

THE GREAT GIVE

"THE CURRENCY OF EXTRAORDINARY FAITH"

LUKE 21:1-4

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Money – I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes. 2 Corinthians 8:7 *But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving.*

The University of Notre Dame is sponsoring studies on generosity. Current studies come from many different and often disconnected disciplines and focus on various terms, such as philanthropy, volunteerism and altruism. The Science of Generosity initiative aims to bring together diverse approaches in order to create a field for the study of generosity in all its forms. You can go to the Science of Generosity website for additional interesting, informative, and helpful information (<http://generosityresearch.nd.edu/>).

An article entitled "Want to Be Happy? Stop Being So Cheap!" by Jordan Michael Smith and Christian Smith published September 22, 2014 contains the authors' findings on the relationship of generosity to happiness. Issues of *The Scrolls* in this sermon series will contain excerpts from this intriguing article found on the website. The following is a continuation of the interview from last week's issue.

Jordan Michael Smith: Some of the people in your book [*The Paradox of Generosity*] who you chronicle and classify as ungenerous seem to be close with their spouse or child. Isn't that a form of generosity?

Christian Smith: They might be helping each other in a very limited sense. And that's a good thing, of course, when people help their immediate, nuclear family. But the dynamics of

generosity are such that people who are learning to be generous increasingly expand their circle to people beyond their most comfortable or the most intimate and there is a helping of 'the other,' and not just one's own tribe, so to speak. That's an important threshold to cross in being a generous person.

JMS: How do Americans stack up against people from other countries?

CS: There are different kinds of generosity, of course. When it comes to voluntary financial giving, Americans are relatively more generous than people of any other nation. A lot of people from other nations 'give' their money away by paying a lot more in taxes that support more disadvantaged people and better healthcare systems. A lot of Europeans would say, 'well, we don't it voluntarily, because we also give a lot more in taxes, and that creates a better world.' But Americans tend to be voluntarists. They like to give voluntarily. Part of it is that Americans are more religious than people of other nations, and religious people tend to give more money. But then again, if you've ever traveled to poor countries, sometimes they can be immensely generous. They have very little and can be incredibly hospitable, they kill their best chicken and give you a very nice dinner. So there are other forms of generosity that maybe Americans lack but other countries would excel in.

JMS: Were you surprised by anything that you found?

CS: I'm surprised at how ungenerous Americans are. I just said they are relatively more generous, but we could be so much more generous. Americans

con't pg. 2

are relatively so wealthy, and there are so many people who don't give a dollar to anything in an entire year, and they'll admit to that on a survey. It's hard to imagine. Another thing that is mind-boggling is that the percentage of people's salaries that they give is unrelated to how much they earn. That is, as people earn more and more money, they don't give relatively higher proportions of their income. It's really not the case that a lot of people don't give because they can't afford it. It's other factors. In their heads, as I said before.

JMS: How much does the American sort of libertarianism affect things?

CS: It does affect things somewhat. The idea of radical individualism that everyone should pick themselves up, everyone is on their own, affects some people. Although the majority of Americans aren't radical libertarians. They're individualists, but they're individualists in the sense that if there's a deserving poor, or if there is someone that really needs help, people will try and help them out. There is a belief that it is good to be generous to others, but there's a fear of being taken advantage of, especially by the 'undeserving.'

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Luke 21:1-4

1As he looked up, Jesus saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3"I tell you the truth," he said, "this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

Cf. other translations

1Jesus looked up and saw some rich people tossing their gifts into the offering box. 2He also saw a poor widow putting in two pennies. 3And he said, "I tell you that this poor woman has put in more than all the others. 4Everyone else gave what they didn't need. But she is very poor and gave everything she had." (CEV)

1While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. 2Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins. 3"I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. 4For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has." (NLT)

Just then he looked up and saw the rich people dropping offerings in the collection plate. Then he saw a poor widow put in two pennies. He said, "The plain truth is that this widow has given by far the largest offering today. All these others made offerings that they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford—she gave her all!" (The Message)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Bracket "As he looked up" in v. 1 to indicate a transition.
- * In parentheses above the bracketed words write in 20:45-47.
- * Box "the rich" in v. 1.
- * Circle and number each occurrence of the phrase "poor widow".
- * Highlight the phrase "I tell you the truth" in v. 3
- * Box "all these people in v. 4.
- * Underline "out of their wealth" in v. 4.
- * Underline "out of her poverty" in v. 4.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Read the Note on vv. 1-4. Prior to studying this passage, which of the four suggested meanings lined up the closest with your initial impression on page 2? Talk about how your opinion has changed.
2. Read the various translations on page 2. In your opinion, which one states the message of this passage the best? Be prepared to share your thoughts.
3. Try to imagine yourself in the temple court. What additional images or characteristics come to your mind in regards to the "rich" Jesus mentions in v. 1?
4. Same exercise as in question 3, only this time, profile what additional images or characteristics come to mind in regards to the "poor widow" in v. 2.
5. Do you think Jesus' mention of the widow was more likely a praise for her actions, a lament for her being victimized by the religious system of her day, or an equal measure of both? Explain.
6. How can it legitimately be said by Jesus that the widow "put in more than all the others"?
7. Why do you think God is less interested in how much we give than how much we keep?
8. So does this passage communicate that we should give up everything we own? Explain.
9. How has the week's lesson shaped your understanding of our Core Competency Giving Away My Money?
10. **For personal reflection:** If the actions of the rich represent a "1" and the actions of the widow represent a "10" on a scale, where would you place yourself in terms of sacrificial giving (i.e. - how much you have left over after you have given your gift/s to God)?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

Luke 21:1-4 concludes a significant segment of the physician's gospel that begins in chapter 19. Just two days prior, a Sunday, Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (19:28-40). The tension from his opposition (chief priests, scribes, and leaders of the people - 19:47) was at its peak. They desperately desired him dead, but the adoring crowds stood in their way (vv. 47-48). The following day, Monday, Jesus entered into and proceeded to cleanse the temple of the corrupt merchants and money changers. The next day (chapter 20), Jesus was back at the temple teaching many about the kingdom of God. Furious over the potential consequences of Jesus' popularity, members of his opposition began challenging his authority to teach in a manner distinct from their interpretation of the Scriptures. "Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things. Who gave you this authority?" (v. 2). "Teacher . . . is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not? (v. 22). "At the resurrection, whose wife will she be..." (v. 33). Each question was answered decisively by Jesus; to such a degree that, "No one dared to ask him any more questions." (v. 40).

Having disarmed their attack, Jesus turns the tables and challenges them with a question of his own (vv. 41-44), one that if answered correctly would affirm the deity (and ultimate authority) of the true Messiah. After all this, Jesus then turns to his disciples and warns of the facade of his opposition. His words communicate that while these religious leaders may sound good and look important (especially before their wealthy followers), their religious deviations reveal their disingenuousness; so much so that they are even willing to take advantage of some of the weakest members of their society, widows (v. 47). What follows, our passage today, is the perfect object lesson for his disciples on the

difference between a heart that is fixated on an economy established by mankind versus the eternal economy of God.

Jesus looks up. In doing so he directs his hearers' attention to those putting their gifts (offerings) into the temple treasury (21:1). The parallel account of this incident appears in Mark 12:41-44. In it, Mark uses stronger language to describe the manner in which the rich are presenting their gifts to the temple: "Many rich people *threw in* large amounts [of money]" (italics added). It is presumed that this act of throwing in one's offering produced a noticeable amount of noise; enough to certainly gain the attention/approval of the crowd and temple leaders. The crowd had bought in to the religious leaders' notion that an acceptable offering was based upon the amount of the gift rather than the amount of wealth that remains after the offering has been made. In stark contrast, the widow unceremoniously walked to one of the collection boxes and quietly "put in" literally "all she had to live on" (v. 4; Mk. 12:44). "The contrast in the story is between 'more' and 'less' [wealth that remains with the worshipper] not between a 'true gift' and a 'non-authentic gift.' There is no basis in the text for giving in accordance to one's means; the widow gives all that she has! She gives *beyond* her means" (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, AB, 1321, italics added). Certainly the difference in attitude/perspective between these economies of giving unto the Lord was realized by Jesus' disciples; a lesson in distinction that is just as important for us to grasp now as it was for Jesus' disciples to grasp back then.

The Message of the Passage
Out of your poverty or your wealth give generously
and sacrificially to the Lord.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

“The Currency of Extraordinary Faith”

(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

vv. 1-4 "The exact point of the story is not as clear as first appears. Several suggestions have been made: (1) the measure of one's gift does not involve how much one gives but how much remains, i.e., how much one keeps; (2) a gift is measured by the spirit in which it is given; (3) one's giving should be commensurate with one's means; and (4) true giving involves giving all one has" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 508).

v. 1 *temple treasury* "The temple treasury was located in the court of the women, east of Herod's temple. Both men and women were allowed in this court, but women could go no farther into the temple building. In the court of women were 13 trumpet-shaped receptacles, shaped like inverted megaphones and positioned to receive donations of the worshippers" (*NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, note on Mark 12:41).

v. 2 *copper coins* "The mite, a copper coin of little value ('mite' is an Old English translation of the Greek *lepton*), may have been the copper prutah, a cheap coin minted during the Hasmonean period but still in use during Jesus' lifetime." *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, 1699). "The smallest and least valuable coins in circulation in Palestine" (the NET Bible, **sn** on v. 2). Each "widow's" mite was worth about one-eighth of a penny.

v. 2 *the widow's gift* "In view of Jesus' condemnation of Pharisaic oral tradition that was more concerned with ritual than with human needs (see Mark 7:9-13), one may wonder if Jesus was praising the widow's action or if he saw in the episode an illustration of what he had said earlier in 20:46-47. In other words, because of the teaching of the religious authorities of her day, the poor widow gives up her last penny and so is victimized for the sake of an oppressive religious system. Her wealth, or what little wealth there was, was 'devoured' (see v. 47)" (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, NIBC, 307-08). Conversely, another commentator replies, "This interpretation [alone] does not explain the present form of the account, for 21:3 is clearly a commendation. The widow having given more to God than the rich would have been interpreted as a positive action by Luke's readers" (Stein, 508).

v. 3 *I tell you the truth* This is a stern, solemn pronouncement from Jesus meant to grab his disciples' attention regarding a profound and important truth. There are twenty-four incidences in the gospels in which Jesus begins to present a spiritual truth with this phrase.

v. 3 *more than all* "When he says the poor widow put in more than all the others, he is saying that, in terms of real cost, the woman gave the most...all those who preceded her donated their gifts out of an excess. What they gave to God cost them little; In contrast, the woman gave, not from her abundance, but from her very life. As Jesus puts it, she gave 'all of her life' (NIV - 'all she had to live on'). Her poverty means that her contribution cost her in terms of life's basics. She did not give from abundance; she gave out of 'what she lacked,' (NIV - 'out of her poverty')" (Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* 9:51-24:53, BECNT, 1646).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Throughout *The Great Give* series, we will be looking at excerpts from *Smart Money Smart Kids* by Dave Ramsey and Rachel Cruz. This book is available for purchase in our KidPix store. Rachel Cruz is Dave's youngest daughter. She reflects on many experiences growing up in the Ramsey household. One thing she remembers is that the family always tithed. Even when they were struggling financially in their early years, the family committed a portion of their finances, time and talents to go for kingdom work **FIRST!** She says, "We are supposed to be good managers of everything that God has given us, and that includes more than our money. It's so easy for families to fall into the trap of giving a percentage of their money without ever stepping outside their comfort zone and really giving of themselves in the world. That's why I teach families the 'Time, Talents and Treasure' idea of giving. In addition to giving our treasure (money), we should freely give from all of our resources, especially our time and talents." The widow in our text today reminds us that giving should be sacrificial. It should cost me something. If I never feel a financial pinch because of generosity or if I never give up some of my time to serve someone else, I am likely not giving with great faith. God will honor faith-filled giving and is waiting to prove it to your family.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Luke 21:1-4

1. Who is the first group of people Jesus saw putting their money in the offering at church?
2. Who did He see next?
3. Which did Jesus say put in more?

What Do You Think

1. Why do you think the woman put all she had into the offering?
2. What is something you can give that would cost you something? (Think about your time and talents too)

What R U Going To Do

Look up the following verses this week and write down what you discover about giving:
 (1) Hebrews 11:6;
 (2) Luke 6:38;
 (3) Micah 3:10; (4) 2 Corinthians 9:6

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Giving Away my Money - I share my money to help with God's work

Memory Verse

Matthew 6:21 - *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-six years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.