

Stewardship

Inspiring a deeper understanding of true giving

August 2023

And Jesus sat down opposite the temple and watched the people putting their money in the treasury. Many wealthy members came along and put in large sums of money. Then a widow came and prepared to put in one penny. Jesus called his disciples and said to them, “See that widow, she is about to give all that she has in the world ... her last cent. Rush to her and stop her that she might not be penniless.

Charge them to do good, to be rich in good works and generous, sharing what they have. 1 Timothy 6:18

These others have given out of their abundance, but this woman wants to give all that she has; don't let her give even that away!” And Jesus' disciples hurried over to her, and took her by the hand, preventing her from giving her last penny. And Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I say to you, this is a nice old lady.”

That isn't the way the story goes, but that's how it should go isn't it?

What goes on in this story is crazy. Jesus allows this woman to give her last penny in the world to the church. She needs that money as much as anybody the church could give it to. She is poor herself. When she drops that last penny in the treasury she's broke ... no money for food, no money for housing, no money for clothes, no money for the necessities of life. She has nothing.

This story is shocking to us. We're trying to build up bank accounts, get some investments going, build up a little security, cut some corners to save money, then she goes and gives her last penny away. We want the money. We want to save, to put more money away.

But this woman gives everything that she has for the poor.

Studies have shown that the less money people have, the more generous they are with it. Percentage wise, in many cases, the more money we have, the less willing we are to share it. Sometimes those with good incomes become more tied to their money than the poor do. This woman, who had almost nothing to give, gave it all.

The motive behind her giving is that she cares for other people. She cares about them even more than she cares about herself. The issue Jesus is raising here is not the amount of money that is given, but the compassion behind the gift.



(Continued on page 4)






Giving What You Have...

Do you remember the story of two country boys talking, and one asked, “Billy Bob, if you had a million dollars, would you give me half of it?” Ole Billy Bob replied, “Lee Roy, you know I would.” So Lee Roy questioned again, “If you had a thousand dollars, would you give me five hundred?” “Lee Roy, we have been friends for over twenty years,” said Billy Bob, “and you know I would give you five hundred dollars if I had a thousand.” Well, Ole Lee Roy scratched his chin and asked, “If you had two hogs, would you give me one?” Billy Bob shouted loudly, “That’s not fair. You know I have two hogs.”

Have you ever heard people say something like that? I have heard many people say if God would let them win the lottery, they would give half of it to the church, spend a lot on helping the poor, and live on the rest. We all need to understand that God never requires of us to give what we do not have. God’s requirement is that we give from what we have.

When we give time, talent, and money to God, it is blessed. There is in

Malachi 3:8-10 a blessing and a curse. The curse may be the absence of the blessing. When something is blessed, it simply means it has the capacity to do more than it would normally do. So which would you rather have: ten dollars blessed of God because you gave the tithe, or ten dollars without the blessing of God because you did not give the tithe? The real question is: Can ten dollars blessed do more than ten dollars not blessed? The answer is ten dollars not blessed can do only what ten dollars can do in our economy. Ten dollars blessed of God can do what GOD CAN DO.

I am not one of those claim-it-and-name-it kind of people, but I am saying you can claim what God has named. So give what you have and not what you don’t have. Then you can claim God’s blessing. 

There is no portion of our time that is our time, and the rest God’s.

There is no portion of money that is our money, and the rest God’s money.

It is all God’s; God made it all, gave it all, and God simply trusted it to us for his service.




Through the Stained Glass...

Imagine that you are having a picnic by a bend in a swift-flowing river. Suddenly, you see someone being swept by, drowning. You jump in and rescue the person. Before you have a chance to dry off, another drowning person comes around the bend. And then another. You walk upstream to see what is happening, and discover a rickety bridge. It has no side rails, and much of its flooring has rotted away; many who try to cross the bridge fall into the river. You could spend all day rescuing them from drowning. Or you could spend a couple of days repairing the bridge, and prevent anyone from falling into the river.

Similarly, it may be argued, one answer to poverty and starvation in the world today is not to “give a person a fish, feeding him or her for a day; but teach them to fish, and feeding them for life.”

Responding to the needs of our neighbors is one of the basic beliefs of Christianity. This sounds so simple. But it is really more complex than it sounds because the real question is: What are the real needs of people?

Sometimes our charity merely eases our nagging consciences and fills our needs, rather than meeting the real needs of the people around us. In our charity, we need to be careful that we are not really just fulfilling our own needs. 

What Size is Your Corn?


Suppose that you are given a piece of land composed of fine river bottom soil, capable of immense profits in truck gardening. You waste very little time puzzling over why anyone would be so generous as to give away such land; you become busy preparing the soil and working it and planning on spending your profits, perhaps for more land.

If the person who gave you this wondrous land were living right next door, instead of in some far off land, you would naturally pause from time to time; and finally, in the joy of your rich harvest and in the certainty that you would be meeting again and again, you would likely come to feel you should share some of your harvest.

Would any of us at that point, screen out our produce and present our donor with only the wilted, scraggly warped vegetables which are the culls, the tossed aside overflow of those who sell produce? If this generous giver had also been instrumental in giving us the fine health it takes to work a truck farm, would not our gratitude be such that we would choose for him the plumppest, sweetest, freshest vegetables?

So it is with giving.

Few of us are farmers today, but a serious look at our income and the bit we slice off to give back to God, measuring and examining it as a farmer would his vegetables, will help us to see our offering in its true light. What size ears of corn are you returning to your God?

Anything less than a fair share of every dollar of your income, which comes to you through “luck” or hard work, is surely giving only the nubbins from your patch! 

Consider this paradox. Compared to the government and the bill collectors, the church almost never asks for money. Yet, of all the things your money could be used for, very few are more important than what the church provides.

The church is here to share the love of Jesus Christ himself. Our money goes to serve him. The church continues to provide ministry in Jesus' name to everyone, whether they can afford to contribute or not. Isn't that something you would like to be a part of?



Suppose that you are given a piece of land composed of fine river bottom soil, capable of immense profits in truck gardening...

More Than Artistic!


Have you ever stopped to consider that talents include many more abilities than merely athletic, artistic or musical? In God's Kingdom, each of us is given a talent according to our ability and the opportunity to use and develop that talent. Jesus does not pass judgement on how many talents we have. He holds us accountable for using the one we have to his glory.

A dormant talent?

Come and discover that talent that may be lying dormant within you or that you may be using every day, but because it isn't a painting you can display for everyone to see, you may believe that you don't have any talent.

Outside the church

God does not require our talents to be used necessarily in the church. A candy striper in the hallways of a local hospital sharing his or her talent of

giving comfort and hope to burn victims is certainly glorifying God with their talent as much as a Sunday School teacher who loves the children in the class. 

Continued from page 1...

And Jesus sat down...

This woman gave more than anybody else because she was willing to sacrifice, completely. They gave a lot of money, but it was small in proportion to their wealth; she gave a penny, but it was everything she had. She gave "the little that is all." It was an enormously greater sacrifice on her part. 