

Sermon: Financial Stewardship

Bible Passage: Mark 12:41-44; 2 Cor 8:1-9

I. Some introductory remarks:

1. Jesus' public ministry ends with this nameless widow with the expression "everything she had" (verse 42)
2. Jesus' public ministry started with Mark 1:17 "follow me" and ends with "everything she had" of this passage
3. Jesus' passion begins from Ch. 13
4. Jesus' passion narrative begins and ends with two nameless women, who Jesus appreciates greatly for their giving
5. Eventually Jesus imitates these two women in giving Himself completely 100%
6. This passage teaches the maturity of true discipleship

II. Some Observations of the Passage:

1. Narrator's comparisons:
 - a. Many vs "a" (vv. 41-42)
 - b. Wealthy vs. poor (vv. 41-42)
 - c. Abundance vs. poverty
2. Jesus zeroes (cf. "amen") in on the widow (PS: Jesus is not against the wealthy)
 - a. Jesus sitting next to the treasure is not to judge the givers, but to teach the disciples about finance and faith
 - b. The expression "all she had" expresses her faith
 - c. The widow's giving "all she had" is a true fulfillment of the call to discipleship to follow Jesus by losing one's life (8:35)
3. According to Jesus, the poor widow gave more than the "many wealthy people"
 - a. Two lepta: the smallest and least valuable coins
 - b. It was worth one-half of a quadrans (for Latin readers)
 - c. The amount is extremely negligible, but Jesus appreciates it greatly
 - d. Though her giving to God was going to hurt her, she gave—it could have caused her next meal
 - e. For Jesus, the value of a gift is not the amount given, but the cost to the giver (J. R. Edwards)
 - f. When she gave all she had, she expressed her trust in God and His provisions for her
4. James R. Edwards, a NT scholar says:
 - a. No gift, whether of money, time, or talent, is too insignificant to give, if it is given to God
 - b. And what is truly given to God, regardless how small and insignificant, is transformed into a pearl of great price.
5. According to Jesus, the widow gave 100%—(consider Jesus' perspective) The poor widow gave more than the "many wealthy people"

III. What does Jesus teach his disciples through this incident?

1. Jesus teaches a "willing-giving"—giving to the Lord and His work willingly, over giving legalistically
2. Jesus teaches that His followers need to demonstrate "unselfish generosity" when it comes to giving to God

IV. General Notes on “stewardship”

1. The New Testament does not teach “tithes” for Christians
2. The New Testament teaches that believers do not relate to God by means of the Law which includes “tithes”
3. Believers must not give to God out of compulsion
4. It is a matter between God and a believer
5. A third party (pastor or elder) must not impose it on the believers. However, believers must be taught about it
6. Paul calls giving to God a type of “grace” (an enablement) or “grace giving” (2 Cor 8:1)
7. According to Paul, “grace giving” is carried out with joy and generosity (2 Cor 8:2) by those who are spiritually regenerated
8. Giving (ideally) needs to be proportionate to the grace one receives from God
9. It is never legislated or forced upon, but it is spontaneous and the barometer of one’s love for God

TAKE AWAY

1. Give your resources to God willingly because your giving demonstrates your assessment about Him
2. The Crossroad Church does not emphasize or promote “tithes;” instead we teach “stewardship” or “partnership” or “grace giving” to God
3. Develop an annual and monthly “giving-plan”: Our expenses are:
 - a. support for the fulltime & part time ministers
 - b. rent
 - c. Missions and benevolence