

Title: **“A CERTAIN POOR WIDOW”**
Text: Luke 21:1-4
Subject: *Giving*
Date: Sunday Evening — February 20, 2004
Tape # Y-70a
Readings: *Bob Poncer and James Jordan*

READING — *2 Corinthians 8 and 9*

2 Corinthians 8

¹ Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; ² How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. ³ For to *their* power, I bear record, yea, and beyond *their* power *they were* willing of themselves; ⁴ Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and *take upon us* the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. ⁵ And *this they did*, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. ⁶ Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

⁷ Therefore, as ye abound in every *thing, in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all diligence, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also. ⁸ I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your

love. ⁹ For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. ¹⁰ And herein I give *my* advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. ¹¹ Now therefore perform the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to will, so *there may be* a performance also out of that which ye have. ¹² For if there be first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to that a man hath, *and* not according to that he hath not. ¹³ For *I mean* not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: ¹⁴ But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want: that there may be equality: ¹⁵ As it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack.

¹⁶ But thanks *be* to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. ¹⁷ For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. ¹⁸ And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches; ¹⁹ And not *that* only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and *declaration of* your ready mind: ²⁰ Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us: ²¹ Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. ²² And we have sent with them our brother,

whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which *I have* in you. ²³ Whether *any do enquire* of Titus, *he is* my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren *be enquired of, they are* the messengers of the churches, *and* the glory of Christ. ²⁴ Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

2 Corinthians 9

¹ For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: ² For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. ³ Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: ⁴ Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. ⁵ Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as *a matter of* bounty, and not as *of* covetousness.

⁶ But this *I say*, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. ⁷ Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or

of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work: ⁹ (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. ¹⁰ Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) ¹¹ Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. ¹² For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; ¹³ Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for *your* liberal distribution unto them, and unto all *men*; ¹⁴ And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. ¹⁵ Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

INTRODUCTION

Why do you go to work every day? What is your purpose in working? It does not matter what kind of work you do. We live in a society that honors and praises professionals, whose jobs require a college education. Doctors, lawyers, politicians, and executives are usually the people who have influence in society, before whom others bow and scrape like groveling dogs. What a pity!

It is altogether proper that we give honor to whom honor is due; but we ought never to look upon one person with contempt and another with adulation, simply because of their different social status. It does matter not in the least where you work, or what kind of work you do. All honest labor is honorable labor. I do not care whether you work for minimum wages by the hour or whether you make a million dollars a week. If your labor is honest labor, it is honorable labor.

My question has nothing to do with the kind of work you do. I want you to consider only one thing — *Why do you do it?* What is your reason for working?

THREE REASONS

In the Word of God, I find three things, and only three things, which should motivate believers in their labor. These three motives are very clear. There is nothing profound or mysterious about them. I hope none of you will be surprised by the fact that among these three

motives for working, and working hard, there is not a word about gaining riches, getting more stuff, or increasing our social rank. Are you interested in Bible motives for work? Here they are — **Three biblical motives for honest labor are...**

1. THE GLORY OF GOD

(1 Corinthians 10:31) "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

(Ephesians 6:5-6) "Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; (6) Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;"

(Colossians 3:22-24) "Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: (23) And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; (24) Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."

When we go about our daily employment, whatever it is, let us seek to honor our God in the work we do.

2. THE NEEDS OF OUR FAMILIES

(1 Timothy 5:8) "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

It is the responsibility of every man to provide for his family. That provision reaches beyond physical things. We are also responsible to provide for our families spiritually. Every man is responsible to serve God as a prophet, priest, and king in his own house.

We ought to be motivated every day, as we do the work the Lord has given us to do, to do that work (whatever it is) to the best of our ability for the glory of God and the good of our families.

But there is a third reason for working, a third noble, biblical principle which ought to be a high priority and motive to every child of God in his daily employment. You will find it in Ephesians 4:28. We ought to work, *thirdly*, so that we might enjoy the high honor and...

3. THE PRIVILEGE OF GIVING

(Ephesians 4:28) "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

Proposition: If we belong to Christ, if we are his servants, we ought to make the business of giving, open handed, open hearted, generous giving, a high priority in our lives.

There are many, many great examples of this kind of giving in the Word of God.

- David (2 Sam. 24:24)
- The Forgiven Woman (Mk. 14:3-9)
- The Macedonians (2 Cor. 8 and 9)
- The Philippians (Phil. 4:15-19)

Tonight I want us to look at the example found in Luke 21:1-4. My subject is giving. The title of my message is “A CERTAIN POOR WIDOW.” Let’s read the text together.

(Luke 21:1-4) "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. (2) And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. (3) And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: (4) For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

There are few events in the earthly life of our blessed Savior more commonly overlooked than this, and few of his sayings which are less discussed than the one now

before us. Our Lord saw “*the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury.*”

Without question, those who have more should give more. That is seldom the case; but it should be. Usually, the wealthiest people really give the least. And when they do give a little something somewhere, they have lots of strings attached and a bag of instructions!

Then, our Master spotted “*also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.*”

Divisions: Let me call your attention to four things in this story. May God the Holy Spirit graciously and effectually teach us the things here revealed in His Word.

1. The Observer
2. The Givers
3. The Gifts
4. The Lesson

THE OBSERVER

(Luke 21:1-4) "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. (2) And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in

thither two mites. (3) And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: (4) For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

1. **The first thing evident in this passage is the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

There is no indication at all that our Master was informed by anyone about the wealth of the rich or the poverty of this woman. Yet, he who is the omniscient God knew everything about everyone before him. He knew how much each possessed, how much each gave, why they gave it, and what the circumstances of their lives were. I stress this fact because I want us ever to remember that he who gave his all to redeem and save us is himself the almighty, omniscient God. **He who is God gave himself for us!**¹

(2 Corinthians 8:9) "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

¹ The fact of Christ's divinity assures us of the certain efficacy of his work. If he is God, he cannot fail. If he can fail, for any reason, to accomplish what he desires or tries to accomplish, then he is not God!

(Philippians 2:5-8) "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (7) But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

That Man who loved us and gave himself for us is himself our God. No wonder then that Paul, when he thought on these things, exclaimed, “*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!*”

2. Now, look at this — Mark tells us, “**He beheld HOW the people cast money into the treasury.**”

He who is the omniscient God beheld everyone there, the rich and the poor. He beheld what they gave and why they gave it.

Let us ever be aware of this fact. Our God observes all things. He looks beyond what we do and observes why we do it. All things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

THE GIVERS

(Luke 21:1-4) "And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. (2)

And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. (3) And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: (4) For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

I have only one thing to say here; but I want you to hear it. There are many in this world who are rich, very rich in material things, even rich in religious tradition, ceremony, and activity, who are poor, utterly destitute before God. And there are many very poor people in this world who are rich, infinitely and eternally, rich toward God, rich in Christ. **Learn what that means.**

- Riches, luxury, ease of life, and earthly exaltation are no indication of God's favor (Ps. 73).
- Poverty, afflictions, and earthly sorrows are no indication of God's disfavor (Job — David — Lazarus).
- Those who have Christ have all; and you who are yet without Christ have nothing. Without Christ you are without God, without promise, without grace, without mercy, without hope!

THE GIFTS

In the temple worship of the Old Testament, in addition to the tithe required by the law, those who were so inclined brought their voluntary gifts (freewill offerings)

and put them in an offering box here called the treasury. These offerings were used in the maintenance of the temple and to supply the priests with those things necessary for the service of the temple and the worship of God. Though the worship of God had degenerated to nothing but religious ritualism during the days of our Lord's earthly ministry, it was customary for people, when they entered the temple to put some money in the box. Many, we are told, who were rich cast in much.

But our Savior calls our attention to a certain, poor widow. She had only two mites to her name. And that two mites is what she put into the collection box. Now listen to what the Master says in verses 3 and 4.

(Luke 21:3-4) "And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: (4) For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but **she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.**"

Anyone who observed such an act as this, were this story not recorded on the pages of Inspiration, would declare that it was an inexcusable act of misplaced zeal. It would be condemned by all as an unnecessary, useless act of presumption.

- Unnecessary because God did not require it.
- Useless because her two mites were materially insignificant.

- Presumptuous because, when she had given all she had, she had not exercised any wisdom or prudence with regard to her future needs.

But the Son of God not only approved of what she did, he called his disciples’ attention to her gift, and said, *Boys, this is what the Bible calls giving!*

1. **Though she gave only two mites, our Savior commends her gift as something both great and good.**

- Great because it involved great sacrifice.
- Good because she gave as unto the Lord, for the glory of God, to the utmost stretch of her ability.

2. **This poor woman’s gift, in itself was small, insignificant, even contemptible in the eyes of men; but it was highly valued and esteemed by the Son of God!**

All that was given by the wealthy was given out of their abundance. It was just the overflow, the excess, what they had left over after buying all they wanted, throwing away all they wanted, and saving all they wanted.

- They gave a portion, but only a portion of what they had. — She gave all!
- They gave out of their wealth. She gave out of her poverty!
- They gave and had much remaining. — She gave everything she had. — All her daily sustenance!

“She did cast in all that she had, even all her living; her whole substance, all that she had in the world; what was to have bought her food, for that day. She left herself nothing, but gave away all, and trusted to providence for immediate supply.” — *John Gill*

- They gave out of a sense of duty. — She gave because she wanted to give.
- They gave to be seen of men. — She gave because she loved the Lord.
- They gave to get glory to themselves. — She gave to the glory of God!
- They gave what they did not need. — She gave what she very much needed.
- They gave their spare change. — She gave everything!

Leftovers

Leftovers are such humble things,
We would not serve to a guest,
And yet we serve them to our Lord
Who deserves the very best.

We give to Him leftover time,
Stray minutes here and there.
Leftover cash we give to Him,
Such few coins as we can spare.

We give our youth unto the world,

To hatred, lust and strife;
Then in declining years we give
To Him the remnant of our life.

I have heard men and women speak with a pretended modesty of giving their “*two mites*.” We have given our “*two mites*” when, like this blessed woman, we have given our all!

Illustration: *James Watson and the Rich Visitor*

THE LESSON

You will find the lesson of this story in 2 Corinthians 9:7.

(2 Corinthians 9:7) "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

Give me your attention for just another minute or two, while I wrap this message up by answering three questions.

1. What motivates such giving as that which this poor widow exemplified?

Believers give, not by legal constraint, but by grace, not by force of law, but by the force of gratitude. Believers

understand what the world can never understand. Why do believer’s give as they do? *Because...*

- We recognize that Christ gave his all for us!
- We realize that everything we have has been given to us.

(1 Corinthians 4:7) "For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*"

- Believer’s love Christ, his gospel, and his people.
- Believer’s understand that it really is more blessed to give than to receive.

2. **Who should give?**

In the light of this story, I cannot imagine anyone asking that question; but just in case...***EVERYONE OF US!***

- Pastors, Elders, Preachers, Teachers — **We ought to set the example in all things!**
- Old and Young
- Rich and Poor

3. **How should we give?**

If you are interested in honoring and serving God with what you possess, I urge you to carefully study the chapters we read earlier — 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

There is an abundance of instruction in the New Testament about Christian giving. All of 1 Corinthians 9, 2 Corinthians 8 and 2 Corinthians 9 are taken up with this subject. But there are no commands to the people of God anywhere in the New Testament about how much we are to give. Tithing and all systems like it are things altogether foreign to the New Testament. Like all other acts of worship, giving is an act of grace. It must be free and voluntary. But there are some plain, simple guidelines laid down in the New Testament for us to follow.

- 1st. First, let us **give ourselves to Christ**. Paul, commending the Macedonian believers as examples in this matter of giving, said, they “*first gave themselves to the Lord*” (2. Cor. 8:5).
- 2nd. Our giving must be **motivated by love** and gratitude towards Christ (2 Cor. 8:8-9). Love needs no law. It is a law unto itself. It is the most powerful and most generous of all motives.
- 3rd. Our gifts must arise from **willing hearts**. — “*If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath*” 2 Cor. 8:12). — If that which you give arises from a willing heart, if it is given freely and cheerfully, it is accepted of God. The Lord is not concerned with the amount of your gift, be it great or small. He looks to the motive behind it.

- 4th. We should give to the work of the gospel **in proportion** to our blessings from the Lord (2 Cor. 16:2). — We are expected to give generously in accordance with our own ability.
- 5th. **All of God’s people should give** (“*everyone*” — 1 Cor. 16:2; “*every man*” — 2 Cor. 9:7). Men and women, rich and poor, old and young — all who are saved by the grace of God are expected to give for the support of God’s church and kingdom.
- 6th. We should be both **liberal and sacrificial** in our giving (2 Cor. 9:5-6). — We have not really given anything until we have, like that “*certain poor widow*” in our text, taken that which we need, want and have use for and given it to the Lord.
- 7th. Our gifts ought to be **planned and purposeful**. — “*Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give*” (2 Cor. 9:7)
- 8th. Yet, our gifts must be **voluntary**, “*not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver*” (2 Cor. 9:7).
- 9th. We are to give **as unto the Lord** (Matt. 6:1-5). — We give, not to be seen of men, but for the honour of Christ, hoping for nothing in return. As much as possible that which we do for Christ needs to be done secretly.
- 10th. **This kind of giving is well-pleasing to God** (Phil. 4:18; Heb. 13:16).

(Philippians 4:18-19) "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from

you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. (19) But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

(Hebrews 13:16) "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Give purposefully, in proportion as the Lord has prospered you. Give secretly. Give cheerfully. Give generously. Give regularly — “*On the first day of the week.*” Give for the glory of God, as unto the Lord.

OUR MOTIVE

Let me see if I can give you a motive for following this poor widow’s example, a motive we cannot resist. Nowhere do I find in the New Testament that believers are commanded to tithe. Such a commandment would be contrary to the gospel of grace and the spirit of the new covenant. Legal commandments are good enough for children of bondage, like Ishmael. But the children of promise are motivated from a better principle. For them it is enough to say,

(2 Corinthians 8:9) "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

We do not divide out our tenth, like religious misers. We give ourselves and all that we have to Christ. Cheerfully we give all that we can for the cause of Christ and the support of the gospel ministry. (Time, money, energy, talents, homes, all!) Why? Because we know his grace.

“Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.” — Brethren, the wealth of God, the treasures of the infinite, the riches of eternity are the possession of our blessed Savior. From the highest throne of glory to the lowest pit in hell, Jesus owns it all. It is true Christ is the lowly man of Nazareth. But he is more. He is the eternal God, possessing all the riches of divine wisdom, power and glory.

“Yet, for your sakes he became poor” (Phil. 2:5-8). — The eternal Son of God took manhood into union with himself. The God of glory robed himself in human flesh. Behold the depths of his poverty at Calvary! He was betrayed, mocked and beaten. He was crucified. God made his Son sin for us! There he was robbed of all the joy of heaven and the comfort of his Father’s presence. His dying bed was a malefactor’s cross. His resting place was a borrowed tomb. What was the reason for such humiliation?

“That ye through his poverty might be rich.” — What riches are ours through the mediation of Christ! In him we have all and abound. The riches of grace and redemption, time and eternity are ours. Do men who know such grace need the threat of the law to make them

tithe? No! The love of Christ constrains us. And in everything grace produces more than the law. Let us then give cheerfully and bountifully.

“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive!” (Acts 20:35). It really is! May the Lord graciously teach us all to abound in this grace also, for Christ’s sake.

Amen.