

## **Only a Fraction** **Mark 12:41-44**

Stewardship is not really about money – it is about the heart – what people who belong to Jesus Christ do with their lives, their time, their abilities and their resources – as His followers.

For the Christian, the Kingdom of God is the thing – we have been graced to see that there is something more reaching and desirable and healing and satisfying than the greatest experiences this life brings – it is knowing God and being known and loved by Him – this doesn't depreciate or rust or fade or fall or die – the work of the Kingdom always bears fruit in terms of people and lives and a community of forgiven people.

**Psalm 24:1-2** – "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters."

"He owns the Cattle on a Thousand Hills,  
The wealth in every Mine..."

Stewardship begins and ends with this – that everything belongs to God and He has entrusted to us all we have and invites us to share in the work of His Kingdom.

- **The Offering** – While many came and threw in huge amounts – this widow gave 'two copper coins' – two 'lepta' – ¼ of one penny today. The fact that she gave anything is amazing – she didn't have to – but she did – and she not only gave something, but Jesus knew (because He knows the heart and everything about our lives), and here He reveals that she gave everything she had.

You hear this word, 'Tithe' a lot in the Church...

- **The 'Tithe'** – One Tenth – God never asks us to give what we don't have – "out of her poverty" – vs. 44
- **The 'Firstfruits'** – The First and the Best – "all she had to live on" – vs. 44
- **The 'Storehouse'** – Where you are nourished – "into the treasury" – vs. 43

Jesus is not putting down wealth, but here He knew that the gifts of the rich involved no generosity – no sacrifice – no gratitude. It involved no trust that the true source of their wealth was not their hard work or financial savvy – They had no sense of need for God's provision. They were enslaved to their wealth.

But our unnamed friend gave out of her poverty, and interestingly, **This isn't a story where Jesus intervenes.**

He doesn't make the widow rich like He would cause a blind man to see or a lame man to walk – **and she doesn't ask Him to.**

Because contrary to what we might easily assume, there was nothing 'wrong' with her or her status in life – In fact, everything was right – otherwise she would hoard even her ¼ cent.

In God's Economy, Big is Small and Small is Huge – When the heart is closed the gift is tiny regardless of its actual size, and when the heart is full and free, the gift is immense, regardless of its actual size.

Compared to God's resources the largest gift is a drop in the Atlantic. He really does own the cattle...

- Friend, if you think you are helping God with your gifts, you are fooling yourself. But those whose gifts are simple expressions of faith and gratitude and joyful participation

in the Kingdom, even if their gifts are only a fraction of what others give, to God they are immeasurably huge.

- If you give 10% with an ungenerous heart, you are missing the point. But for those who give out of their poverty, God sees them as rich beyond measure and they experience a joy beyond measure.
- If you possessively hold on to your money and 'stuff,' and measure what you give against that of others, you betray an Enslaved Heart and Unsatisfied Soul, but for those who let go and trust – even with their wallets and purses, God unleashes them and uses them beyond the size of their gifts.

Free of Charge, Miroslav Volf – **we really are the hands of God** – that when we give, we are not only giving what is not ours in the first place, but it is God Himself, through us, doing the giving. He is the Benefactor and we are the channels through which He continues to pour out His Goodness.

I believe we have been given much to give much. I believe that we have been Graced to be gracious.

- What we love we give to
- What we love we sacrifice for
- What we love we sink ourselves into
- We give it away – We give it up – We color outside the 'lines' of expectation and are drawn into the 'rich generosity' God expresses toward us.

Nothing God has given to you is meant to be hoarded or held tightly to. It is all given to be given, offered to be offered, shared to be shared.

And you will never give to anything more important... work of God. You will never make a better investment than the one you make... in heaven, in people, for God's Kingdom.

In the end it is really all about Grace – because the big secret is that God doesn't need anything we give or could give.

### Two Encouragements:

1. Begin to Give – Don't think in terms of percentages – think in terms of the heart. If you have become so overburdened by overspending, then repent and ask God to heal and give you the grace to give.
2. Ask for a Generous Heart – Ask God to protect you from Greed and Legalism. Relinquish ownership of all you have to God – Remind yourself that it is already His, not yours.

When you let go of your fear and greed and legalistic thinking, you are set free because you acknowledge that what you have God gave you and that if you ever lose everything He is still there and you are still His – and that is Good News.

The Gospel teaches that when God sent Jesus He gave His Firstfruits – the best and most beautiful of all He possessed – **Romans 8:32** – "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" And it begs the question that if God has already given everything in Jesus, why would He withhold anything else?

**2 Corinthians 8:9** – "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich."