

**Introduction** (Luke 21:1-4)

Last week, Donald spoke about rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and rendering to God what is God's. The religious leaders had sent spies to try and trap Him into saying something that would set the people against Him, or incriminate Him with the Roman government. They were unsuccessful, and Jesus turned the tables on them. After His response, they were silent and could say nothing.

It is amazing how much the Scriptures have to say about the use of money. Scholars say there are four times as many verses on giving than prayer. We know that prayer is extremely important. The early church was devoted to prayer. Jesus calls His church to be a house of prayer. But, there are four times more Scriptures on money than prayer. God wants us to be faithful with the use of money.

As Christians, we must be faithful with the use of money. We must faithfully give account to our government and pay our taxes to our government. Christians should be model citizens to the rest of the country. Christians must also give account to God for their use of God's money, and we must render to God what is God's. We are commanded by God to give tithes and offerings. It is part of our worship of God, but it is also one of the ways that helps God's kingdom work to be accomplished. When we give to God what is God's, we are sowing into his kingdom. We are encouraged to sow generously into His kingdom, and to store up treasures in heaven.

Our passage today also deals with money. In particular, Jesus deals with our giving. It is a passage that challenges us on our concept of giving.

There is a story about a farm, where a hen and a pig had a conversation. It was morning time and the air was full of breakfast aroma. The farmer and his wife were cooking their breakfast of eggs and bacon. Meanwhile, the pig and hen were discussing giving. The hen said she gladly gave her offerings every day. She was glad to joyfully contribute to the farmer and his wife. After all, they fed her well, and took good care of her. On the other hand, the pig was rather uncomfortable with the discussion. He was anxious because the smell of bacon in the air was a constant prophetic reminder of what was to come. He listened patiently to the hen's remarks about giving, until he finally could stand it no longer. He said, "it is easy for you to joyfully give. You just give offerings. For me, it's not just an offering, it's a total sacrifice."

Luke gives us a very similar account to this familiar story. Jesus and His disciples were in the temple. They were in the court of women, which is where the treasury boxes were located. They were watching the people give, and they too had a discussion about giving. Let's read our text to see what they had to say.

(Luke 21:1-4) "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. {2} And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. {3} And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; {4} for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

Our passage today is fairly simple and straight forward. It gives us an idea of how God looks at giving. In Scripture, we are told not to compare ourselves with others. Paul said we are to examine our own work in regard to ourselves, and not in regard to another. Each of us will bear our own load.

This story of the Widow's Mites is not about comparing our giving with the giving of others, even though Jesus made a comparison. Jesus made the comparison to give us some insight about how God views our giving. This morning, we will look at the background of the passage, the giving of the rich, the giving of the widow, the comparison of the gifts, and finally some applications for our lives. Let's look at the Widow's Mites.

(Gal 6:4-5) "But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. {5} For each one will bear his own load."

### The Widow's Mites

1. Background
2. Giving by the rich
3. Giving by the poor widow
4. Comparison of the gifts
5. Applications

#### 1. Background

Jesus has entered Jerusalem and it has been an eventful few days. He threw out the money changers from the temple. He began to teach in the temple. He did not just teach, but He taught with authority. He healed many who were sick. He confronted the religious leaders about rejecting Him as the Messiah. He also confronted them about the resurrection of the dead. And the religious leaders are angry with Jesus about all of this. It is Wednesday, two days before the crucifixion, and the religious leaders have tried to trap Jesus. They were looking for grounds to accuse Him and have Him put to death. That brings us up to Luke chapter 21. In verse five, Jesus begins to talk about the destruction of Jerusalem, and His second coming. Sandwiched in between what has happened and His prophetic words of the coming destruction, we have four verses about a scene in the temple.

The scene is in the Women's Court, which was one of three courts in the temple. The Women's Court was on the eastern side, and it contained the Temple treasury where people donated their money. The treasury boxes were put in the Women's Court because they were accessible by everyone.

The temple treasury was not a single treasury box; there were thirteen treasury boxes in the wall. These boxes were called shopheroth, or trumpets, because they were shaped like trumpets. 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.

Each of these trumpet shaped boxes are clearly marked with what the offering was to be used for. **The treasury boxes were for designated offerings.** We do a similar thing by designating on our checks or on an offering envelope what the money being given is to be used for. Some people give offerings above their tithes, and they designate it for the benevolent ministry, facility, missions, or other area ministry. Instead of designating, they put the various offerings in the appropriate trumpet-shaped offering box.

Here is how scholars say the boxes were appropriated.

- Trumpets 1 and 2 were appropriated to the half-shekel Temple-tribute of the current and of the past year.
- Trumpet 3 was for women who had to bring turtledoves for a burnt and a sin offering. They would drop the equivalent value in money into this box.
- Trumpet 4 similarly received the value of the offerings of young pigeons.
- Trumpet 5 was for contributions for the wood used in the Temple.
- Trumpet 6 for the contributions used for incense.
- Trumpet 7 was for the golden vessels for the ministry. 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 7.
- 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.

## 2. Giving by the rich

Jesus and His disciples are in the Women's Court where these trumpet-shaped treasuries are located. Luke says that Jesus "looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury." This tells me that Jesus was probably not deliberately watching people put in their offerings. If He had been deliberately watching, He would have had His eyes focused on the treasury boxes and would not have had to look up. I believe that He looked up and happened to see the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.

(Luke 21:1) "And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury."

Luke records that He saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. The Greek word is plousios, which means wealthy. It comes from ploutos, which means to flow or abound. **The rich givers flowed and abounded in wealth.** They probably dressed well, particularly when compared to the poor widow. They probably had clothes that were not faded or tattered. They probably had clothes made out of expensive linens. They probably had expensive jewelry. They had shoes that were not worn out. The root word of ploutos is pleo, which means to sail. It was smooth sailing for these rich people. They were not in rough waters. They were not going into a head wind. They had the wind at their backs. Things had been going well and they were just sailing along.

## 3. Giving by the poor widow

Next, Jesus saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins or mites (KJV). The Greek word for "small copper coins" is leptos (pr. lepton), which means peeled, fine, thin, small, or light. These were two very small coins, and they were also small in value. In the Gospel of Mark, we find that the value of these two coins amounted to a cent (kodrantes or quadron). A quadron was one fourth of an as, and was worth about one cent. It took two of these small copper coins or mites to make a cent. When I lived in Iran, you could buy a large piece of chippoti, their bread, for two rials, which amounted to almost three cents. This poor widow could not have bought much with her two coins.

(Luke 21:2) "And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins."

(Mark 12:42) "A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent."

Luke records that it was a "poor widow" who put in the two copper coins. How did He know that

she was a poor widow? The Greek word for poor that is used is *ptochos*, which means to crouch or cower. It is most often associated with begging. A more literal rendering would be a beggarly widow. Perhaps Jesus had seen her previously outside begging. Or, He may have just had a word of knowledge. While the rich people were flowing in wealth, **the poor widow was beggarly and scrapping for anything she could find.**

People sometimes ask me if I am related to the Murchisons in Dallas. I tell them yes, but distantly. I usually tell them that we have heard of them, but they have probably not heard of us. Clint Murchison got involved in the oil and gas business when it was a fledgling industry. He also was one of the founders of Southwest Airlines. And, he is probably most famous for founding and owning the Dallas Cowboys. At one time, Clint was listed as the seventh wealthiest man in the world.

On the other hand, my father's family was like the poor widow. He grew up on the Rio Grande River in Mission, Texas. They lived in an abandoned box car with no electricity or running water. They had a small outhouse, and they went to the Rio Grande River for their water. His sister, Jean, went to school with Tom Landry, who was also from Mission, Texas. Tom became the coach for the Dallas Cowboys. You had one group of Murchisons who were rich and flowing with money. You had another group of Murchisons that were as poor as you could get. That is about the same comparison as the rich people and the poor widow in this account.

Jesus also tells us that these two leptos were all that she had to live on. **She put in her last cent.** She could have possibly bought a piece of bread, but certainly not much more. In Randy Alcorn's book, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*, he gives a story about John Rockefeller. When he died, someone asked his accountant how much he left. The accountant did not feel obliged to answer the nosy person, and cleverly replied, "He left everything." If we use this same way of thinking and ask how much the woman gave, "she gave everything." She had nothing left to live on. That was her last cent.

(Luke 21:4b) "but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

#### 4. Comparison of the gifts

Next, Jesus compared the giving by the rich man and the poor widow. He said that the poor widow put in more than all of the rich people. In a literal sense, this is not true. But Jesus was not talking literally. **Jesus compared their giving so that He could give us God's perspective on giving.**

(Luke 21:3-4) "And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; {4} for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

Not only does Jesus tell us that the poor widow put in more than all of them, but He tells us two other things about their gifts. **The wealthy gave out of their surplus.** Their giving did not affect their lifestyle. Their giving did not affect their ability to buy groceries, clothes, or find shelter. Their giving did not affect their ability to satisfy their hunger when they got home. Their giving was out of their surplus. The second thing that Jesus said is that **the widow put in all that she had to live on.** Her giving affected her food, clothing, and shelter. It left her with nothing else to live on. It was all she had. Therefore, Jesus said that she put in more than all of them.

When we took an offering for the building fund, some gave \$5.00, and that was a huge gift for them.

It was a sacrificial gift. I rejoiced with the Father over those \$5.00 offerings in the building trumpet. Many others, even though they had more to give, gave several hundred dollars, or even several thousand dollars. For many, it was just an offering out of their surplus. It did not carry as much weight as some of the \$5.00 offerings. All the offerings were greatly needed and appreciated, but some were most costly to the givers than others.

## 5. Applications

I believe the whole point of this story is for us to learn to view our giving from God's perspective. It should encourage those who do not have much to give about their gifts, and it should encourage those who are wealthy to give generously according to their ability. But, I want to take a look at some other applications.

### A. God observes our giving.

First, just as Jesus observed the giving in the temple, God looks at our giving. Our giving is to Him, and He sees what we give and what we don't give. When the Ananias lied about His giving, Peter said that he had lied to the Holy Spirit. In the next verse, he said that he had lied not to men but to God. Not only does it show that God watches our giving, but it is a proof text on the deity of the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 5:3-4) "But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?...You have not lied to men but to God."

When the nation of Israel was giving their lame and sick animals to be sacrificed, God sent the prophet Malachi to rebuke them for bringing in offerings that did not honor Him.

(Mal 1:8-9) "But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts. {9} "But now will you not entreat God's favor, that He may be gracious to us? With such an offering on your part, will He receive any of you kindly?" says the LORD of hosts."

When they were not bringing in the full tithe and other offerings on top of the tithes, God told Malachi to rebuke them for not bringing the whole tithe into the storehouse. A tithe is ten percent of your income. If you make three thousand dollars a month, your tithe would be three hundred dollars a month. If you make six thousand dollars a month, your tithe to the church would be six hundred dollars a month. Anything that you give on top of the six hundred would be considered an offering. They had not been bringing in their whole tithes, and they had not been bringing in offerings on top of their tithes. The same rebuke could be given to the church in America, where the average giving is around 2.5%.

(Mal 3:8-10) "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. {9} You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! {10} Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house..."

God observes our giving because He uses that to test our faithfulness. If we are faithful with the use

of our money, He knows that He can entrust us with greater responsibilities, and the true treasures.

(Luke 16:11) "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?"

### **B. God opens up doors of provision when we give.**

The poor widow knew something that many people do not understand today. Our giving to the Lord opens up doors of provision in our lives. Let's go back to the passage in Malachi. God told them to test Him in the matter of giving. He said He would open up the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing until it overflows. He also promised to rebuke the devourer for us.

(Mal 3:10-11) "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test 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 a blessing until it overflows. {11} Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes," says the LORD of hosts."

In 1 Kings, the Lord commanded Elijah to go to Zarephath and see a widow. He said that the widow would provide for him. Upon getting there, he asked the widow to get him a drink of water, which she did. Then, Elijah asked her for a piece of bread. She told him, "I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar." She went on to say that she was preparing to make her last meal for her son and her before they died. Elijah responded by telling her to make some for him first, and then to make some for herself and her son. He promised her that the bowl of flour will not be exhausted and the jar of oil will not be empty. So, the woman "did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty." When, we give our first to the Lord, He pours out blessings and provision for us. The poor widow at the temple and the widow in Zarephath understood this principle.

(1 Kings 17:8-16) "Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, {9} "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." {10} So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink." {11} As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." {12} But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." {13} Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. {14} "For thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.'" {15} So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days. {16} The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah."

**C. God looks at our heart when we give.**

God looks beyond our offerings; He looks at our heart. He saw the heart of the rich people putting in their token offerings. He also saw the heart of the poor widow, who had put in everything that she had to live on. He said that she had put in more than all the others.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians about giving, he said that those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly, but those who sow bountifully will reap bountifully. Then, he said, "each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." In our hearts, we need to purpose to honor God. In our hearts we need to give cheerfully. God loves a cheerful giver. The poor widow did not give grudgingly. No one made the poor widow give her last two coins. She also gave as she had purposed in her heart. She sowed bountifully, giving more than all the rest. Even though the text does not say it, I believe that she gave cheerfully, and God loved it.

(2 Cor 9:6-7) "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. {7} Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

**D. God expects us to give according to our ability.**

When Jesus compared the giving of the rich and that of the poor widow, He said that she gave more than all of them. He was looking at their gifts in light of their ability. Some have the ability to give more, and more is expected of them. Jesus said in Luke 12 that "from everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more." We cannot give what we do not have, but we can all give according to the ability that we have.

(Luke 12:48b) "...From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."

Notice what Paul writes to Timothy about the rich. He tells them not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God. Then, he tells them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share. God expects those who have the ability to give generously to give generously. The rich in the temple were giving token offerings, not generous offerings.

(1 Tim 6:17-18) "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. {18} Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,"

On the other hand, even though the widow was poor, she gave according to her ability and beyond. She gave similarly to the churches in Macedonia. Paul told the Corinthians that "in a great deal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints." Notice that they gave voluntarily. They gave as they purposed in their heart. They gave cheerfully. And, they gave according to their ability and beyond.

(2 Cor 8:1-4) “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, {2} that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. {3} For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, {4} begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,”

### **Conclusion**

Even though the account of the giving by the poor widow is very short, it is rich with meaning. My prayer is that we do not just hear these words, but we take to heart the principles of giving that are mentioned in this passage.

Let's pray.

Lord, help us to honor You with our finances. When You observe our giving, I pray that You will feel honored. May the quality of our gifts honor You. May the quantity please You. Help us to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. Help us to learn to give above and beyond the tithe. Help us to bring offerings that please You. Lord, may the attitude of our hearts please You. May we be a people that give cheerfully. May we be a people that give voluntarily. May we get to the place where we ask to give to help support Your kingdom work. May we give as we purpose in our hearts. Put on our hearts the various trumpets that You would have us put our offerings in. May we give generously and according to our ability. May we learn to give by faith and give even beyond our ability. Father God, help us to be a people that honor You with our gifts, just as this poor widow did.

And Lord, many have not been giving their tithes and offerings. Lord, there is no condemnation on them. But Father, You want to pour out a blessing on them, and You have been waiting for them to test You in this matter. Father, I ask that You bless those who test You and begin to give their tithes and offerings. I ask You to rebuke the devourer on their behalf. I ask You to stand behind Your word, and I know that You will always be faithful to Your word. Thank You for doing this. I ask and pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Turn it over to Donald for the baby dedication...



**Introduction** (Luke 21:1-4, Gal 6:4-5)**1. Background**

- The treasury boxes were for \_\_\_\_\_ offerings.

**2. Giving by the rich** (Luke 21:1)

- The rich givers \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in wealth.

**3. Giving by the poor widow** (Luke 21:2, 21:4, Mark 12:42)

- The poor widow was \_\_\_\_\_ and scrapping for anything she could find.
- She put in her \_\_\_\_\_ cent.

**4. Comparison of the gifts** (Luke 21:3-4)

- Jesus compared their giving so that He could give us God's \_\_\_\_\_ on giving.
- The wealthy gave out of their \_\_\_\_\_.
- The widow put in \_\_\_\_\_ that she had to live on.

**5. Applications**

- God \_\_\_\_\_ our giving. (Acts 5:3-4, Mal 1:8-9, 3:8-10, Luke 16:11)
- God opens up doors of \_\_\_\_\_ when we give. (Mal 3:10-11, 1 Kings 17:8-16)
- God looks at our \_\_\_\_\_ when we give. (2 Cor 9:6-7)
- God expects us to give according to our \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 12:48b, 1 Tim 6:17-18, 2 Cor 8:1-4)

**Introduction** (Luke 21:1-4, Gal 6:4-5)**1. Background**

- The treasury boxes were for \_\_\_\_\_ offerings.

**2. Giving by the rich** (Luke 21:1)

- The rich givers \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in wealth.

**3. Giving by the poor widow** (Luke 21:2, 21:4, Mark 12:42)

- The poor widow was \_\_\_\_\_ and scrapping for anything she could find.
- She put in her \_\_\_\_\_ cent.

**4. Comparison of the gifts** (Luke 21:3-4)

- Jesus compared their giving so that He could give us God's \_\_\_\_\_ on giving.
- The wealthy gave out of their \_\_\_\_\_.
- The widow put in \_\_\_\_\_ that she had to live on.

**5. Applications**

- God \_\_\_\_\_ our giving. (Acts 5:3-4, Mal 1:8-9, 3:8-10, Luke 16:11)
- God opens up doors of \_\_\_\_\_ when we give. (Mal 3:10-11, 1 Kings 17:8-16)
- God looks at our \_\_\_\_\_ when we give. (2 Cor 9:6-7)
- God expects us to give according to our \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 12:48b, 1 Tim 6:17-18, 2 Cor 8:1-4)