

SERIES: GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

SUBJECT: VALUES AND PRIORITIES

SCRIPTURE: MARK 12:41-44

SERMON NO. 28

Introduction

All of this year we have been getting to know the things that are important to our Lord, so we can make them important to us.

Our use of money and possessions tell a great deal about us. It tells what's important to us, and what we're like deep down inside, where no one else sees where our values and priorities lie.

I. THE STORY OF THE WIDOW.

This scene takes place in the Court of Women, found in the outer area of the great Temple at Jerusalem. It was called the Court of Women, not because it was to be used just by the women of Israel, but because it was one of the places in the Temple where women could freely come and go. And in that court were thirteen trumpet-shaped boxes into which God's people put their offerings for the Temple's various ministries.

The statement that she was a poor widow actually means she was without a money-earning male as a partner, most widows in Israelite society lived lives of agonizing destitution, vulnerability, and were utterly dependent upon the charity of others.

Widows were generally regarded as people to whom offerings from the Temple treasury were to be given, not from whom they

were ever expected. And yet here's where the story of this particular woman becomes amazing.

1. This widow came and put in two "very small copper coins".

These coins equaled about one sixty-fourth of an average day's wages. It would seem like a very insignificant amount to just about anyone, for sure it was a ridiculously small amount when you compared to the "large amounts" that many rich people were throwing in. Jesus tells us, that it was "everything she had" to live on." She just cared that much for the work of God's temple.

Illustration: In the early days of Sunday Schools, parents wanted their children to attend. A little girl was told by a church in Philadelphia that they couldn't take her because there wasn't enough room.

Two years later, the little girl contracted smallpox and eventually died. What was surprising was what her mother found underneath her pillow when she cleaned out the little girl's room. It was a small coin purse containing 57 pennies which she must have stowed away one-by-one. Along with the pennies was a note, written very clearly in her childlike hand. It read: "To help build the Little Temple bigger, so more children can go to Sunday school."

The pastor of that church told this story to his congregation. Somehow the newspapers got a hold of the story, first in Philadelphia and then across the country. Soon the 57 pennies grew. They were joined by gifts of \$1,000, \$10,000, \$100,000, \$1,000,000.

Today, you can see the outcome if you visit Philadelphia. Now there is a church that will seat 3,300 people; there is Temple

University; Temple Hospital; and a large Temple Sunday School building that has been the spiritual home to tens of thousands of children over the years. And it all began with 57 pennies and the heart of a child that wanted everyone to know Jesus.

Why did this poor woman make such an incredible sacrifice?

Maybe she believed that much in the work of God's Temple in Jerusalem. Or maybe she just believed that much in God. After all, you just don't make a sacrifice like that without some kind of backup plan to meet your legitimate needs. To give everything would have to mean that you would have some kind of confidence that you will be okay.

Maybe she knew God's promise in...Malachi 3:10 **Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.** We don't know for sure if the poor woman was trusting in God's provision that much, or if she simply believed in the work of the Temple.

II. HER ACTIONS DIDN'T GO UNNOTICED. (41). **And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.**

Why was Jesus sitting there?

1. Giving shows where our heart is. Why does Jesus care about what people give or how they give it?

Why did Jesus make 714 references to love; 371 references to prayer; 272 references to faith and believing... AND 2,172 references to money and possessions? Why do almost half of Jesus' 38 parables focus on how to handle finances and possessions? Why

do approximately 1 out of every 10 verses in the gospels deal with the subject of money?

Jesus made a statement about stewardship in Luke 12:34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

In over forty years I have never preached a tithing sermon, only mentioned it in the study of God's word. I have never liked to talk about tithing and few church members like to hear about it. This statement of Jesus about stewardship in Luke 12:34 is very hard for all of us to hear.

2. We kindly want to tip and honk. We want to remind Jesus of our good deeds in helping others, and how faithful we are in church attendance, as if that offsets our giving. I can imagine Jesus saying, "I'm really pleased about all of that. You're on the right track. But in my opinion, those things don't tell me anywhere near as much about your true heart as the way you spend your money. Tell me how you spent your assets last year, and I'll tell you more about your personal priorities, your ultimate loyalties than maybe you've even admitted to yourself."

A gift of 57 cents would be just the sort of thing that would delight God from one person, while a gift of \$570,000 might be too small a gift from another-because it didn't come close to sacrifice. You see, in our service to His kingdom, God does not expect equal sums from all of us; but He does ask for equal sacrifice.

3. Why is sacrifice so important? Every parent knows the answer to that. And every follower of Jesus who has truly thought seriously about the Cross has some clue.

When you really love someone, you tend to give things up to meet his or her needs and interests. Maybe that's why Jesus wasn't particularly impressed by the "large amounts" that the rich people dropped into the Temple coffers that day. Maybe they were only tipping or honking, and not really giving from their heart.

But when that widow dropped those two tiny coins into that treasury box... when she acted in love toward God, as God acts in love towards us, by giving everything she had... that gift which was too small to be heard by the next person in line, made a sound that clanged so loudly across eternity that God himself sat up and took notice.

CONCLUSION

In this story of the widow and her coins. Maybe you're seeing how little of ourselves we really sacrifice for the One who left behind the glory of heaven, and crawled through the mud of human existence, and willingly went to the bone-crushing pain of Calvary. Jesus gave...not just 1 or 5 or even 10 percent-but He gave everything that He had, so that you and I might be saved.