



## First Baptist Church Selmer

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE • BEYOND GIVING! • LUKE 21:1-4; ACTS 4:34-37 • 3/19/2023

### MAIN POINT

Giving is not about how much we give, but the condition of our heart in giving.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Outside of the church, is there an organization or cause you regularly support financially?**

**Why is that organization or cause important to you?**

It has been said, that Jesus spoke about money more than any other topic. In all actuality, Jesus did reference money in 11 of the 39 parables He taught but He also spoke about food in 18 of them. With closer examination, even though Jesus did mention money in these parables, Jesus' focus was far more on the Kingdom of God than money.

We will look at a passage today that shows us what is most important in giving for what is most important to God is not how much we give, but how much we have left.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 21:1-4.

*1 "Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, 2 and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3 And he said, 'Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in*

*more than all of them. 4 For they contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."* (ESV)

**How might we look at the size of the widow's offering in these verses?**

**Who does v.1 say noticed who and what was being placed in the offering box?**

**What did Jesus commend about the widow's giving? What reason did He give?**

The widow did not give very much based on human standards; yet according to her means, she gave everything she had. We often judge people's gifts based on their amount, not what they can afford. When we judge based on an external basis, we are not judging as God does. He alone sees the heart.

The two small copper coins given were called mites. They were the smallest of Jewish currency. In comparison to a day's wage, the two mites would have equaled only 1% of a day's wage but she gave all she had.

**We read that the widow gave two mites. Would anyone have questioned her motive if she would have held back one of them to keep for herself?**

**What does the widow's example teach us about giving?**

**How was her giving sacrificial? How did the widow's obedience far exceed the level of a tithe?**

Our giving is always seen in proportion to our income. When we get more, we should not look at how much we can spend, but how much we can give. As we learn to be generous and faithful with our money, we should ultimately become people who live and give sacrificially to the work of Jesus.

These verses clearly show that Jesus is attentive to the condition of our hearts as we give. The amount matters far less than our faithfulness in giving.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 4:34-37.

*34 "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was called by the apostles*

*Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." (ESV)*

**How was the early church described in verse 34? Would that same statement describe the American church? Why or why not?**

**Do you see any qualification for giving by the disciples in these verses?**

**How does sacrificial giving allow the church to be a community without need? What would it take for this to be true of our church?**

Luke's commentary in verse 34 is an incredible statement. The early church was a community without need because of the number of sacrificial givers. As any had a need, it was met. We should give sacrificially and abundantly to the work of the church. By doing so, we support ministry both inside and outside the church itself.

The selling of land and giving away all of the money was not compulsory. These gifts were given freely by those who were concerned with the well-being of their brothers and sisters. Barnabas's gift served as a practical example and encouragement for other people. Those who had needs were encouraged by knowing he really cared about them. Those who had resources were encouraged to follow his example and give of their resources to meet others' needs. We also can be inspired and motivated by Barnabas's example as we understand that one way we can encourage others is to be generous to support the Lord's work of meeting people's needs with our finances.

**Barnabas sold a field that would have been of some value to him. Is there anything that is "off limits" for you to give to the Lord?**

**What are the benefits to building God's kingdom instead of our own kingdom? With which was the early church most concerned?**

Barnabas was not concerned with building a kingdom for himself, but with building God's kingdom. Barnabas went on to become a pillar of the early church and a traveling companion of Paul. But as we see here, Barnabas was committed to the church with his wallet as well as his life. Like the widow in Luke 21, Barnabas was a sacrificial giver, and God was able to use him to do incredible things.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Are there specific needs in your group that need to be met?**

**How can we identify needs that will challenge us to give sacrificially to meet them?**

**Take a minute to write down at least one way the Lord is prompting you to give sacrificially.**

## PRAYER

Pray that God would bless us so we could be a blessing to others through our sacrificial giving. Ask that God would show you a few concrete ways you can give more of your resources to the growth of the kingdom.

## COMMENTARY

| LUKE 21:1-4

There were 13 coffers shaped like inverted trumpets in the court of women in the temple and a treasury room nearby where supplicants could deposit their offerings. The poor widow did not have much to give, unlike the rich who made a great show of their offerings. Tiny copper coins called mites were the smallest Jewish currency at that time. Jesus commended the widow for giving sacrificially.

| ACTS 4:34-37

4:34-35. If verse 32 depicted the Christian sharing in terms of Greek ideals, verse 34a sets forth the Old Testament ideal: "There were no needy persons among them." This is the ideal God established for Israel. According to Deut 15:4f., Israel was to keep God's commands; and God would bless them; there would be no poor among them. There is evidence that in New Testament times the text of Deut 15:4 was seen as a reference to the ideal final times when Israel would be fully faithful to the law and there would be no poverty in the land. The Christians saw themselves as the people of God of the final times (cf. 2:17), they were experiencing God's blessing (4:33), and they were striving to realize the ideal of a people of God with no poor among them.

Verses 34b-35 depict the means by which they sought to realize this ideal. Those who had lands or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds, and lay them at the apostles' feet. The proceeds were then distributed to the needy among them. But what of the practice of laying the proceeds at the apostles' feet? The gesture was one of submission to another. At this point the Twelve were the representatives appointed by Christ as the foundation of the true people of God. The submission was not to them but to the one they represented. To lay one's gift at their feet was to offer it to Christ. The apostles certainly did not consider this an enviable role. They were all too glad to turn the responsibility over to others (cf. 6:2).

4:36-37. Luke concluded his treatment of the early Christian sharing with two specific examples—one to be followed (Barnabas) and one to be avoided (Ananias and Sapphira). Barnabas sold a field and placed all the receipts at the apostles' feet. Of more interest to us are the little details told about Barnabas here. Luke had a way of taking characters who played a major role later in the book and introducing them early, but only briefly and in passing, as is the case with Barnabas here. His name was Joseph, and he was given the nickname Barnabas by the apostles. This was not insignificant in itself because the granting of a nickname was often seen as a sign of respect. (Compare Jesus giving Simon the nickname of Peter/Rock.) He was the encourager, the advocate, the paraklete par excellence of all the characters in Acts. When the Christians in Jerusalem shied away from Paul after his conversion, Barnabas interceded and introduced him to them (9:26f.). When Paul refused to take Mark on his second missionary journey, Barnabas took up for Mark (15:36-39). When the Christians of Jerusalem became concerned over the orthodoxy of the Antiochene Christians in their witness to Greeks, Barnabas again served as intercessor, saw the gracious work of the Antiochene Christians, and encouraged them (11:20-23). Indeed, 11:24 well sums up the portrait of this "Son of Encouragement": "He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith."

We also learn that Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus. Levites were officials in the temple cultus, subordinate in rank to the priests. Prohibited from offering sacrifices and barred entrance to the holy place, they served in such capacities as policing the temple grounds, keeping the gates, and providing the music at sacrifices and on ceremonial occasions. According to ancient provisions (Deut 10:9; Num 18:20, 24), Levites were not supposed to own land, but that no longer seemed to apply in Barnabas's day.

We are not told where the field was located, whether in Judea or his native Cyprus. Nothing was made of Barnabas's Levitical status in Acts. He may never have served as a Levite. Such service was in no way compulsory for one of Levitical lineage. Just how strong were Barnabas's Cypriot roots we also are not told. Luke simply said here that he was a Cypriot by birth. His family may have moved to Jerusalem when he was quite young, and it is in and around Jerusalem where we

find Barnabas active in the early chapters of Acts. On the other hand, it is probably not by chance that Paul and Barnabas's mission work together began on the island of Cyprus.