

The Widow's Mite

Mark 12:38-44; Luke 21:1-3

38. As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, 39. and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 40. They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely." 41. Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. 42. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. 43. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. 44. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on." - **Mark 12:38-44**

Luke 21:1 As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2. He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3. "I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Mark 7:10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' 11. But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban' (that is, a gift devoted to God), 12. then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. 13. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

Devour Widows' Houses

Matthew 23:14 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Mark 12:40 Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Luke 20:47 Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

The Widow's Mite (Lepton)



Considering that a denarius is the common pay for a day's work in Jesus' era, a *lepton* is just a tiny, tiny portion. If a laborer can earn US \$100 to \$200 in our day, then 1/128 of that would be 75¢ to \$1.50. Two lepta appears to have been the minimum lawful amount of a temple contribution.[10] At \$8.00 hour it would be .50 or less – two bits.

Trumpets I and II - half-shekel Temple-tribute of the current.

Trumpet III those women who had to bring **turtledoves** for a burnt- and a sin-offering dropped their equivalent in money.

Trumpet IV similarly received the value of the offerings of **young pigeons**.

In **Trumpet V** contributions for the **wood** used in the Temple;

in **Trumpet VI** for the **incense**

in **Trumpet VII** for the **golden vessels** for the ministry were deposited.

Trumpets IX, X, XI, XII, and XIII 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. In all probability this space where the thirteen

Trumpets were placed was the 'treasury,' where Jesus taught on that memorable Feast of Tabernacles (John 7 and 8; see specially 8:20). We can also understand how, from the peculiar and known destination of each of these thirteen 'trumpets,' the Lord could distinguish the contributions of the rich who cast in 'of their abundance' from that of the poor widow who of her 'penury' had given 'all the living' that she had (Mark 12:41; Luke 21:1).

Principles of Giving

1. **Secret** – let no man know (Matthew 6:4)
2. **Faithful** – every Sunday (1 Corinthians 16:2)
3. **Proportionate** – each of you (1 Corinthians 16:2)
4. **Willing** – as determined in heart (2 Corinthians 9:7)
5. **Sacrificial** – beyond ability (2 Corinthians 8:3)

Principles of Sowing

2 Corinthians 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both *shall be* alike good.

- ☐ Stanley Tam – silver
- ☐ LeTourneau – earthmovers
- ☐ Testimonies of Tithers - Joe

Principles of Stewardship

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Luke 12:48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

Principles of Sacrifice

2 Cor. 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

2 Cor 8:3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even **beyond their ability**.

Danger of Misinterpretation

Preachers harangued that if people would only take a lesson from the Bible, giving their last coins like the story of the widow's mite, or giving all that they had, like the woman who gave her last bit of food to the prophet Elijah, then they too could reign like kings and queens. It could all be true for everyone, just like those Christians on the TV screen.

The devouring of widows houses continues today.

DO WHAT YOU CAN

*I am only one,
But still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
But still I can do something.
And because I cannot do everything,
I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.*

EDWARD HALE 1822

The Power of a Dime

Mark 12:42-44 and Luke 21:2-4 tell the story of the widow who gave all she had, **two "mites"**. A number of tiny copper coins circulated in Judaea during the time of Christ so there is no way to establish any particular design as "the" Widow's Mite. A bronze widow's mite, or **Lepton**, was minted by Alexander Jannaeus, King of Judaea, 103 - 76 B.C. and had such little value it almost incalculable. These cheap coins were produced in vast quantities through the first century BC and first century AD. The workmanship employed in the production of these coins varied mediocre at best. The sizes of individual specimens also vary greatly (some were halves of the whole 'prutah' which itself was worth half of a Roman quadrans, **the smallest denomination then being produced at Rome**). Whatever the exact coins, the gift of the Widow was certainly a small amount of money.

Today money is cheap. But a dime is still a dime and still made of silver. A dime is worth ten cents. We used to have dime stores, a dime a dozen, and dime novels. Today a dime doesn't buy much. It won't buy a cup of coffee, a newspaper, or an ice cream cone, or candy bar, or bottle of pop. A dime won't keep the parking meter running. Are dimes dead, doomed, or dammed to extinction? No, a dime is still a dime. It may have eroded in its buying power in our Madison Avenue culture. But a dime is still a deal. God still values the dime. It is called a tithe, one tenth, or one dime of every dollar.

During the Great Depression it was often heard on the streets of American cities, "Hey buddy, spare a dime?" Even then it didn't hurt? Giving a dime is not a big deal. You say it all the time. But when a man makes more he tends to want to hoard more. Suddenly that same dime is more costly to let go. When you only made a dollar, slapping down a dime for a soda pop was no big deal. It's just a dime. But when you made your first \$1,000 per week check it suddenly became really hard to plunk down \$100 in the offering plate. Why? It is still just one thin dime on the dollar. Nothing has changed. Or has it? You have changed. Now there's a pun, change changed you.

Think of the widow's mite as two small dimes. Perhaps in today's equivalent she only had received from begging one measly dollar – 100 pennies, ten dimes, or four quarters. But a deal was a deal to her. God's deal is always a dime per dollar whether you have million or a dollar it is always the same.

Quote:

"Hey buddy, spare a dime?" ~ famous quote of the depression

Read: Luke 6:38 - Give Shaken Together Running Over

38. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Stanley Tam Story

Most of us have heard of Stanley Tam. He wrote his life story in a book titled, "God Owns My Business." What we don't always remember is that it was not always that way. Here is the story.

Stanley tells the story of being 20 years old and having a great and innovative idea for extracting some of the 16 tons of metal that photographers wash down the drain. He recounts one day when he had spent his last 13 cents on a hamburger and gas for his car. He was 170 miles from home and no way that 13 cents worth of gas was going to get him there. Along the highway he saw a hitchhiker and though his father had warned him against picking up strangers this time he did. The man turned out to be a local farmer who offered to pay for his gas to them home to next town. Stanley says that began to teach him lessons in trusting God for his needs.

A few years later his new business was booming and it was time to add a partner. Tam had a great idea, why not ask God to be his partner. So he arranged for an attorney to draw up the papers to legally make God his partner. The first thought he was crazy, but the second needed the money and did it. His partner was to get 51% of all the profits in the business. Tam's business turned into three businesses and he prospered just as God promised.

In 1955 God spoke to Stanley Tam once again. God wanted to buy him out, lot stock and barrel. God asked him if he were willing to turn all of his business ventures over to the Lord. Realizing that God did not want Tam to have just earthly treasures that would soon fade after his death, but God wanted him to store treasures in heaven where nothing could ever take it away. So, Tam once again made a deal with God. "You can have it all," he said. In the process God bless Stanley Tam both here and in eternity. The Lord also healed him of cancer. Today more than 80 years old he continues to travel telling people how wonderful it is to turn things over to a loving Savior who gave you all you have so you could bless others.

Read: 2 Cor. 6:19 - Owning Nothing but Possessing All Things

LeTouneau Story

Robert Gilmour LeTourneau has a story to tell. It is a story of God's amazing grace. He was once quoted as saying, "God's shovel is bigger than mine."

LeTourneau dropped out of school by the time he was fourteen. Then he bounced around from job to job, learning but not making much money. In 1904 he went to a Portland crusade and gave his heart to Christ. He married at 28, lost their first child in infancy, and broke his neck in a car crash. By the time he was 35 years old LeTouneau was \$5,000 in debt, and enormous sum back then.

A banker agreed to give him an extended loan for that amount. When asked how he would repay it LeTourneau simply held up his two big hands and said, "With these." Soon after at a revival at his church his heart was stirred and convicted of his self-reliant nature. That night he prayed, "Lord, if you will forgive me and help me, I'll do anything you want me to do from this day on." A day later a preacher told him that God not only needs preachers and missionaries, He needs businessmen who will serve as a supply line to those on the front lines.

LeTourneau gave what he had to God, those two big hands and a bigger heart. God anointed him with wisdom to create earthmoving equipment that did not exist at the time. He holds over 200 patents for earthmoving equipment. God blessed him and used him enormously during World War II so much so that 70% of the earthmoving equipment of the war was his or because of his patents.

Later in life he committed 90% of his income to God and was content to live on the leftovers of 10%. He bought a hospital and turned it into a University. He created a colony in Liberia to bring Christ to the "savages." All this was possible because one man refused to be possessed by his money and gave it back to God in shovels full, but found that God's shovel was bigger than his.

Quote:

*"It is not what you'd do with a million, If riches should e'er be your lot.
But what you are doing at present, With the dollar and a quarter you've got."*

~ R.G. LeTourneau

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." ~ Jim Elliott, martyred missionary to Ecuador

The Great Depression: A Brief Overview

America's "Great Depression" began with the dramatic crash of the stock market on "Black Thursday", October 24, 1929 when 16 million shares of stock were quickly sold by panicking investors who had lost faith in the American economy. At the height of the Depression in 1933, nearly 25% of the Nation's total work force, 12,830,000 people, were unemployed. of a population of 122,775,046

Wage income for workers who were lucky enough to have kept their jobs fell almost 43% between 1929 and 1933. It was the worst economic disaster in American history. Farm prices fell so drastically that many farmers lost their homes and land. Many went hungry.

Bit/Two Bits

One of the more frequently asked questions on this site's discussion group is where the term two bits comes from. Most people know that it means 25 cents, but the origin is a mystery to them.

Bit, which ultimately comes from the Old English bita, originally meant a morsel of food. From there it went on to denote any small thing, particularly a fraction of a larger whole. By **1683 in the English-speaking American colonies** bit had come to denote a **Spanish/Mexican real**, or **one eighth of a peso**. The peso was a common form of currency in the colonies. And in the early days of the United States, pesos were commonly used as dollar coins and real coins represented twelve and half cents, hence two bits equaled 25 cents.

2 Corinthians 8

1. And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2. Out of the most severe trials, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3. **For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.** Entirely on their own, 4. they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. 5. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. 6. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. 7. But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us --see that you also excel in this grace of giving. 8. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. **9. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.** 10. And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. 11. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. 12. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. 13. Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. 14. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, 15. as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."

1 Corinthians 16

1. Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

2 Corinthians 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:6. Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

8. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 9. As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." 10. Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

11. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. 12. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

THE TREASURY

The inner area of the Temple contained three courts. The easternmost court was the Court of the Women, and it contained the Temple treasury where people donated their money (Mk 12:41-44). Three gates led into this court, one on the north, one on the south, and a third on the east. This third gate on the east side is almost certainly the "Beautiful Gate" that was mentioned in Acts 3. A fourth gate, which was much larger and ornate led from the Court of the Women west into the Court of Israel (women could proceed no further), which was elevated 15 steps higher than the Court of Women.

According to the Mishnah (Middoth 2,5) the Women's Court was just over 200 feet square between bounding lines. Each court on the outside was 60 feet square. The colonnade ran around the court, and within it, against the wall, the thirteen chests, or 'trumpets,' for charitable contributions were placed. 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.

Their specific objects were carefully marked on them. Nine were for the receipt of what was legally due by worshippers; the other four for strictly voluntary gifts. According to tradition Edersheim says:

Trumpets I and II were appropriated to the half-shekel Temple-tribute of the current and of the past year.

Into **Trumpet III** those women who had to bring turtledoves for a burnt - and a sin-offering dropped their equivalent in money, which was daily taken out and a corresponding number of turtledoves offered. This not only saved the labour of so many separate sacrifices, but spared the modesty of those who might not wish to have the occasion or the circumstances of their offering to be publicly known. Into this trumpet Mary the mother of Jesus must have dropped the value of her offering (Luke 2:22,24) when the aged Simeon took the infant Saviour 'in his arms, and blessed God.'

Trumpet IV similarly received the value of the offerings of young pigeons. In **Trumpet V** contributions for the wood used in the Temple; in **Trumpet VI** for the incense, and in **Trumpet VII** for the golden vessels for the ministry were deposited. 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 VIII. Similarly, **Trumpets IX, X, XI, XII, and XIII** 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. In all probability this space where the thirteen

Trumpets were placed was the 'treasury,' where Jesus taught on that memorable Feast of Tabernacles (John 7 and 8; see specially 8:20). We can also understand how, from the peculiar and known destination of each of these thirteen 'trumpets,' the Lord could distinguish the contributions of the rich who cast in 'of their

abundance' from that of the poor widow who of her 'penury' had given 'all the living' that she had (Mark 12:41; Luke 21:1). But there was also a special treasury-chamber, into which at certain times they carried the contents of the thirteen chests; and, besides, what was called 'a chamber of the silent,' where devout persons secretly deposited money, afterwards secretly employed for educating children of the pious poor.

It is probably in ironical allusion to the form and name of these treasure -chests that the Lord, making use of the word 'trumpet,' describes the conduct of those who, in their almsgiving, sought glory from men as 'sounding a trumpet' before them (Matthew 6:2)--that is, carrying before them, as it were, in full display one of these trumpet-shaped alms-boxes (literally called in the Talmud, 'trumpets'), and, as it were, sounding it. *

The allusion is all the more pointed, when we bear in mind that each of these trumpets had a mark to tell its special object. It seems strange that this interpretation should not have occurred to any of the commentators, who have always found the allusion such a crux interpretum. An article in the Bible

Educator has since substantially adopted this view, adding that trumpets were blown when the alms were collected. But for the latter statement there is no historical authority whatever, and it would contravene the religious spirit of the times.