

Lessons At The Temple

Introduction. In Acts 20:35, Paul reveals one of Jesus' sayings outside of the gospels: "It is more blessed to give than receive." Part of being a Christian is knowing about not only our responsibilities, but also the acts we perform that help us grow.

This lesson on giving is not designed to solicit funds or communicate a hidden message to give more. The purpose is to show you how to be a better steward of God's graciousness.

Every person works within an order of priority. Most of us probably respect our relationship with God first, our family second, and our money and possessions third. If we understand our duty to God to be His servant, our duty to our friends and family to teach them, then where does that leave our money and possessions? On the Tuesday before Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus was at the temple and made an observation about giving that is going to help us today (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4).

I. ***There Is A Treasury In God's House***

- A. False teachers try to show that church treasuries are unscriptural. The scriptures support the fact that there was an established treasury for money given to the Lord.
- B. Jesus and His disciples had a treasury.
 - 1. Judas was the treasurer (John 12:6).
 - 2. Various women contributed to the support of Jesus and the apostles (Luke 8:1-3).
 - 3. The funds sometimes were not sufficient to take care of every situation (John 6:5-7).
- C. The saints at Jerusalem had a treasury.
 - 1. Funds were laid at the apostle's feet (Acts 4:34-35).
 - 2. Note the examples of Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:36-37; 5:2).
 - 3. There is a distinction between church funds and individual funds (Acts 5:4).
- D. Other churches had treasuries also.
 - 1. The church at Corinth had a treasury (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). The collection was to be made on the day when the church assembled. Why would this have been required if it were to be done at home?
 - 2. The church at Philippi had a treasury (Philippians 4:15-17). Paul could not take their gift if they did not have it from a collection on the first day of the week.
 - 3. Paul took church funds to work at Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:8; Acts 18:5). Those funds were in a church's treasury.

- E. The Lord's work takes money. Providing a place to assemble, paying a preacher, teaching brethren and non-Christians, and helping needy saints requires funds.

II. ***The Lord Watches The Treasury***

- A. In Herod's temple, there were 13 trumpet-like chests placed at intervals around the walls of the court of women where worshipers could contribute. Mark's phrase, "beheld how the people cast money into the treasury," indicates that the Lord was continually observing the different people contributing.
- B. The Lord always knows what we are doing (2 Chronicles 16:9). He is not indifferent to our actions. He knows exactly what you feel when you sing, pray, listen to a sermon, partake of the Lord's supper, and give (John 2:25; Acts 15:8). He knows it as well as He could watch those people contribute at the temple.

III. ***The Lord Knows Our Circumstances***

- A. The adjective "poor" meant this woman was in extreme poverty. It was used to describe a person who literally had nothing and was in imminent danger of starvation.
- B. The widow was in very different circumstances than her wealthy predecessors.
 - 1. The wealthy had given what they did not need. In so doing, they demonstrated no self-denial (Mark 8:34).
 - 2. Jesus saw her potential and commended her for the purpose in her heart (2 Corinthians 9:7). He did not measure what she gave with what others gave.
- C. God is imminently fair, but that fairness can also be a double-edged sword. If we are greedy and walk by sight we will be judged (cf. Matthew 6:33-34; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

IV. ***The Lord Knows Our Contributions***

- A. For the benefit of his Roman readers, Mark states the woman put in "two mites, which make a farthing." The word "mite" came from a word signifying "crumb" or "morsel." The coins were the smallest forms of Jewish currency, much like our penny.
- B. It is tempting to measure the value of our actions quantitatively rather than qualitatively. God, though, looks at the inward rather than the outward. So God loves a cheerful giver, not necessarily a big giver (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). Giving needs to come from a willing heart (Exodus 35:29; 1 Chronicles 29:9-10; Matthew 10:8).
- C. Sometimes we are tempted to think that we give and sacrifice, but no one can recognize our effort and commend us (cf. Matthew 6:1-4).

God knows what we give, and the commending will be done by Him (2 Corinthians 10:12).

V. ***The Lord Teaches Us To Give***

- A. The church's work is financed by our giving, but is that the only reason to give? Is there a deeper meaning to our giving?
- B. In 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul addressed the deeper significance of giving.
 - 1. Giving demonstrated their graciousness (2 Corinthians 8:7).
 - 2. Giving demonstrated their love (2 Corinthians 8:8).
 - 3. Giving demonstrated Christ's graciousness (2 Corinthians 8:9).
 - 4. Giving allowed the brethren to have equality (2 Corinthians 8:13-15).
- C. Paul commended the Macedonians as he observed their principles of giving.
 - 1. They gave liberally (2 Corinthians 8:3). They did not withhold their contribution from a good cause. The saints in Judea needed to be cared for, and the Macedonians were willing to give what they could not spare. Is this not what the widow did?
 - 2. They did not have to ask or be asked (2 Corinthians 8:3). Many Christians have to be "arm-twisted" to give. Can we not let go of money and trust in God?
 - 3. They gave themselves first (2 Corinthians 8:5). If you are not willing to give yourself to the Lord, you will not find any joy in giving to the church, helping your brethren, or helping your neighbor.

Conclusion. Giving to God involves self-sacrifice in a society that takes a little more every year. We tend to let what should be a priority fall to a point of contributing out of our overflow. We divide what is left over after all the bills are paid. God deserves more than that. He has been so good to us. We need to be good to Him!

In Mark 10:28-31, Peter commented on the cost of discipleship, but the Lord responded with the true cost of being a disciple. The widow had that attitude and she was not even under the New Covenant. Although she did not have the words of Jesus and Paul, she understood her duty to God and the correct outlook on life. When we give something that means a lot to us, we come a little closer to understanding God giving His only Son (John 3:16). How do you treat those possessions that are most valuable to you (Matthew 6:19-24)?