

## Giving: The Widows Mite

Mark 12:41-44

Online Sermon: [http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567)

“A story is told of a circus strong man who particularly had very powerful hands. And one of the things he would do is take an orange before the crowd and squeeze it with his bare hand until every drop of juice came out. And then they dared the audience to find another drop because of



how strong he was. So he would squeeze it and every drop would be rung out and big men would come up and try to squeeze it more. But to no avail, there would be no more juice to come out. On one occasion a real skinny man came up and said I'd like to try. They laughed but gave him the orange. And he took one hand and with all the strength he could mustard up he squeezed it. And to the shock of the strong man and the crowd there was a drop of orange juice that dripped out. They couldn't believe it. They said, how in the world were you able to

squeeze out another drop of orange juice? Where did you get that power? Oh, he said it's easy I'm the local treasurer for the Baptist church down the street. I can, I know how to squeeze stuff out of folks.”<sup>1</sup>

“When God has to squeeze out of us praise, squeeze out of us time, squeeze out of us service when He's been this good there is something wrong and it's a matter of the heart!”<sup>2</sup> The goal of this sermon is not to “hit you up” for money but to provide you with sound doctrine on tithing so that you might be good stewards by sharing with one another the blessings you have received.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Evans, [“The Motivation of Stewardship,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.

<sup>2</sup> Tony Evans, [“The Motivation of Stewardship,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.

## The Widows Mite – An Example of Honorable Giving

The doctrine of giving is best illustrated by the story of the widow's offering unto the Lord. We are told that Jesus entered the Court of Women and sat down on a bench.<sup>3</sup> This was not only “the first enclosure of the sanctuary in which Jewish women and children were allowed



to worship”<sup>4</sup> but also the location of the treasury. There were 13 trumpets shaped like a ram's horn “positioned with the tapered end upward to prevent theft”<sup>5</sup> along the walls of this court.<sup>6</sup> While some of these trumpets were designated to fund specific purposes others were used for freewill offerings.<sup>7</sup> Since it was the Passover the treasury would have been exceptionally busy<sup>8</sup> and as a result Jesus sitting on a bench watching people<sup>9</sup> put money in one of these “shopharoth” chests would have gone

unnoticed. Since the heavier and the larger the quantity of the copper, brass or bronze coinage a person gave the louder the “clang they would make in the trumpet bell,”<sup>10</sup> one could easier determine or even announce the size of a person's gift. Since the Jerusalem temple was known

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<sup>3</sup> Walter W. Wessel, [“Mark,”](#) in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 740.

<sup>4</sup> James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Mark](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 380.

<sup>5</sup> James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Mark](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 380.

<sup>6</sup> Tony Evans, [“The Motivation of Stewardship,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.

<sup>7</sup> Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 440.

<sup>8</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior](#), vol. 2, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 130.

<sup>9</sup> William L. Lane, [The Gospel of Mark](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 442.

<sup>10</sup> David E. Garland, [Mark](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 481.

for its vast wealth<sup>11</sup> it should not come as a surprise that while Jesus sat on the bench He saw and heard many of “rich people throw in large amounts” into the treasury (verse 41). After a while a poor widow came into the Court and dropped in the smallest of currency in Palestine, two small coins or “mites” that were worth a “sixty fourth of a denarii” which was the equivalent of a day’s wage.<sup>12</sup> As she dropped these coins into the trumpet chest the best they would do is make a faint “ting.”<sup>13</sup> And yet while her amount to many would have seemed insignificant it was all she had to live on. She could have kept a coin for herself<sup>14</sup> and buy desperately needed flour to make a small meal<sup>15</sup> and yet she chose to trust God and gave everything! To Jesus her sacrificial giving “made the noise of a vast offering”<sup>16</sup> that would forever ring how to tithe honorable unto our Creator!

### What is a Tithe

So what exactly is a “tithe” and what amount are we to give unto God? Ever since the beginning of time humanity has been giving back to God some of the blessings they have received. For instance, Abel gave God the first fruits of his flocks (Genesis 4:4), Abraham gave a tithe of his increase (Genesis 14:20),<sup>17</sup> and “while making a shrine at Bethel Jacob promised to give a tenth unto God” (Genesis 28:18-22).<sup>18</sup> By Levitical law every Jewish person was required to pay tithes for the Levites, for the temple and great feasts, and for the widows and poor of the

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<sup>11</sup> Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 440.

<sup>12</sup> Tony Evans, [“The Motivation of Stewardship,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.

<sup>13</sup> Tony Evans, [“The Motivation of Stewardship,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.

<sup>14</sup> William L. Lane, [The Gospel of Mark](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 443.

<sup>15</sup> Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 441.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Carr, [“God’s Word about Your Money \(Mark 12:41–44\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 970.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Carr, [“God’s Word about Your Money \(Mark 12:41–44\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 970.

<sup>18</sup> J. Christian Wilson, [“Tithe,”](#) ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 579.

land<sup>19</sup> in the form of “seed, grain, wine, oil and firstlings of herds and flocks (Deuteronomy 14:22-23).”<sup>20</sup> The word “tithe” literally simply means “the tenth”<sup>21</sup> and in the Old Testament this was the minimum a person was to give unto the God (Mal. 3:10; Lev. 27:30).<sup>22</sup> Even



though there is not a direct command in the New Testament for Christians to tithe<sup>23</sup> giving according to 1 Corinthians 16:2 is to a “regular part of our lives.”<sup>24</sup> While it is debatable that since “not the smallest letter or least stroke of the pen will by any means pass away from the Law until all things are fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18) means that today’s Christians ought to still give a 10 percent, there are lots of examples like today’s story of the Widows Mite, and the giving by the churches of Asia Minor that

point to tithe in the New Testament not defined in percentages but attitude of heart! One is to give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:6-7), out of one’s possessions not abundance (Acts 2:45; 4:32-37) beyond one’s means (2 Corinthians 8:3) and without “neglecting the weightier matters of the law, namely justice, mercy, and the love of God” (Matthew 23:23).<sup>25</sup> The conviction to give in

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<sup>19</sup> M. G. Easton, *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), 671.

<sup>20</sup> J. Christian Wilson, [“Tithe,”](#) ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 579.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Carr, [“God’s Word about Your Money \(Mark 12:41–44\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 969.

<sup>22</sup> Alan Carr, [“God’s Word about Your Money \(Mark 12:41–44\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 970.

<sup>23</sup> R.E.O. White, [“Tithe, Tithing,”](#) *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 2072.

<sup>24</sup> Alan Carr, [“God’s Word about Your Money \(Mark 12:41–44\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 970.

<sup>25</sup> J. Christian Wilson, [“Tithe,”](#) ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 579.

the New Testament was not to be done out of guilt but in light of what the Lord has done for us<sup>26</sup> and the fact that “every penny we have to our names is the Lord’s.”<sup>27</sup> We ought to give generously, willingly and with thanksgiving in our hearts out of our deep desire to express our love for God and one another (Matthew 22:37-40!

## Excuses to Not Give

Given the teaching on sacrificial giving in the New Testament one would think the coffers of the churches would be overflowing but that we know is far from the truth. While about 84 % of Canadians donate to some cause each year, for a total of about 10.6 billion



dollars,<sup>28</sup> this only represents on average \$390 per person each year!<sup>29</sup> Since the average family income (after tax) in Canada is about \$71,000 this means a family of three gives only 1.5 %!<sup>30</sup> There are many reasons why giving is so meagre. First, most people only give out of their “perceived” abundance. Such a “left-over giver” philosophy minimizes giving because rarely will one ever think one has plenty, and even if one does to sacrificially give from such an

abundance just seems like too much to give!<sup>31</sup> Another reason people do not give is due to coveting and pleasure-seeking reasons. Many believers have gotten into so much debt to “keep up with the Joneses” and indulge their every pleasure that by the time one pays for the basics of living and their debt nothing is left to give to God.<sup>32</sup> Other believers don’t give because they are

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<sup>26</sup> Alan Carr, [“God’s Word about Your Money \(Mark 12:41–44\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 971.

<sup>27</sup> Alan Carr, [“God’s Word about Your Money \(Mark 12:41–44\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 969.

<sup>28</sup> Taken from the following website: [Research About Giving in Canada | Sector Source](#)

<sup>29</sup> Taken from the following website: [Summary of charitable donors \(statcan.gc.ca\)](#)

<sup>30</sup> Taken from the following website: [Here’s how much Canadians are earning by province - Workopolis Blog](#)

<sup>31</sup> Alan Carr, [“God’s Word about Your Money \(Mark 12:41–44\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 971.

<sup>32</sup> Tony Evans, [“The Motivation of Stewardship,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.



as poor as the widow and to do so would mean threatening their very existence. And yet others don't give because they feel the church is too corrupt and will only spend their hard-earned money on frivolous, posh building materials while neglecting to take care of the poor of this world! Even though the widow had economic and religious reasons to not give she still did so because she loved and trusted God with her very life!<sup>33</sup> While one can always think of many excuses to not give, is not our indebtedness to the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of this world (1 Peter 1:19-20) more than sufficient of a reason to give to God what is rightly His?

### God Measures Your Gift by Your Motives (verses 43-44)

Am I suggesting that those who give large sums of money have given sacrificially and have honored God through their tithe? Not necessarily! As Jesus "critically and spiritually"<sup>34</sup>



evaluated the "clang" of the big donations of the rich and the "ting" of the meagre donation of the Widow He told the disciples "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They gave out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on" (verses 43-44)! From this story we learn that "God measures our giving, not by what we give, but by what we keep for ourselves."<sup>35</sup> Also, for our

giving to be a "sweet fragrance" unto God it must be given out of pure devotion to Him. One simply cannot offer "God token love while maintaining a bosom friendship with this world."<sup>36</sup> Those who "seek power, wealth, empire, and sensual gratifications"<sup>37</sup> cannot be submissive to God's will because they are trying to serve two masters (Matthew 6:24)!" Matthew 6:2 states

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<sup>33</sup> Tony Evans, "[The Motivation of Stewardship](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.

<sup>34</sup> Tony Evans, "[The Motivation of Stewardship](#)," in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.

<sup>35</sup> R. Alan Cole, [Mark: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 276–277.

<sup>36</sup> David E. Garland, [Mark](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 483.

<sup>37</sup> David E. Garland, [Mark](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 483.

that when we give to the needy, we are not to be like the Pharisees and announce it to the world to get praise from others but are to do so in a manner that gives God all the glory ... remember one only has a lot to give because God first gave it to you! What makes our offering of enormous value to God is “not the amount given but the cost to the giver!”<sup>38</sup> Since where your treasure is, there your heart will also be (Matthew 6:21), holy giving is one that trusts God so much that whatever He asks one will give with thanksgiving for it truly is an honor to give to He who bought one at the price of His very life (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)!

### Give Knowing We Need God

For our tithe unto God to be a sweet aroma unto Him it must be given out of love and utter dependence on He who sustains our very lives



(Colossians 1:16). “The initial call of Jesus to the fishermen beside the sea to leave all and ‘come and follow Me’ is perfectly filled in giving of two small lepta, which symbolized an undivided heart.”<sup>39</sup> Jesus taught that those who want to be His disciples “must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Him” (Matthew 16:24). This means trusting that God will always do good to those who love and obey Him ... no matter what the costs (Romans 8:28)! For example, even though the widow of 1 Kings 17 gave her very last meal to the prophet Elijah, which by human reasoning meant certain death,<sup>40</sup> she did so cheerfully, trusting God to provide and He did so for the “food that was given kept on coming until the rains came to bring it naturally!”<sup>41</sup> While God often blesses us “in direct proportion to our level of giving (Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6)”<sup>42</sup> this is not to be our primary motivation for such an attitude is not

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<sup>38</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior](#), vol. 2, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 128–129.

<sup>39</sup> James R. Edwards, [The Gospel according to Mark](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 382.

<sup>40</sup> Tony Evans, [“The Motivation of Stewardship,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.

<sup>41</sup> Tony Evans, [“The Motivation of Stewardship,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.

<sup>42</sup> Alan Carr, [“God’s Word about Your Money \(Mark 12:41–44\),”](#) in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 971.

sacrificial giving but merely giving to purchase something better! We give not to receive more from God, which often happens, but because He has already given us every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) and without Him we simply cannot exist! We also give because doing so rightly expresses our “feelings, emotions, desires and passions”<sup>43</sup> to love God and one another! Such a person does not give to attain status or approval of people but to please the Father in heaven. Even though the widow “was destitute and without ‘human honor,’<sup>44</sup> she still gave because the love she had received from God was of infinite value and she wanted to express it by giving beyond her means and in utter trust in her Lord, Savior and King!

## Conclusion

I stated at the beginning of this sermon my goal was not to “hit you up” for money but to provide you with sound doctrine on tithing so that you might be good stewards by sharing with one another the blessings you have received. There is much we can learn from the story of the Widow’s Mite. First, the Lord is still critically and spiritually watching and evaluating our



giving! If the Lord with His nail print holes in His hands passed the plate to you how would this affect your giving?<sup>45</sup> Would you truly be like Ananias and Sapphira and try to hold back sacrificial giving (Acts 5:1-11) by boldly stating, you have given all you can? Could you with any kind of integrity state after paying your bills you have nothing to give when the poor of this world survive on so little? While one might sigh a breath of fresh air that one is no longer under the Old Testament covenant that requires

giving 10 percent, one quickly gasps to learn in the New Testament believers are called to give sacrificially to the point that the value of the gift given is determined by what one keeps! Second, even if you are poor would you truly think your “two mites” would ring so little in the heart of your Savior who is passing you the plate when His praise of the Widow has rung in hearts of so many believers? The truth is no gift, whether of money, time, or talent, is too

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<sup>43</sup> David E. Garland, [Mark](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 483–484.

<sup>44</sup> David E. Garland, [Mark](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 484.

<sup>45</sup> Tony Evans, [“The Motivation of Stewardship,”](#) in *Tony Evans Sermon Archive* (Tony Evans, 2015), Mk 12:41–44.



insignificant to give,<sup>46</sup> if it is given sacrificially in love of God and one another! Third, since the Lord who knit you in your mother's womb still weighs our actions<sup>47</sup> that are written in the Book of Life (1 Samuel 2:3; Psalms 139),<sup>48</sup> the attitude and amount we give reflects and has a profound effect on our relationship with our Savior. And finally, it is not a burden but an honor to give that which is not our own to God and trust our Rock and Savior to always do good to us because we have been adopted as His very own children!

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<sup>46</sup> James R. Edwards, [\*The Gospel according to Mark\*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 382.

<sup>47</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [\*Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior\*](#), vol. 2, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 130.

<sup>48</sup> James R. Edwards, [\*The Gospel according to Mark\*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 381.