

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: The Sacrificial Gift of the Poor Widow, Mark 12:38-43; Mark 6:1-4;
Mark 17:20

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INTRODUCTION: The Gospels speak negatively of rich people at times, and I believe it was because of the belief of the day—that the rich had God’s favor and the poor had God’s displeasure. Jesus wanted to set the record straight that riches or the lack thereof, were not necessarily signs from God.

There are three points to my message today:

1. Jesus watched everyone, but it was the poor widow who got his attention.
2. The difference between the gifts of the rich and the widow was the level of sacrifice.
3. The only way we can come to Jesus is from a state of spiritual poverty.

First, JESUS WATCHED EVERYONE, BUT IT WAS THE POOR WIDOW WHO GOT HIS ATTENTION.

BACKGROUND: Here’s some background—The temple in Jesus’ day was rather complex. There were different areas for different purposes. There was a court for the women, which was only about 200 square feet, and they were restricted to only this area. Around this area, there were 13 chests where people gave their offerings.

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:38-40 [Warning Against the Teachers of the Law] ³⁸*As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, ³⁹and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. ⁴⁰They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”*

SCRIPTURE: Mark 12:41-44 [The Widow's Offering] ⁴¹ *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. ⁴² But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.*

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

EXPLANATION: Jesus watched everyone, but it was the poor widow who got his attention. Jesus was there watching, the scripture says, when he saw the rich with their gifts. Some of them, no doubt, knew who Jesus was. Some of them had heard him teach. Some of them had witnessed him heal people.

I wonder if any of the people tried to impress Jesus with their large gifts. I wonder if any word passed through the crowd saying Jesus was present, and therefore, the day's offering was more than normal. I wonder if the poor lady knew Jesus was there and was ashamed of her gift. We don't know. These are only speculations.

APPLICATION: Today, I wonder what things people will come up with to try to get God's attention. Perhaps something bad happens to a person, and he or she decides to get right with God. Perhaps this person will do outward things hoping God will notice but forget true devotion to God is total sacrifice.

ILLUSTRATION: Think back to a time when a little child tried to get an adult's attention. Do you recall a time when adults were sitting around in someone's home having a conversation and a two or three year old girl walked in and did a little dance or a boy brought some of his toys to show the adults? Or, maybe they brought their coloring books to show the adults. If you are doing outward things to get God's attention but there is no faith involved, then you are merely putting on a show like a little child.

APPLICATION: I want to challenge everyone to start giving. A secretary here got a call this week from a woman who was concerned because her brother started giving more to the church. She thought something was wrong with him.

Many people think if they cannot give a thousand dollars, then they can give nothing. Nothing is further from the truth. Some people want to believe they can give of their time and make up for not giving money. I'm sorry, but the Bible doesn't allow for that. Giving of your time is important, but you cannot give your time to make up for not giving your money.

People walk in Tusculum Hills and look around and say, "Wow, you must have some rich people here." No. Everyone here has rather simple means. In fact, most live on a retirement income. It is the collective giving of many that really adds up.

Second, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE GIFTS OF THE RICH AND THE WIDOW WAS THE LEVEL OF SACRIFICE.

The widow, having once had a husband, a protector and provider, was now alone and unmarried. In this day, there was no social security, no retirement plan, and no bank savings as we know it. And, since she only had two coins, she was the poorest of the poor. She gave all she had.

You may not have much to offer the Lord. You may think you are too poor, or too untalented, or too sick to make any difference in the kingdom of God. You may feel completely inferior to those around you, who seem to have it all together and can answer any Sunday School question. You might think what you have to offer is no more valuable than two pennies. Well, I've got good news: God will take what you offer, valued at almost nothing, and turn it into something good. He'll honor sacrificial giving because sacrificial giving comes out of one's faith.

I like how Christian writer Warren Wiersbe says it: "If a person is 'important' only because of the uniform he wears, the title he bears, or the office he holds, then his 'importance' is artificial. It is *character* that makes a person valuable, and nobody can give you character; you must develop it yourself as you walk with God."

It is not the amount of the gift that's important; it's the proportion of the gift that's important. The rich gave some of what they had; the poor widow gave all she had.

I said to some immigrants, “Welcome to America—now start giving back. Welcome to church—now start giving back.”

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 6:1-4 ¹“*Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.*

²“*So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.* ³ *But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,* ⁴ *so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

Third, THE ONLY WAY WE CAN COME TO JESUS IS FROM A STATE OF SPIRITUAL POVERTY.

EXPLANATION: Spiritually speaking, God is not looking for people who think they are godly, walking around in flowing robes, desiring respect. He’s not interested in those who want to be greeted in public with respect—who want the most important seats in the house and the places of honor at banquets.

ILLUSTRATION: Occasionally, I’ll hear someone mention the name of a superstar, and they’ll say, “Wow if that person could come to Christ, imagine what would happen.” You know, really, God doesn’t seem to work through superstars. We’ll hear of a famous person who comes to Christ, but they don’t bring throngs of people to Jesus, do they? We should rejoice when anyone comes to Christ, shouldn’t we? But it seems God specializes in using plain, everyday people to change the world.

Only when we come to Jesus completely spiritually impoverished will he take our brokenness and turn it into something good.

CONCLUSION: These teachers of the law were banking on a religious system that would go away in just a few years. In fact, Jesus would be the one who would do

away with it. As Jesus traveled about with his earthly ministry, he pointed out the poor spiritual condition of people quite often.

The men, who were no doubt important in the eyes of many, would only be remembered in history with these few condemning verses about them. Yet, the mere pauper, the poor woman—the poorest of the poor—would be remembered as having given everything.

CALL TO ACTION: The widow and her giving is a lesson for all of us.

1. If she can give, anyone can give. You see, Jesus was an excuse eliminator. I truly believe this story reminds us we are all without excuse.
2. Do we give out of our abundance or out of faith?
3. Where is your faith? Is it in your own savings, your own things, or is it truly in God?

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 17:20 ²⁰*He replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."*

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

Find me at www.thbc.com Click on sermons or YouTube channel: Pastor Paul Gunn
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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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