

Sunday, December 11, 2016

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Introduction to Mark 12:41-44

God's economy works very differently than ours. We tend to know of those who are rich and powerful more than we know of those who are generous with what they have. For instance, everyone knows Bill Gates and Warren Buffett. Very few know of the widows, like the one in Jesus' day, who give beyond their means out of sheer faithfulness, expecting nothing in return.

Perhaps, some may say, there are no people like that in the world. Well, the fact that Jesus points out this woman whose name and family history have been lost to the ages, proves that we are not aware of all that God is doing and all that His faithful followers have done with their lives and the gifts that God has given to us. So as we approach this well-known story, it is important that we consider all that God has done. We ought to consider that He will accomplish His purposes no matter what, and that He has raised up humble women like this one to teach us something about this spiritual discipline called giving...

Context

Jesus has just finished talking about how evil the scribes were. In that section, He pointed out the fact that they "devour" widows' houses. While it is possible He saw this woman at the time He rebuked them, it is nonetheless likely that the "devouring" of their estates was common practice and that one did not need to look far and wide to identify someone who had been left in their compassionless wake.

Structure

- I. Jesus observes giving practices (41-42)
- II. Jesus teaches about giving from the heart (43-44)

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Mark 12:41-44

“Christmas Giving”

Jesus *observes* our giving

- Contributions of the rich
- Contributions of the poor

Jesus *evaluates* our giving

- It's not the amount, it's the heart... *love*
- It's not the amount, it's the cost... *sacrifice*

Godly Giving

- We should give.
- Whatever we give, Jesus sees.
- Giving is measured not by amount, but by cost.

Discuss

- 1) Giving is a difficult subject to broach in church—especially as the pastor speaking from the pulpit. Why do you think that is? How is giving different, or at least perceived to be different, than other spiritual disciplines?
- 2) In this passage, Jesus decries the giving of the rich people. Why is there a temptation to make our giving known to others? What benefit is received by a person who shows off their giving?
- 3) Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). How is that blessing received? Is it tangible/intangible? What kind of blessing do we receive through giving?
- 4) There is a close connection in Scripture between love and generosity. In fact, the most memorized verse (John 3:16) includes just two verbs (loved and gave). How would you describe the relationship between love and giving of any kind (money, time, abilities, etc.)?
- 5) God's generosity is well-documented. Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 and 9:6-15. How does God's generosity inform and enable us to give generously?