

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #263 Attachment... “The Largest Offering”

One of the best ways to objectively measure how we are doing in our personal response to God's love is to take an honest look at how we are managing our Lord's resources. No matter what we may say or sing with our mouths, the way we actually use money shows what we value most. As Jesus said: *“Where your treasure is, your heart will be also.”*

We spend money on the things our hearts really treasure. That is why we will *all* give a complete future accounting to Jesus of every cent His grace entrusted to us in this life—His audit will tell the true story of our inmost heart affections and priorities. (As will every word we have spoken in this life!)

A wise servant will take time for periodic “pre-audit” evaluation of their financial stewardship, and carefully consider how their spending reveals their heart values and treasures.

Both Mark and Luke include a very brief description of the largest offering Jesus ever witnessed, and the lesson He drew from it in their gospels. The incident occurred on Tuesday of Passion Week, at the end of his public ministry in the Temple. This brief story can teach us one of the most important lessons we will ever learn about giving.

Like everything else in life, God's perspective on the subject of giving is very different from our way of looking at things. This story is intended to highlight one essential Kingdom principle of grace-giving from God's point of view. Make sure you gain a tight grip on this principle in your mind, and apply it in your life.

People whose passion is to “follow” the Person, Word, and Example of Jesus Christ in all things (in other words, a “disciple”) recognize that everything they have comes from God freely, as a gift of His grace. Furthermore, disciples seek to give away as much of what God freely provides for them as they possibly can. As Jesus said and did: ***“You have received freely. Now freely give!”*** Mt. 10.8B

Because God is a Lover, He is an incessant Giver. He wants us to learn to be Givers too, so He provides His resources to us for that purpose. This text shows how our Lord measures our giving.

Note that Jesus is the one who saw and evaluated the giving that was going on in the Temple. Mark indicates two things about the way Jesus looked at the offerings. First, ***“He sat down in front of the treasury box.”*** Jesus was probably exhausted from his blistering denunciation of the hypocrisy of the spiritual leadership of Israel, as summarized in Mt. 23. He sat down so that He could take His time making this evaluation over an extended period of time, like when we sit down at our desk to go to work, or study. He chose the perfect vantage point for doing this.

Secondly, ***“He saw what people were putting into the box.”*** The verb used here indicates careful, perceptive observation. He was taking attentive note of whom and what He saw, like a teacher carefully examines students who are taking a test. Of course Jesus was also able to see into each giver's heart and read their motivations and attitudes, as His comments will show us in just a minute. The verb tense shows us that Jesus kept on looking for an extended period of time, further reinforcing this picture of Jesus giving His full, undivided attention to what He saw.

This is an important point. It is our LORD Jesus Christ who sees and evaluates every penny that we both spend, and give. He knows our motivations and attitudes. He sees us, too, and evaluates our giving on a regular basis. There are no secrets before Him. Just as Jesus saw all the giving that was going on in the Temple, you can be sure that He is present and aware of everything about our giving, too, every time we do it.

Jesus is the only One who SHOULD evaluate our giving. That is right and good. One day we will all stand before Him and give an accounting to Him for everything we did with all HIS resources that were entrusted to us.

The key thing we want to learn from this story is the difference between our way of thinking about giving, and our Lord's principle of evaluation. The typical way to measure giving is the size of what we give.

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Jesus saw lots of wealthy people giving huge sums of money that day. There was no paper money back then, so wealthy people had lots of coins to throw into the offering box. Mark notes that some of them kept on tossing their coins for a while. These coins were made of copper, and the rich givers were able to make a quite a production out of how much they were giving, by how long it took them to throw it all in.

It was not uncommon for famous rich Pharisees in particular to bring an entourage of admirers with them to the Temple and toss their offering with the sound of applause and human praise for their great generosity ringing in their ears.

Everyone considered this kind of public spectacle a great example of spirituality and commitment...something truly pleasing to God.

Jesus, on the other hand, was not impressed with this grand show of fleshly hubris strutting about beneath His watchful eye. He had no regard for the huge sums being poured with pride into that Offering box. He didn't even consider them to be large amounts of money. I can just see Him sitting there, quietly taking it all in with a mixture of amusement, sorrow, and concern flashing in His eyes.

It is a fact of human nature that WE make a great deal out of large financial donations. We do it in business, politics, religion, and also in the Church. But the fact is that most of that kind of giving comes from the wealthy, who do not even notice or miss what they gave away. No sacrifice.

Say you have a Billion dollar fortune and you give away 10 million dollars. That is a large sum of money to be sure, but it represents a small fraction of the interest you will earn on a Billion dollars in one year! That is why Jesus said: **“They gave out of their surplus.”** They gave a lot to be sure, but they had so much to begin with, that they could keep on giving like that every day for the rest of their lives and never even miss any of it! In God's audit that is NOT a large gift at all...in fact it is very small, and He is not impressed, not matter how much WE might be.

Back now to Jesus. Suddenly a smile breaks out on His face and His eyes begin to shine. An elderly widow woman is slowly shuffling her way up to the offering box.

The rowdy crowd of admirers around the rich man who has been tossing his money with great flair into the box for over 5 minutes does not even notice her, but Jesus can't take His eyes off of her. She is bent over from age and rough-edged, life-long toil in the fields, and her skin is tanned deeper than a Hawaiian surfer.

In her gnarled, pinion like fingers she clutches two beat-up, paper thin coins that together add up to just 1/5th of a penny! They are more precious to her than diamonds. A stream of tears gushes out of the corners of her eyes, while a wild, hilarious smile puts her toothless gums on full display.

Finally, the rich man takes his final bow and reluctantly moves off center stage, waving to his admirers with a satisfied grin. The widow manages to make her way through the throng and stands now before the offering box, bows her head to pray, and croaks out: *“Great is Thy faithfulness, Oh Lord most High. Blessed Be the Name of the Lord.”*

With a look of sheer determination she gently lets go of those two coins, and they fall into the box, the sound unheard over the noise and tumult of the crowd.

Suddenly the widow's smile breaks out brighter, and she glances up from the box to see Jesus' eyes beaming with pride and joy into her own. With his eyes still on her, He rises to His full height, and calls his disciples to him with his unforgettable voice. Instantly it quiets the entire Temple crowd, and draws every eye to Him.

“I tell you the truth. This widow has just put more into the offering box than all the rest put together. They all gave out of their abundant surplus. But she, out of her poverty, gave everything... all she had to live on.”

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The joy in that widow's heart, and the loving pride in Jesus' eyes were one and the same, and for several seconds they just looked at each other, as the impact of what Jesus had just said began to be felt in minds and hearts all over that Temple.

Has what Jesus is saying to us all through these words dawned on you?

How does our Lord evaluate our giving? **Jesus measures what we give by the size of what we do NOT give!** This poor woman gave her whole living... everything she had...she had nothing left for herself after those two precious coins left her hand. She gave it ALL! Because she had nothing left, she gave the most.

True worship is measured by the degree of sacrifice involved...not the monetary value of what is given. *The one who offered the least sacrificed the most, and therefore gave MORE than everybody else!*

Think about the way Jesus gave Himself for us. He gave everything...nothing left over for Him. The Lord of Glory died penniless, naked, with not one physical possession left over. He gave up His righteousness, His reputation, His power, His glory, His health, His peace, His body, and all of His blood. He gave us ALL of His eternal riches in glory...ALL of His fullness...ALL of His heart, soul, body, mind and strength. Jesus gave everything...literally nothing left that an omnipotent God could possess remained in Him, for Himself. He gave it ALL away.

Even the measure of our Lord's giving is not the infinite size of what He gave...it can be found in the startling fact that HE kept nothing back for Himself... nothing left over when His giving was done for each of us. That attitude was what He saw in this poor widow. *"Love so amazing, so Divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."*

Is this our spirit of giving today? How much do we hold back for ourselves? How much does our giving come out of our surplus, and how much out of sacrifice? How often do we give to the point where it really hurts? How long does our sacrifice go on? I am not trying to lay a guilt trip on you. But we need to understand what Jesus is saying.

The whole question comes down to Who really owns what we have. Does it truly belong to us, or does it all belong to the Lord, as both He and His Word clearly states? If it is His, then we have to relinquish control over it all, and acknowledge that there is in fact nothing left that belongs to us. Both we, and all we have is ALREADY His!

If we truly believe that we are stewards of what belongs to Jesus, then anything and everything we have is just under our temporary management. We have nothing to hold back for ourselves. We manage our Lord's resources for His Kingdom purposes, so we passionately seek to manage His resources in a way that gives maximum support to His ministry in this world. The widow shows us this.

I wonder how much of your life, your time, your talents and gifts and training you are holding back for yourself? How much of our money remains behind when you and I are through giving?

If we looked at our giving the way Jesus does, and measured by what we do NOT give rather than by what we do, I'm sure we would all become better managers of His resources than we presently are. More Kingdom resources and ministry would flow out of us. And our joy would multiply like this widow as we become more like Jesus, the greatest Giver this universe will ever know.

Will you dare to evaluate your giving by the size of what you do NOT give, as Jesus does? *This one principle will change everything about your life-style as a giver if you will embrace it.*

Will you surrender your ALL to the One Who actually owns it all, and hold nothing of yourself back from Him? THEN all your spending *and* giving will declare that Jesus Christ is your “all, in all” forever. His pleasure will surely be your greatest treasure. And His “well done, My good and faithful servant” will be your eternal source of joy, as well.