

Luke 20:41 – 21:4

Then he said to them, “How can they say that the Messiah is David’s son? For David himself says in the book of Psalms, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” David thus calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?” In the hearing of all the people he said to the disciples, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”

Devotion

In Jesus’ time tithes were collected in a building beside the synagogue, much like a bank. Sounds of a trumpet were often used to alert crowds that a wealthy individual was preparing to place a gift in the treasury. These individuals wanted attention drawn to them as they gave. They gave to gain respect and honor for their contribution.

Jesus looks over at the people flinging their offering into the baskets, intent on announcing to the crowd their generosity. Then a poor widow approaches the basket with an attitude of complete surrender and offers her two coins. How refreshing it must have been for Jesus to see someone so recklessly generous!

At Christmastime we often think a lot about money. We worry when the news reports a decrease in the stock market. We calculate the tax incentive we will receive if we make a monetary donation to a charitable organization by the end of the year. We worry about having enough money to buy just the right gifts and when we spend beyond our budget, we justify our action with the excuse that “The holidays are a time to give.” Yet, when provided the opportunity to give back a portion of our wealth to God, we hesitate to offer our remaining money.

W. Graham Scroggie once said, “There are two ways in which a Christian may view his money--"How much of my money shall I use for God?" or "How much of God's money shall I use for myself?" In Luke we are reminded, by the example set by a poor widow, that we are called to give all we have, trusting that God will meet our needs.” It wasn’t hard for the wealthy individuals to drop a small portion of their wealth in the basket, but it was painfully hard for the widow to offer two copper coins. Yet, she does it without fanfare or attention.

William Barclay points out in his commentary of Luke that, "Giving does not begin to be real giving until it hurts." The ultimate gift from God, the birth of Jesus, shows the magnificent love God has for his people. God sent his son into the world with the full knowledge that he would be crucified on a cross for the sins of the world. Despite the hurt of knowing his son would die, he gave graciously and abundantly, so that we may have eternal life with him.

As people of God we are called to give abundantly of our money just as the poor widow did. In a season where financial uncertainty surrounds us we are challenged to give all that we have with reckless abandonment. As we abandon our worry over money and faithfully trust God, we can expect that the unexpected will be fulfilled through his son, Jesus Christ.

Prayer for Today

O Abundant God, you have blessed us beyond our imagination through the birth of your son, Jesus Christ. In this season of giving, we pray that you would ignite our hearts to surrender our financial anxiety and embrace a life of reckless generosity.

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, we ask that you would mold us into people who act more like the faithful widow and less like the wealthy individuals who seek fame and recognition. We seek to return all that is yours, trusting that in our reckless abandonment, you will meet our every need. Amen.