



Luke 21:1-4

The Widows Mite

NKJ Luke 21:1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury,

2 and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites.

3 So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all;

4 "for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

Can you even believe this? What does this widow think she's doing? I mean what kind of religious fanatic gives away their living to the church? Especially one who had so little to begin with? And what did this woman expect her two tiny mites to accomplish anyway? Rich people were already giving a lot more to the church and their money was going to accomplish a lot more than hers.

I mean talk about a lack of common sense. I think we can all agree that she should have kept what little money she had and used it to take care of herself, can't we? I mean if at sometime she got a little extra money that she didn't really need, she could give that to God, but while she was so poor she should have held on to every penny.

Well that would be the reasoning regarding the widow's donation that you could probably expect from the world. From their point of view this just wouldn't be right. And if we want to be brutally honest, there are probably some even in the church who might be sympathetically inclined to a lot of those points. But the problem with that is, that Jesus praises her action and is obviously lifting it up as an example to His disciples, and by extension, you

and me. So we need to seriously ask, why is the world's reasoning wrong, and the widow's decision right and what are the implications of that?

What's the setting for these events, Jesus has just finished answering the trick questions of the Pharisees and Saducees, and they have finally given up trying to trap with them, he has even shown them up by posing a question that both showed they didn't understand the scriptures they claimed to interpret. Now he is resting, Mark tells us he sat down opposite the temple treasury. That is he sat on a bench in the courtyard known as the "women's court" not because it was set aside for women, but because it was as far into the Temple as a Jewish woman might venture. In this courtyard there were 13 chests, each of which had a trumpet like funnel into which pilgrims might put offerings and dues, for instance the half-shekel that they had been obtaining from the money changers was deposited into one of these chests.

Now, many rich men were coming and putting in a lot of money devoting it to various uses, no doubt everyone would have noticed the sound of many coins tinkling in the funnels as they were poured in. And in the midst of this a poor widow comes and puts in two small copper coins called *lepta* which the KJV translates mites. This was the smallest coin then in circulation. 128 of these made up a denarius and a denarius was a laborers wages for a day. This was also literally the smallest donation that the regulations of the temple allowed for, one lepta would have cost more to administer. So if this is all that this woman has to live on, you can imagine how grindingly poor she really is.

Now from the perspective of onlookers, her donation was nothing at all. For instance, a rich merchants wife would have been considered to be doing far more when she poured in her donation. And yet, Jesus says that the reality is exactly reversed. That in reality, the widow's donation was immense and valuable and praise worthy, while what the rich merchant gave was nothing at all. That is because God looks not at the quantity of a sacrifice but upon the true cost of it. So his estimation is not in terms of how much was given, but how much it cost the giver to give it. In fact, God is far more concerned with the heart of the one giving than the donation itself.

Jesus, because He is the both the Son of David and the Son of God, knew how much the widow had and how much she had given and why, and he judged the sacrifice according to her heart, and therefore found it commendable when others might not.

I want to suggest two lessons we can immediately learn from that –

1) First we learn the vital importance of real sacrifice in our own giving to God.

I want to suggest to you, that it is in our acts of sacrifice that the reality of our faith is manifested. How did God test Abraham's faith? Did he ask him to burn a portion of his income on the altar? No. He did not even ask him to sacrifice all of his herds and flocks. He asked Abraham for that which was most precious to Him, his only Son and Heir Isaac. God asked Abraham to give up that which was his greatest treasure on earth, to prove that He loved God more than anything else, any creature, any particular idol of the heart, in fact in that God was essentially asking who is number one in your heart Abraham?

He also asked him for that sacrifice to test whether he really believed the promises of God. God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations through Isaac, so if he really believed God, he would believe that even if he offered Isaac, God would raise him up from the dead.

Hebrews tells us that Abraham passed that test:

Heb. 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

Abraham proved that day on the mountain that God was the most important thing to Him, that God was in fact #1 in his heart and so he didn't have to go through with that sacrifice.

You yourselves show what you think is really important by how you are willing to sacrifice for it. For instance, you who are parents sacrifice many things time, money, hair for your children, in order to provide for them. How many of you, for instance, have had to give up things you might have wanted because you wanted to provide a better life, or a better education for them?

Now the widow, showed who was most important to her by her sacrifice that day. I want to ask you, what do the sacrifices you make say about your own heart priorities? How are they ranked? And most importantly, do they indicate that Christ is your #1 priority? No one can answer that question but you and God.

2) *By this parable we are reminded what God wants from us*

What does God want from you? Now some might say, well he wants 10% of our income to be tithed. I want to set the consideration of tithing aside for a moment, as that is in fact a very minor application of this principle. But does he just want 10% of *you*?

What did Jesus say the first and greatest commandment is? "*Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."*

No God wants all of you, he wants you to love and serve Him with all of your being.

Can you imagine for a moment if on joining a unit, a guy about to go into battle said to his buddies, "I want you to know right now, that I love you guys, and that when the stuff goes down and the lead is flying you can depend on me 10%," "don't you mean 110%?" No man I mean 10%, the other 90% is going to be me looking after #1. But I'll be there for you at least 10% of the time. How much do you think that would impress his buddies with his devotion?

No Brothers and Sisters, God wants all of you, not 10% which is fitting really, because Christian, God didn't create 10% of you, or die on the cross for 10% of your sins, nor say I will never leave you nor forsake you 10% of the time, or that there is a 10% assured you'll spend eternity with me in heaven. In all of those cases it was 100%

And so He asks for and has a right to all of you, to be first in your life. For there to be no other God's before Him. And please, let me assure you of this, if Christ is #1 in your life, you will serve your spouse, your family, your friends, your workplace or your unit, far, far, better, than if they were #1.

The same incidently applies to Pastors, a Pastor who loves the Lord more than anything else will serve his congregation infinitely better than a pastor who loves the congregation more than the Lord and desires to please them.

If we understand those twin principles of sacrifice and giving ourselves wholly to God, then the widow's donation begins to make more and more sense doesn't it?

Well let me leave you with three practical applications of these principles.

1) *Be eager, and not just willing to sacrifice for God*

Tithing is obvious application of this principle, I mean a real life sacrificial tithe was the heart of this story. Never forget that, this is not just a parable, this is not hyperbole, this widow really existed and she really did give this highly commendable tithe:

Along those lines, Spurgeon tells the following story: "I heard of a gentleman some time ago who gave a sum of money to a chapel, and said to his minister that he might put that down as the widow's mite; but his minister said, "No, sir, I don't think I should like to take so much as that from, you." "How is that sir?" "Why," said the minister, "if you had given me only half the widow's mite that would satisfy me." "What do, you mean?" "Well," he said, "if you would give me £50,000 that would satisfy me well. That is half the widow's mite." "How so, sir?" "Why," he said, "to my knowledge you

are worth a hundred thousand pounds. The widow's mite was all that she had. I won't take so much as that from you. I shall be quite satisfied if you will give half the widow's mite." I thought the man who called his offering by that sacred name, "the widow's mite," deserved the rebuke that he received. Though we have not to give all we have as she did, we should give till we feel it, and I think that we do not give much until we do begin to feel the pinch. We have not done much for a friend if we have only given him our superfluities. True love proves itself when it comes to something like self-denial, but how few of God's servants ever reach to self denials for Jesus. They could not remember, if they sat down, that they ever denied themselves a penn'orth of anything to eat or drink, or denied themselves a pound's worth of finery, or a comfort in their homes, or anything else, for the sake of Christ. We should do better if we could get to feel that we love Christ so much that we could not give too much to him.

Now recent polls suggest that only 4 percent of believers tithe, and the average level of giving is 2.3 percent of income. Now 2.3% is not a sacrifice, I mean I hate to say it, but I probably misplace more than 2.3% of my income and my wife can attest to that.

How much then should you give? Well that is ultimately between you and God, but it should never simply be from your excess. King David came to make a sacrifice at a particular threshing floor in 2 Sam. 24:20-25 and his servant Araunah offered to give Him the threshing floor and the oxen and the wood as a gift, but David said *"No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing."* So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver."

Whatever your tithe is, make sure it really is a sacrifice rather than simply a surplus.

2) **Application:** Understand that you are never so poor that you cannot contribute to the kingdom, or that your contribution is of no worth. In the final judgment we will learn that the sacrifices of humble believers who no one ever heard of were of greater value than the contributions of men

with names like Carnegie and Mellon, and than giving a cup of cold water to a beggar was worth more than the purchase of a Cathedral.

Also, please don't think of your sacrifices only in terms of money, let me suggest two others, Worship and Prayer.

Evening Worship and Family Worship
Personal and Corporate Prayer

Now the word may be pushing you out of your comfort zone here, but it will never ask you to do anything that is not good for you. Who benefits from your sacrifice? YOU DO! We add nothing to God.

Kids: Can you sacrifice to the Lord? YES! And not just by Money.

3) And final application: The world would look at the sacrifice of the widow and see it as nonsensical, because they do not in the end understand the self-less love that motivated it. That is because they have no idea of the depth of the selfless love that caused the richest king who ever existed to leave his throne and humble himself, to undergo humiliation and death, not for his friends but for his enemies, because He knew how truly poor they and without hope they were. A poor widow understood that and let it shape all her actions.

If you, by the work of the Holy Spirit in your hearts, understand that, then and only then will you understand this:

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

“Oh, dear brethren, I invite you all-and I ask that I may be able myself-to give to our Lord, who is greater than Solomon, our whole being, every power of thought and expression every faculty of affection or of judgement-all that we are and all that we have; for if we gave Christ our gold and nothing more he could not accept it. He wants ourselves-to live from mornings light to evening’s shade for him, to eat and drink and sleep to his glory, to do all to his honor. This is the obligation of the Christian, and this his truest privilege.” - Spurgeon