

THE WIDOW'S OFFERINGS: REAL GIVING

MARK 12:41–44

Introduction

This is a touching story with a powerful message often ignored. It is a story that...

- shows how God's heart reaches out to those in need — reaches out in tenderness and compassion and love.
- shows how much devotion and commitment and boldness mean to Him.
- shows how deeply God is moved by those who give all they are and have to Him (contrast the Rich Young Ruler, Mk. 10:17-22).
- shows what real giving is.

I. Real giving was demonstrated: Jesus observed some people giving (vv. 41-42).

II. Real giving is sacrificial giving (v. 42).

III. Real giving is measured by how much a person has left — not by how much a person gives (v. 43).

IV. Real giving seeks to have a need met (v. 44).

V. Real giving is giving all a person has (v. 44).

1. *Mark 12:41–42 Jesus Observed People*

Jesus observed people giving. Following all the plotting and argument in the Court of the Gentiles (Mk. 11:27-12:40), Jesus walked into the Court of the Women over by the treasury. The treasury was an area in which there were thirteen trumpet shaped collection boxes where the worshippers dropped their offerings. He sat down, apparently all alone, to get some relief and rest from the tension of the past hours. While resting, He “watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasure.” The word *watched* (*etheorei*) means He was deliberately observing, discerning the motives of the people as they made their offerings. He saw many walk by and drop in sizeable offerings. Some were apparently quite large contributions. He could see the handfuls of coins and hear them clang against the sides as they slid down the funnel shaped trumpets. But none attracted His admiration. Finally a poor widow came along and threw in two copper coins, which were the smallest of coins, coins of very little value. Christ took what he saw and taught what true giving really is.

II. *Mark 12:42 Real Giving is Sacrificial Giving*

Real giving is sacrificial giving. The word *poor* (*ptoches*) means pauper. She was not just poor, she was destitute, in deep poverty. Her poor dress and plain appearance showed her desperate plight. The coins were all she had, yet she gave them despite her own desperate need.

Now note the point: what she gave was a *sacrifice*. What the others gave was not a sacrifice. It did not cost them nor hurt them. They still had plenty left, for they gave only what they could spare. But not the widow. Her gift cost her. It hurt to give, for she gave what she could not spare. She gave what Christ called a *sacrificial gift*. She sacrificed; she went without a meal or gave up something else so that she could give.

Thought 1. There is a great difference between giving what one can spare and giving sacrificially, actually giving up something in order to give. Sacrificial giving costs something. Sacrificial giving is giving when it hurts, when a person has nothing left, nothing to spare. The difference needs to be stressed, for God expects sacrificial giving. If the world and its desperate needs are ever to be reached for Christ, then every believer must give sacrificially.

1 Cor 16:2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

2 Cor 9:7, 12-13, 15 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Deu 16:17 Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you.

III. *Mark 12:43 Measuring Real Giving*

Real giving is measured by how much a person has left, not by how much a person gives. Jesus called His disciples to him and used the great sacrifice that the widow made to teach a much needed lesson. Note several facts.

1. They all gave an offering to God: both "the crowd" (v. 41) who had and the poor widow who did not have.
2. The ones who had plenty gave more money, much more than the widow. Their contributions were generous. Their incomes were dazzling, so their offerings were large.
3. But in God's eyes the widow gave more. Why? Because God measures what was *kept*, not what was given.

=> The widow had less remaining; the others still had much.

=> The widow had given more of what she had; the others had given less of what they had.

=> The widow had sacrificed more: the others had sacrificed less.

In proportion to what she had, the widow gave a larger percent. The others gave a much smaller percent. After they had given, they still had 85 percent or 90 percent or 95 percent to spend on themselves.

This is the lesson Jesus was teaching, a critical lesson. God counts what we have left, not what we give. He counts the amount of sacrifice, not the amount of money. The gift that matters is the gift that costs the giver to give. To the thoughtful recipient it is not the size of the gift that impresses, but the sacrifice the giver had to make in order to give the gift. The greater the sacrifice the more appreciative the recipient.

Mat 6:21 “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Luke 19:8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

2 Cor 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

IV. Mark 12:44 Meeting a Need

Real giving seeks to have a need met. Note the words, “She, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on.” She had great need for food, clothing, and shelter. She had so little; she was the kind of person who would have had to wander about seeking odd jobs just to survive in a depressed economy. Looking at her, a person could tell she never knew where she would get her next meal. She had no one to care for her and no one to help her. The weight of the world seemed to lie upon her shoulders. There was no man who cared or expressed care. This was evident in her appearance, but she knew something. Men may not care, but God cares; so she came to God for help. And what she did is a crucial lesson for men to learn.

She took her need and gave it to God. Her need was financial, so she took what money she had and gave it all to God. She simply said, “God, I have need, the need for money. I do not even have enough money to buy food. If I am to eat, you have to provide somehow, some way. I have worked as hard as I can at the jobs I have been able to find. Here is all I have. Take it; use it in your kingdom. You now take care of me.”

She knew the great principle that God will take care of those who give all they are and have to Him. She knew that if she were to be assured of God's care, she had to give *all* to God. If she gave *all*, God would not deny her anything. He would provide all the necessities of life (Mt. 6:33). She took her need and all that was involved in it and gave it to God. She sought God to meet her need by giving *all that she had* to God.

Note something else. Two needs are present and being met.

1. God's temple (church) had need. The widow, though poor, gave to help carry on the ministry of God.

2. The poor widow had need. She gave, believing God would see to it that she had food, clothing, and shelter.

Luke 6:38 *“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

2 Cor 9:6 *Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*

Prov 11:25 *A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*

Prov 22:9 *A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.*

Isa 58:10 *And if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.*

V. **Mark 12:44 Giving All a Person Has**

Real giving is giving all a person has. “She, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on.” Just imagine! *She gave everything* — not just part — not just a sacrifice — but *all!* She could have easily said what so many often feel:

=> “My gift doesn’t matter. It’s so little.”

=> “I have so little. God will understand. He doesn’t expect me to give it when I can’t even buy food.”

Thought 1. The lesson is twofold.

- 1) We lack devotion and dedication in our commitment to God, whether commitment of life, time, gifts, or money.
- 2) We lack boldness in giving and using what we have for God.

Mat 19:21 *Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

Mat 19:29 *“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”*

1 Cor 10:33 *Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.*

Eph 4:28 *He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. ■*