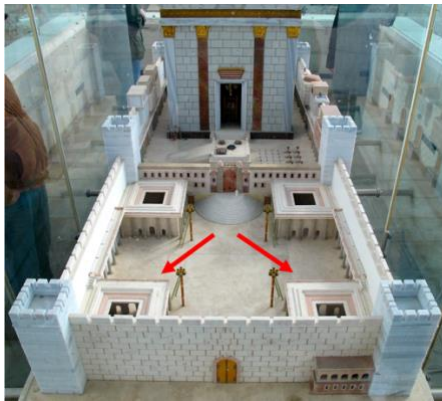
It was actually a row of BOXES – plural. They were in a row against the west wall in the Court of Women. **These boxes were called “treasury” boxes, but the Jews had a peculiar nickname for them.**

They were called “trumpets” because of the funnel-shaped metal that sat on top of each box. They looked like Old Testament Shofars so by the turn of the first century the boxes were just called “trumpets”

It was thought that the noise of coins dropping would deter someone from stealing money from the box. Well, we know what those “trumpet” sounds ended up being... a way to bring A LOT of coinage and slowly pour it into the metal funnel so that it made a lot of noise. More noise, more mula!

But Mark said Jesus sat by “the” collection box or treasury. Which one? There were thirteen of them.

Yeah, there wasn't just one trumpet there were 13 treasury boxes lined up against the wall. The boxes were in the court of women because there were actual accounting offices or “safe deposit” style areas in the corners of the women's court.



Two trumpets were reserved for the temple tax.

Trumpets 3 to 7 were for collecting funds for the appointed value of certain sacrifices.

Trumpet 8 was for money left over from sin offerings.

Trumpets 9 through 12 held funds left over from guilt offerings, specific groups of those who've taken vows and a Leper's offering – yep part of the process of being declared “clean” meant that you paid a “thanks” offering to God for being healed.

From what I can figure out Trumpets 1-8 had specific designations, but 9-13 were more or less voluntary.

But it was Trumpet 13 that caught my attention and that's the backstory we're missing when Mark records Jesus' people watching.

Trumpet 13 was for voluntary contributions specifically to be set aside for the poor.



It's not just that Jesus sat down. It's not that he was just watching people drop money, Jesus specifically sat down near trumpet 13!

He watched as the wealthy approached and slowly poured their coins in the funnel I'm sure they looked around with some satisfaction of being a big giver. Remember, the more coins, the more noise!

When the widow approached. I think she put in her two coins (less than a penny each), one at a time and thanked God for each coin and also for God directing the money to those less fortunate than her. I also think she didn't even notice Jesus there watching. But I'm sure she smiled and I'm sure that Jesus smiled with her and at her.

How can the poor give to those who are poorer?

How can a poor person out give a wealthy person? It's right here.

Look inside box 13. What you'll find is money given voluntarily - not for taxes, building programs, temple expenses or even sin. You'll find a pile of generosity given not for show but for gratitude.

The widow wasn't a bigger giver in amount, but in a bigger heart.

It wasn't really the amount of money; it was participating with God to care for the poor. She had a bigger heart for giving because she gave sacrificially, out of faith. Maybe Jesus smiled because he knew what his Father God was going to do to bless her. We are most like God when we give.

Q: Jesus called his followers over to learn something. What did he want them to notice and learn about?

The word "poor" is a really broad noun today. Who are we talking about? The homeless, the indigent, the widow, the hungry, the children?

***Poverty defined:** When evaluating poverty in statistics or economics there are two main measures: **absolute poverty** compares income against the amount needed to **meet basic personal needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter;**^[2] **relative poverty** measures when a person cannot **meet a minimum level of living standards, compared to others in the same time and place.** The definition of *relative poverty* varies from one country to another, or from one society to another.

Yet, poverty cannot define the whole picture of a human life. There are also those who are physically poor and spiritually poor.

Mission's today is about both and, not either or.

As believers, in the past, **we tried to get away from providing help to the social or physical needs WITHOUT addressing the relationship and spiritual needs of the soul.** Then we pendulum swung so far the other way that we were only concerned about people receiving Jesus and tended to very little physical needs. It's both and, it's cups of water in the love of Jesus! It's beginning a relationship, when possible, and sticking with them.

This widow is THE perfect example of our Mission's endeavors! She gave and the temple leaders distributed that money to the poor. Or, they converted it to things the poor needed.

I don't mind being schooled by a widow. Widows are some of the most generous, wise people I know. I am more humbled by being schooled by the poor. Their generosity inspires me to see my life and my stuff completely different.

Q: You might be rich or you may be poor, or somewhere in between, how do you continue to mature in the area of generosity?

Mission's giving. What we are focusing on for a couple of weeks is about Trumpet 13 giving. It's not just about giving money to the physically, socially,

even emotionally poor - it's also about giving to the spiritually poor. **Because although poverty sucks, eternity without a restored relationship with Jesus Christ is far worse!**

Our Mission's giving isn't just about the size or monthly faith promise towards our Missionaries, it's not really about the money at all. **It's about participating with God together!** So, no matter how small your gift may be, it's about our faith, growth and maturity in how we follow Jesus. If you have never given to anything, this may be a starting point. Start small and watch God supply.

If you're watching online, you can join in to not only support our current Missionaries (about 80), but also help us add some new ones we'll talk about next week.

NOTES

The thirteenth Trumpet

GIVING - Generosity

https://www.bible-history.com/court-of-women/the_temple_treasury.html

The court of women was also known as the "middle court", as it stood between the [Court of the Gentiles](#) and the Court of Israel.

The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament

"1049. γαζοφυλάκιον gazophulákion; gen. gazophulakíou, neut. noun from gáza (1047), a treasure or treasury, and phulakḗ (5438), a place where something is guarded. A treasury, a place of deposit for the public treasure. **Among the Jews this was the sacred treasury kept in one of the courts of the temple** (Neh. 10:37, 38; 13:4, 5, 7, 8; Esth. 3:9).

According to the Talmudists, the treasury was in the court of the women where stood thirteen chests, called from their shape "trumpets," into which the Jews cast their offerings (Ex. 30:13f. In the NT in Mark 12:41, 43; Luke 21:1). Spoken of the court itself in John 8:20."

<https://ref.ly/o/wsntdict/1141917?length=625>

The Temple Treasury - Bible History
Charitable Donations at the Women's Court



The inner area of the Temple contained three courts.

The easternmost court was the Court of the Women, and it contained the Temple treasury where people donated their money (Mk 12:41-44). Three gates led into this court, one on the north, one on the south, and a third on the east. This third gate on the east side is almost certainly the "Beautiful Gate" that was mentioned in Acts 3. A fourth gate, which was much larger and ornate led from the Court of the Women west into the Court of Israel (women could proceed no further), which was elevated 15 steps higher than the Court of Women.

The 13 Contribution Chests (Trumpets)

According to the Mishnah (Middoth 2,5) the Women's Court was just over 200 feet square between bounding lines. Each court on the outside was 60 feet square. The colonnade ran around the court, and within it, against the wall, the thirteen chests, or 'trumpets,' for charitable contributions were placed.

These thirteen chests were narrow at the mouth and wide at the bottom, shaped like trumpets. There were actually eleven treasure chests of the Temple for the voluntary offerings of money, and then also two at the Gate of Susan, for the half-shekel tax.

Their specific objects were carefully marked on them. Nine were for the receipt of what was legally due by worshippers; the other four for strictly voluntary gifts. According to tradition Edersheim says:

- **Trumpets 1 and 2** were appropriated to the half-shekel Temple-tribute of the current and of the past year.
- **Trumpet 3** those women who had to bring turtledoves for a burnt and a sin offering dropped their equivalent in money, which was daily taken out and a corresponding number of turtledoves offered. This not only saved the labour of so many separate sacrifices, but spared the modesty of those who might not wish to have the occasion or the circumstances of their offering to be publicly known. Into this trumpet Mary the mother of Jesus must have dropped the value of her offering (Luke 2:22,24) when the aged Simeon took the infant Saviour 'in his arms, and blessed God.'
- **Trumpet 4** similarly received the value of the offerings of young pigeons.
- **Trumpet 5** contributions for the wood used in the Temple;
- **Trumpet 6** for the incense, and

- **Trumpet 7 for the golden vessels for the ministry were deposited.** If a man had put aside a certain sum for a sin-offering, and **any money was left over after its purchase, it was cast into Trumpet VIII.** Similarly,

Trumpets 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 were destined for what was left over from trespass-offerings, offerings of birds, the offering of the Nazarite, of the cleansed leper, and **voluntary offerings.** In all probability this space where the thirteen Trumpets were placed was the 'treasury,' where Jesus taught on that memorable Feast of Tabernacles (John 7 and 8; see specially 8:20).

We can also understand how, from the **peculiar and known destination of each of these thirteen 'trumpets,' the Lord could distinguish the contributions of the rich who cast in 'of their abundance' from that of the poor widow who of her 'penury' had given 'all the living' that she had (Mark 12:41; Luke 21:1).**

But there was also a **special treasury-chamber, into which at certain times they carried the contents of the thirteen chests;** and, besides, what was called '**a chamber of the silent,' where devout persons secretly deposited money, afterwards secretly employed for educating children of the pious poor.**

Matthew 6:1-2 NLT

"Watch out! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. When you give to someone in need, don't do as the hypocrites do—**blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity!** I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get."

It is probably in **ironical allusion to the form and name of these treasure-chests that the Lord, making use of the word 'trumpet,' describes the conduct of those who, in their almsgiving, sought glory from men as 'sounding a trumpet' before them (Matthew 6:2)**--that is, carrying before them, as it were, in full display one of these trumpet-shaped alms-boxes (**literally called in the Talmud, 'trumpets'**), and, as it were, sounding it.

The allusion is all the more pointed, when we bear in mind that each of these trumpets had a mark to tell its special object. It seems strange that this interpretation should not have occurred to any of the commentators, who have always found the allusion such a crux interpretum. An article in the Bible Educator **has since substantially adopted this view, adding that trumpets were blown when the alms were collected. But for the latter statement there is no historical authority whatever,** and it would contravene the religious spirit of the times.

COMMENTARY REFERENCES

Edersheim - Court of the Women. The Court of the Women obtained its name, not from its appropriation to the exclusive use of women, but because they were not allowed to proceed farther, except for sacrificial purposes. Indeed, this was probably the common place for worship, the females occupying, according to Jewish tradition, only a raised gallery along three sides of the court. **This court covered a space upwards of 200 feet square. All around ran a simple colonnade, and within it, against the wall, the thirteen chests, or 'trumpets,' for charitable contributions were placed.**

Word Studies in the New Testament

Mark 12:41 (WSNT): **The treasury.** In the Court of the Women, which covered a space of two hundred feet square. All round it ran a colonnade, and within it, against the wall, were the **thirteen chests or "trumpets" for charitable contributions. These chests were narrow at the mouth and wide at the bottom, shaped like trumpets, whence their name.** Their specific objects were carefully marked on them. **Nine were for the receipt of what was legally due by worshippers, the other four for strictly voluntary gifts.** See Edersheim, "The Temple."

Matthew 6:2 (WSNT): Sound a trumpet (σαλπισης). **There seems to be no trace of any such custom on the part of almsgivers, so that the expression must be taken as a figurative one for making a display.** It is just **possible that the figure may have been suggested by the "trumpets" of the temple treasury**—thirteen trumpet-shaped chests to receive the contributions of worshippers. (See on Luke 21:2.)

Judas was the keeper of one of these non-trumpet shaped "boxes."

John 12:4-6 NLT

"But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, "That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor." Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the **disciples' money**, he often stole some for himself."

John 12:6 (WSNT): The bag (γλωσσόκομον). [**glóssokomon: a case, a box**] Only here and 13:29. Originally a box for keeping the mouth-pieces of wind instruments. From γλωσσα, tongue, and κομέω, to tend. The word was also used for a coffin. Josephus applies it to the coffer in which the golden mice and emeralds were preserved (1 Sam. 6:11). **In the Septuagint, of the chest which Joash had provided for receiving contributions for the repairing of the Lord's house (2 Chron. 24:8).** Rev. gives box, in margin.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

Treasury τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον seems **to be used of that receptacle mentioned by the rabbis to which were fitted thirteen chests or boxes, τρηψὶ i. e. trumpets**, so called from their shape, and into which were put the contributions made voluntarily or paid yearly by the Jews for the service of the temple and the support of the poor; cf. Lightfoot, *Horae Hebrew et Talm.*, p. 536f; Lücke (Tholuck, or Godet) on [John 8:20](#); (B. D. American edition under the word). (Strabo 2, p. 319 (i. e. 7, 6, 1).)

The Bible Guide

Mark 12:41–44 (BG): In the temple there is a treasury. Here it is possible to watch people paying in their gifts—placing money in one of the thirteen trumpet-shaped chests. Some of the contributions are quite impressive! But Jesus notices a poor widow. She gives only two tiny coins, but it is the greatest gift of the day—because it is all she has. She has given her whole self to God. **The poor widow's coins are 'lepta'—sometimes called 'mites'.** They are the smallest coins in everyday use. **Two of them together pay a farmworker's wage for about ten minutes' work.**

For more about the history of these “treasury” contribution boxes see 2 Kings 12:4-16.

Links

* **The eyes of God** - <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Bible-Verses-About-Gods-Eyes/>

* Poverty - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty>

Who is more generous?

<https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/resource/statistics-on-u-s-generosity/>

2022 Charitable Giving - <https://nonprofitssource.com/online-giving-statistics/>

You can give to missions online, just choose “Missions” as the Sub Fund!

<https://lifecenterchurch.com/give>

Scriptures

Mark 12:41-44 NLT “Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.”

Questions

Q: Do you ever find yourself just watching people? What do you notice?

Q: Anyone surprised at what Jesus was so interested in? What kind of things do you think God is interested in watching?

Q: Were you aware that most churches have several ways (funds) that people enjoy giving to? See if you can list some of the funds Life Center has setup to give to. Any of these funds sound more interesting than others?

Q: Jesus called his followers over to learn something. What did he want them to notice and learn about?

Q: You might be rich, or you may be poor, or somewhere in between, how do you continue to mature in the area of generosity?