

Generous Giving

Generous Giving Pleases God

AIM: To encourage participants to give generously to God.

HYMN: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:41-44

LEADER'S RESOURCE: Jesus watched many people give their offerings in the temple. The rich gave large amounts. A poor widow gave a small amount—two mites. The rich gave of their surplus; she gave out of her need—what she needed to live on. Theirs were gifts of convenience; her gift was a sacrifice. She received praise from Jesus, not because of the amount of her gift, but because of the greatness of her sacrifice.

The measure of her gift is seen not in the amount of the gift but in the amount she had left. Her giving involved self-giving, for she gave all that she had.

Jews who were considered faithful were expected to give tithes and offerings, but the poor widow gave much more than was expected. There was no law requiring her to give that much. She gave freely and generously, not just to satisfy a legal demand but to express her love and devotion to God.

Her gift was great because her love for God was great. She gave a gift because of her faith. She trusted God for the future; so, she gave Him all that she had. Hers was a radical faith, and she showed reckless abandon in expressing her faith through giving. Jesus commended this act of faith in and devotion to God.

Her giving was an act of worship. She gave to God at the place of worship in keeping with the biblical teaching: "*Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name: bring an offering, and come into His courts. Worship the Lord in holy attire; tremble before Him, all the earth*" (Ps. 96:8-9; see also Deut. 12:5-26; 16:2-17).

Such generous giving is Godlike. God is the great Giver. He created all things and "*richly supplies us with all things to enjoy*" (1 Tim. 6:17). As an act of grace, God gave His Son for our salvation (Rom. 5:6-11). To give generously and graciously is to give like God. We can never give as much as God has given to us. In fact, we can't give anything which He has not already given us.

Generous giving demonstrates that Jesus Christ is Lord. When we accept the lordship of Jesus Christ in our lives and recognize His lordship over all things, we give as He leads. He is both our Teacher and our Example. And He taught and practiced sacrificial giving.

As we evaluate our giving, it will be helpful to ask:

- Is our giving to God sacrificial? Does it require a change in lifestyle?
- How much do we have left after we give?
- Have we used the tithe as a guide in developing the grace of giving?
- Does our giving express the level of our love and devotion to God?
- Does our level of giving demonstrate faith in God?
- What does our giving say about our character? Our identity?
- What does our giving say about our relationship to God?

Ask God to grant us the faith, the love, and the commitment to give generously to God. May we be guided by the Scripture and the Spirit of the living Christ in our giving.

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