

# WHY JESUS WATCHES OUR WEALTH

In a few minutes, we will pass around offering plates, and people will put money in them as a gift to God. Little kids will put in a quarter, and grown-ups will put in a check or some cash in an envelope.

So if Jesus were in your pew—I mean, he is, but if he were sitting there with his physical body—what would he do when he passed the offering plate to you? We might expect him to look away, mind his own business. We've decided that's the polite thing to do. That's what I do. When I pass the plate, my eyes quickly find something else to look at so nobody thinks I'm watching them.

But Jesus doesn't share our shyness. At least, he didn't. When he went to worship at the temple, he watched people give their offerings. In a few minutes, when we pass the offering plate, Jesus will watch us too. Why? Why does he care what we do with our money? A close look at the gospel reading for today shows us...

## WHY JESUS WATCHES OUR WEALTH.

In there, we'll see three truths to apply to our giving.

- 1. Jesus cares about your gift.**
- 2. Jesus doesn't need your money.**
- 3. The gift reveals the heart of the giver.**

### **Mark 12:41-44 (NIV)**

**<sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.**

**<sup>43</sup> Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup> They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."**

## JESUS CARES ABOUT YOUR OFFERING

It's surprising that Jesus watched people giving their offerings, but do you know when he did it? It was the Tuesday before he died. Ninety-six hours until Jesus was nailed to a cross to save the world, and what did he spend his time doing? He walks into the temple courtyard, where men and women of every nation could gather, and he sits down across from the treasury and watches people give offerings. They did not pass offering plates back then. They collected offerings as we did last year. They set up a few donation boxes in the entryway so that people could give offerings on their way in or out of the temple. And Jesus sat down across from one of the boxes and watched.

Picture Jesus doing that today. Imagine Jesus walking into church, and we're all like, "Jesus! You should preach today! Or pray with us! Teach our Bible class!" But instead, he asks how much is in your offering envelope. Crazy right? But that's what he did. The point: Jesus cares about your offering.

## JESUS DOESN'T NEED YOUR MONEY

One reason people might be nervous about that is that they think, "Jesus only wants my money." But this story makes it clear that he doesn't. If Jesus were after your money, then the best offerings would be the biggest ones, but that's not what he said in the story. Remember, many rich people put in large amounts, and the widow put in two coins worth less than a penny. People smarter than me estimated those coins were worth  $1/64^{\text{th}}$  of a denarius, which is what a laborer got for a day's work-  $1/64^{\text{th}}$  of a day's wage. What would that be today? If a laborer earns \$15 per hour for 8 hours, that's \$120 for a day's wages.  $1/64^{\text{th}}$  of that is \$1.87. The woman gave two bucks, and what did Jesus say about her? **"This poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others."** (Mark 12:43) Clearly, Jesus is not just after our money. He measures our gifts in something other than dollars. It was the smallest in dollars, but Jesus said it was the most. That's because Jesus doesn't need your money.

That's still true, you know. Jesus doesn't need your money. Of course, he doesn't. He already has it! What did we recite at the beginning of our service today? **"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world**

**and all who live in it.” (Psalm 24:1)** So if I or any other church leader ever say, “You better give more money; otherwise Jesus’ isn’t going to know what to do!” Ignore us. Jesus doesn’t need your money.

But if Jesus doesn’t need your money, why does he care about your offering? Because there’s something Jesus desperately wants, and it’s not your money; it’s your heart. That’s why the third truth from this story is so important.

## **THE GIFT REVEAL THE HEART OF THE GIVER**

If you don’t believe that one, next valentine’s day, try giving your girl this special gift: Instead of doing chocolates or flowers or a weekend getaway, go outside and collect a bunch of sticks from the ground. Give her sticks! Would she love it? Well, there’s nothing wrong with sticks, but that present reveals the heart of the giver—not a lot of thoughtfulness or effort went into collecting sticks! But what if a four-year-old did that for his mom? I bet that would go over a little better—and not because the sticks are any different! It’s not about the gift, but the gift reveals the heart of the giver. And a little four-year-old heart that wants to get something for his mama—that’s a lovely heart.

So, when Jesus watched people putting their gifts in the temple treasury, it wasn’t about the money. He cared about their offerings because their gifts revealed something about their hearts. It’s worth noting that he didn’t say anything bad about the rich people who put in large amounts. Big offerings from folks with financial wealth, those can reveal love for God and a generous heart.

But when that widow gave her two small coins, what did that reveal about her heart? Well, Jesus said she gave all she had, all she had to live on. She was not giving the frosting on her cake! She was giving her daily bread. Her gift revealed that her heart loved God more than anything, even more than her own life. Her gift revealed that she trusted God to take care of her. That’s why Jesus was watching the offerings because gifts reveal the heart of the giver.

## **WHAT DO YOUR GIFTS REVEAL ABOUT YOUR HEART?**

So what do your gifts to God reveal about your heart? I can't answer that for you because the pastors at Mount Olive don't know how much each person gives. But Jesus knows, and you know. If you're a member of this church, you got an offerings statement in your mailbox this week, along with a worksheet to help you think through what you're giving to the Lord.

I don't know what your offerings are like, but I know what your heart is like because I've got the same kind of heart. It's infected with selfishness. My heart is hard-wired to think that I'm number one, my needs and my wants get met first, or maybe my kid comes first, and God third or fourth. If you saw my calendar, if you could read my mind, if you saw my bank account, it would reveal my heart. What do your gifts reveal about your heart?

## **WHAT DOES GOD'S GIFT REVEAL ABOUT HIS HEART?**

But, you know, that is not the most relevant question today. Way more importantly, what does God's gift reveal about his heart? If I was giving a gift to someone like you, or worse, someone like me, I wouldn't even give myself a pile of sticks! And we deserve from God a stick whooping us on the backside for our selfishness. He should put us in last place and send us to hell because we often put him in last place.

You don't have to guess what's in God's heart. His gift reveals his heart. This is from **2 Corinthians 8:9**,

**"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich."**

Jesus was not like that widow in the temple because he had ultimate riches. He was the prince of heaven, owner of everything. Remember, **"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it!"** But what did he do? He did like the widow, and he gave everything for you. How do you think Jesus felt, the ruler of the universe when he was crammed inside Mary's uterus? How did God the Father feel on Christmas night, as he saw his Son laying on scratchy hay? And how did it feel when their perfect Father-Son relationship was shattered on the cross? God the Father abandoned his Son—imagine that abandoning your child—God gave him up, Jesus gave his life, for you. So you tell me, what does God's gift reveal about his heart?

So many people try to ascertain God's love for them by seeing how much money he entrusts to them or how many of their dreams are fulfilled. But here's how you can know what's in God's heart for you—look at what he gave for you. He gave everything because he loves you more than anything.

## **KNOWING GOD TRANSFORMS A PERSON'S HEART**

Every single time a human being sees God's heart, it radically changes their attitude about their giving. A little boy didn't have much to eat for lunch, just a few pieces of bread and some fish. He was really excited to eat that, but when he met Jesus, up close and personal, he gave his lunch away. A rich man named Zacchaeus was living large on some ill-gotten gains. Then he met Jesus up close and personal, and he gave away half his money to poor people! The widow in the temple knew her God up close and personal. She loved him, she trusted him, and her gift revealed her heart. She gave everything she had!

For you, the most practical question about your offerings is not, "How much money do you put in the plate." It's, "Do you know God's heart toward you? Do you know Jesus up close and personal?"

This is why many of us hesitate to give money to a homeless stranger at a stoplight. You don't know what's in that guy's heart, and you don't have a relationship with him. And if giving offerings at church feels like that to you, then step one is to get to know Jesus up close and personal. Learn what he has done for you. Investigate the stories about him in the Bible, and see what he has given you.

## **WHAT WILL YOU GIVE TO GOD?**

Of course, many of you already know Jesus, and you love him. If that's the case, what should you give him? Can I make a suggestion? It's God's suggestion. Consider giving 10% of your income. Some people call that "tithing," and it's only a suggestion. God required tithing in the Old Testament, but not anymore. Jesus did suggest that it's still a good idea. 10%. For some people in our congregation, giving 10% to church would mean they don't get to eat. In that case, maybe 5% is a generous, selfless offering that reveals a heart that loves Jesus. Others could give 30% of what they make, and they'd still have plenty leftover. You know that Jesus

doesn't need the money. But he desperately wants your heart, and your gift reveals something about your heart.

And when you give to Jesus, out with your whole heart, it's so fun to see what he does with it. You know on Christmas when you get someone a present, and you're excited to see them open it? Your extra excited when you see them using it! That's how it is when you see Jesus putting your money to use. Jesus uses our money to teach little children the everlasting good news about him. He uses our money to spread the gospel to countries all over the world. He uses our money to share his heart with others so they can know what you know.

**“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich.”  
(2 Corinthians 8:9)**

Amen.