

Gospel of Mark: Sermon Series

Giving God's Way: Mark 12:41-44
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Outline:

1. Completely annihilate popular teachings on "The Widow's Offering"
2. Define *how* to give God's Way.
3. Define *what* to give God's Way.
4. Pray a prayer of financial blessing over THE EDGE community.

The Scene of "The Widow's offering"

This scene is smack in the middle of "Judgment Week". Jesus has entered Jerusalem earlier in the week and is days from His crucifixion. He has been picking a fight with the Religious Leaders; spewing judgment, warning and woe. In this scene, He is hanging out with His disciples around a treasury box (one of 15 around the Temple) and is observing those who put offerings inside.

Scripture:

And he [JESUS] sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on. – Mark 12:41-44

Analysis: Sadly, the church has coveted this text as a means of manipulation and guilt to "fleece the flock". But it would be incorrect to think that Jesus is talking about principles of giving. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

Here's what John MacArthur has to say about this text and about those who would use this text in a manipulative way:

That's ridiculous. That's irresponsible. That's foolish. This passage is not designed to talk about the principles of giving. There's only one comment that Jesus makes...that she gave out of her poverty all she had to live on. That's all there is. No comment that the Lord appreciated her. No comment that the Lord loved her, commended her. No comment that she was now in the Kingdom of God. No invitation to the disciples to reach in to their little money bags and go up there and throw in everything they had because it was good enough for the widow.... And if she was truly spiritual, they should be truly spiritual as well.

*For these reasons, the traditional explanations of this text make no sense to me at all. **One thing I do know is this, the Lord does not expect you to give 100 percent of what you have so that you have absolutely nothing left.** But that's the only obvious principle here if you're going to draw a principle. Besides, why would you inject a principle of giving in a context like this? This is no place to interject it.*

The Lord makes no comment about giving except that she gave more than everybody else relative to what she had. She is not commended. They are not condemned. No one's attitude or spirit in the giving is discussed. And no principle regarding giving is drawn by our Lord. The narrative is not intended to deal with any of those matters. The reason the Lord doesn't say anything about it is that's not what it's about. If you look at the context before and after this you [will realize] that this is all about the condemnation of wicked spiritual leaders and a corrupt religious system that is about to be destroyed.

Google: John MacArthur Widow's Offering

THE HOW

Q: So if the widow from Mark 12 doesn't clue us in as to How to give God's way, what does the Scripture say?

A: Give Freely

No Guilt, No Manipulation, No False Religion!!!

Scripture:

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. - 2 Corinthians 9:7

We live in the day of grace, post Cross and Resurrection. We must be free of compulsion or guilt in our giving. All must be done out of a free heart.

A: Give Generously (even when it's hard):

Scripture:

We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

Even though the widow is not our guide (to give to our own utter ruin), we are still to give generously and, sometimes, with reckless abandon like the Macedonians. Why? Because there's always someone in this big, fallen and hard world who has got it worse than us! For the Macedonians, it was the Jerusalem church. For us it's the rest of the church in the World.

THE WHAT

Q: So now that we know HOW to give, to WHAT should we give?

A: Start with the things that are “Uniquely Christian”

We as Christians have two uniquely Christian concerns:

1. The cause of the Gospel
2. The care of the Church

We can't get a government grant for the Gospel! Oprah Winfrey and Angelina Jolie (for all the great work that they do IN THEIR NAME) will never do anything in JESUS NAME. That's our job.

Our money for the cause of the Gospel

- Give to those who labor in the Gospel HERE (for our sake)

Scripture:

Do we not have the right to eat and drink? Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. - 1 Corinthians 9:4-14

Jesus (in Matthew 10, Luke 10) sends out his Disciples with little food or money because he expects those who are receiving a blessing spiritually to return a blessing in provision. Laboring in the Word is a real, full time job! So says the Lord: “The workman is worthy of his hire” Let's take care of those who have a profession to labor in the word.

- Give to those who labor in the Gospel – THERE (for The World's sake)

THE GREAT COMMISSION

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and

teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” - Matthew 28:17-20

We are in “THE THIRD WAVE” of Evangelism – we can do this thing!

- *Everyday day 166,000 people hear the Gospel for the first time.*

We have **the money** to finish The Great Commission in our lifetime:

- *Conservative estimates indicate that \$1 billion a year could be all that's needed financially to complete the task of the great commission.*
- *Worldwide: “Great Commission Christians” make 6.8 trillion dollars in income.*

But we need to make it a priority!

- *In 2007, Americans spent \$40 billion on their pets.*
- *Only 2% of Church Income goes to Overseas Missions*

Go to www.generousgiving.org

We have **the information & the technology** to finish The Great Commission:

- *Organizations like the Joshua Project have figured out who's left (by people group) and how to reach them!*
- *One in Three has never heard the Gospel, ever. That's over 2 billion people!*

Go to www.joshuaproject.org

Our money for the Cause of the Church

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. - Galatians 6:9-11

Paul had a strong drive to collect from all of Christendom for the Jerusalem church (almost every letter mentions this)

*The point: We **NEED** to bring relief to our brothers and sisters because no one else will care for our family like we will!*

The Persecuted Church!

The secular media will never, ever give us the truth about the Persecuted Church.

- Fact: Iraq, Afghanistan, and Egypt – All Christians are FAR WORSE off as a result of the “Arab Spring”
- Fact: Our “trading partner” China is one of the most shameful abusers of Christianity!

Investigate the persecuted church by going to www.persecution.org

A Financial Blessing

Once we shed the guilt and manipulation seen often in American Christianity we can be free to give boldly for the *uniquely Christian* causes of Gospel and Church. We can also be free in our prayers and petitions for financial blessing. God’s wants to bless us to be a blessing.

That’s the whole point of Psalm 67 (below):

*May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,*

*That your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!*

*Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth.*

*Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!*

*The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, shall bless us.*

*God shall bless us;
let all the ends of the earth fear him!*