

Mark 12:41-44 “Giving to the Servant”

Please Stand and open your Bibles to Mark 12:41-44

This short little story that is found here and in Luke is so profound it deserves a stop of our verse-by-verse journey through Mark. It not only teaches us that motive is more important than money and that God sees our heart but raises a few questions that we need to answer before we move into chapter thirteen. The first thing we notice is that Jesus is sitting opposite the Treasury watching the people putting their money into it. It would seem that this is a carryover from the reign of Joash who did some repairs on the Temple and to do that he wanted to make sure the work got done so he had them do this...

2 Chronicles 24:8-10

Then at the king's command they made a chest, and set it outside at the gate of the house of the Lord. And they made a proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem to bring to the Lord the collection that Moses the servant of God had imposed on Israel in the wilderness. Then all the leaders and all the people rejoiced, brought their contributions, and put them into the chest until all had given.

In 2 Kings we read...

2 Kings 12:9

Then Jehoiada the priest took a chest, bored a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one comes into the house of the Lord

So, we see that as people were coming in and out of the temple they would have an opportunity to put the offerings in this box with a lid on it. But as always, people will want to show how spiritual they are by making a big deal about their giving. It is believed that the Pharisees would throw their coins in the box so that it makes a big noise like a slot machine. Remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount?

Matthew 6:1-4

“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

This is kind of hard to do when you put the box right out in the open where everyone can see. This is the whole point Jesus is making. Also, why he commends the poor widow in that she

gave all she had out of her love for God. What is this amount that she gave? I found this on a coin dealers' website along with this picture *

A number of tiny copper coins circulated in Judaea during the time of Christ so there is no way to establish any particular design as "the" Widow's Mite. The coins were produced in vast quantities through the first century BC and first century AD. The quality of workmanship employed in the production of these coins varied from rushed to miserable. It is rather unusual to find a single coin that shows all of the legends and design on both sides. Sizes of individual specimens also vary greatly (some were halves of the whole 'prutah' which itself was worth half of a Roman quadrans, the smallest denomination then being produced at Rome). Whatever the exact coins, the gift of the Widow was certainly a small amount of money.

Here is picture to give you an idea of the size.

The amount compared to today to give you an idea would be $\frac{1}{4}$ of a penny. I checked on some figures and in today's economy that is around \$2.00. If all you have to your name is two dollars today, you are in big trouble! Imagine living when they had no welfare, no Social Security, no food stamps, no food closets and all you had was two bucks. That's it. What do you do? I would hope you would trust God enough as this woman.

This brings up a principle that we would do well to talk about. How much are we supposed to give? Is there a required amount?

First a disclaimer. We at this church will never force you to give. We put the box in the back and let you decide for yourself how you want to give. You are under no legal requirement to give. It is not a requirement for membership and strictly an act of worship on your part. Also, we are blown away by your generosity and know that through your worship we have been able to meet the needs of this church and expand our ministries. So, before we move on, thank you!

So then why are we going through this? Because we are a Bible teaching church that teaches the whole counsel of God from Genesis to Revelation and when we come to a subject, we deal with it even if we don't want to. We let God's word teach us how to live and how to give. As we grow in the Lord, we want to obey His will and His word.

Matthew 6:19-21

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Jesus used money in his teaching a lot. He compares our sin to debt. He told us last week to render to God the things that are His. What does the Bible teach?

The first thing we need to define is what we talk a lot in church about...Tithes and offerings. What are they and why do we give them? First, these terms come from the Old Testament Jewish Law. A Tithe is a tenth. We see it here...

Leviticus 27:30

And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord.

Under the law of Moses, they were to give more than just this tithe. They had the Temple tax, the first born of all the flocks, and redemption money. Some estimates are up to almost 30% of their income was given to God. Of course, this was a theocratic system, and all of that money went for the functions of their society. We will talk more about why we still use this term in a moment but what is the offering? Here is an example...

Exodus 35:29

The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the Lord, all the men and women whose hearts were willing to bring material for all kinds of work which the Lord, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done.

So the Tithe was the required amount for the Children of Israel and the offering was given on top of that willingly.

So why do many churches say we are required to tithe? The only answer that makes sense to me is replacement theology. Around the fourth century after the church merged with the state many decided to take an allegorical approach to the scriptures and made the claim that the church has replaced Israel. This made the laws that were meant for Israel and only Israel to be applied to the church. This worked out great for them as they will now force people to give. This grew even more terrible in the dark ages as the Roman Catholic church used money as a way to buy forgiveness. Even with the reforms of the reformation churches today still put practices like tithing onto the church. Many of you are thinking great! I don't have to tithe! Well don't put those checkbooks away yet because we still have to answer the question of what does the Lord require of us and do we have any teaching in the Bible to give us an idea. The answer is yes!

I love it when people that don't want to give always like to harp on how we are not under the law and therefore not required to give. They say they are pure New Testament believers, and I always say what Bible are they reading? The Bible tells us how the early church gave in great detail...

Acts 4:32-37

How the Early Church Gave

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

What, wait a minute! This sounds a lot like communism! No way! If we read into closely, we see this is not communism but more of a commune style. This was in the circle of the church. It not only shows us the true motives of the early church but also how the church is to function corporately. We are to take care of each other. None of this "Mine!" attitude. Willing to give to those in need. Not an exact amount figure but an all in approach. What was it that made this so different? They realized that everything they had belonged to God. Do you?

Psalm 50:10-12

For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, and the

wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness.

Another thing we notice is that they gave to those who had need. True Christ like giving is stepping up when someone can't. Too many churches lay trips on the poor folks to show their faith by 'Planting a Seed". Ridicules. When Paul was on his missionary Journey, he never took any money from any one and the only offering he took was for others...

Romans 15:25-26

But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

This brings us to what Paul taught in the church about giving. We see it taught about by Jesus, practiced in the book of Acts, and then instructed on in the letters. This makes it a New Testament Practice. Turn to 2 Corinthians 9...

Giving to the Servant

2 Corinthians 9

Now concerning the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you; 2 for I know your willingness, about which I boast of you to the Macedonians, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal has stirred up the majority. 3 Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be

in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready; 4 lest if some Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we (not to mention you!) should be ashamed of this confident boasting. 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.

6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. 9 As it is written:

“He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever.”

10 Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, 11 while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. 12 For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, 13 while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, 14 and by their

prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

As * we can see in verse 7 the principle of giving and it is a simple one that is designed to set you free. No limits and no restrictions. The only requirement is that you can do it cheerfully.

But some of you might want to know if it is OK to tithe. If you are like me that does not always trust his heart and would love more distinct instruction the tithe is a good place to start. For me and Phyllis it has been a blessing to just have to move the decimal point. It is easy and we don't have to think about it. But, then again, we are able to do that so I would never demand that others do it. We need to remember our first priority set in Acts 4 is your local church. The place where you are being fed and where your fellow members are being taken care of. Remember our guide...

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture (Old and New Testaments) is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So is it all right to tithe. I say yes but not a legal requirement as it was practiced before the law...

Genesis 14:18-20

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tithe of all.

We are told beyond any doubt that Melchizedek is a type of Christ and Abraham the Father of our Faith is giving a tithe to him.

So, if that is what you are comfortable with great, if not great, whatever you can, great. God will provide as He guides. He will. We can and will take care of each other. But so that we see what His heart is towards all this let's end in an amazing little piece of the Old Testament...

The only place that God wants you to test Him
Malachi 3:8-12

“Will a man rob God?
Yet you have robbed Me!
But you say,
‘In what way have we robbed You?’
In tithes and offerings.
9 You are cursed with a curse,
For you have robbed Me,

Even this whole nation.

10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,

That there may be food in My house,

And try Me now in this,”

Says the Lord of hosts,

“If I will not open for you the windows of heaven

And pour out for you such blessing

That there will not be room enough to receive it.

11 “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,

So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground,

Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,”

Says the Lord of hosts;

12 “And all nations will call you blessed,

For you will be a delightful land,”

Says the Lord of hosts.

Let’s remember what Jesus gave for us when we decide what to give Him

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.