



Introduction:

This story is about Christ's witness of extraordinary faith. The faith demonstrated by a widow woman was so amazing that Christ called over His disciples to watch (vs. 43). So, what did she do that was so awesome? She threw in two coins that would be worth a fraction of a penny by today's valuation. What may seem minuscule by man's estimation, was of great value to the heart of Christ. It captivated and moved God's heart so, that He had this story recorded twice – Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:2-4. On the surface this text seems to be just about giving, but it goes much deeper. In verse 41, it says that Jesus saw “*how*” the people gave, not just the amount given. It was not the act of giving, but the attitude of the widow's heart that moved Christ. In the same way, God is not impressed simply with our giving. However, our giving reveals our heart, and God cares deeply about the heart's attitude toward giving. Do you have a heart that gives to God and others?

The Focus:

- **How did the widow touch the heart of Christ?**
 - **She gave out of her need.**
 - **She gave out of her faith.**
 - **She gave out of her love for God.**

This widow did not give to God because it was easy or convenient. She gave out of great need. She was totally destitute. She obviously had no husband and it appears no children either. Based on Christ's response (Mark 12:41, 43), this dispels any belief that giving is all about the amount given. Giving is an issue of the heart. What are you doing with your life? How are you using your resources? Are you using them to glorify God and edify others? Just like this widow and the believers in Macedonia (2 Corinthians 8:2-4), we may be experiencing financial struggles, but despite our circumstances, when we give to God, even during our time of need, it truly touches the heart of Christ. She gave out of her “*living*,” that which was for sustaining her very life (Mark 12:44). Where is your heart regarding giving to God? Do you trust in Him that He will provide?

Not only did she give out of her need, she gave out of her faith. This is true, based on her giving. Mark 12:44 says she “*cast in all that she had*.” She didn't hold anything back from God, and Christ's assessment was that she put more in than everyone who had cast into the treasury combined (Mark 12:43). Giving therefore, according to Christ, is not based on what is given, but what is kept. Her life was represented by the gift she gave. In essence she said, “Lord, I give you my life, and all I have is Yours.” According to 2 Corinthians 8:5, this was how the Macedonian believers could give, even while in “*deep poverty*.” By faith, they presented their entire lives into God's hands. They were so passionate about giving – to the point, they begged Paul over and over for him to receive what they had to give to him because they wanted Paul to be able to minister to others (2 Corinthians 8:4). In our flesh, surrender is not easy because it goes

against our nature, but if we exercise our faith, surrender will work in our spirit, which will touch the heart of Christ. Christ modeled a life of surrender; He left all of heaven to be hung on a cross in order to fulfill God's plan and accomplish God's work.

As well, she gave out of her love for God. Humanly speaking, this woman had every reason not to give. Not only was she in extreme poverty, she was a widow. Remember, the scribes made it a practice of taking advantage of widows and their estates (Mark 12:38-40). They took advantage of helpless and defenseless widows, which was contrary to the law (Exodus 22:22). Regardless of how they may have been treating her, she still desired to give to God. Only a deep love for God would motivate someone in her situation to give in the manner she gave. She realized that all of this was about her relationship with God, not about the scribes or anybody else. Her giving was an issue of love. Jesus stood there just to witness her gift of love. When we give of ourselves and of our resources, it influences others. We will never know the far-reaching impact of our giving until we get to heaven.

Response to the Sermon:

God desires our love for Him more than anything else in this world (Mark 12:30), and our attitude about giving to Him is a barometer of that love. Paul stated that our giving proves the "*sincerity of our love*" – it demonstrates the genuineness and the truthfulness of our love (2 Corinthians 8:8). Paul's exhortation and encouragement to the Corinthians includes the comment that they were to "*abound*" in the grace of giving. Does giving of yourself and your resources just flow out of your love for God and others? What opportunities do you have to grow in giving that will allow you to prove the honesty and truth of your love? What can you do? What can your family do? What can your small group do?

Bible Study Thoughts & Questions:

Paul, speaking to the believers at Corinth, stated in 2 Corinthians 8:19 that they were of a "*ready mind*." This means that they were predisposed to giving; they had a willingness to give so that others could be ministered to (2 Corinthians 9:1). As well, this heart attitude of giving was reflected in the life of the believers in Macedonia. Paul, exhorting the Corinthians who evidently had greater wealth than the Macedonians, was pressed to challenge those believers to give too. He went further in stating that not only are we to have a willing mind to give, we must be ready to do it (2 Corinthians 8:11-12).

Giving like God is contagious. What did Paul say was a result of the Corinthians "*zeal*" (fervent desire) to give (2 Corinthians 9:3)?

Regarding ministering to the body of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:1), what is the principle of giving promised in 2 Corinthians 9:6?

Thinking of the previous verse, as it relates to the story of the widow and her giving, what does this mean concerning our giving?

As we give to God's work and to the ministry of the body, what is the result of our giving (2 Corinthians 9:11-12)?

As we give like God gave (2 Corinthians 9:15; 1 Timothy 1:14), what can we expect to see in the lives of others (2 Corinthians 9:14)?

Application Questions:

On Sunday, Pastor Dan spoke about the widow who gave two mites, which demonstrated her love for God. It seems that widows, who should have been well taken care of (Exodus 22:22), were being mistreated severely (Mark 12:40). Knowing this, it proves even more her faith toward God, not in religion or its leaders. The widow in this story was extremely poor. Her financial situation is described as "*want*" (falling short) and "*penury*" (a deficit; poverty). She had little material wealth. But she was overflowing with faith in God (Mark 12:44). Examining and assessing your financial status, how would the heart of your giving compare?

What are some ways that you can be more aware of your giving?

What can you do to help you be ready to give (2 Corinthians 9:4)?

Why should we decide to give today, regardless of how much we have (James 1:11; 4:14; 1 Peter 1:24)?

According to Paul, how do we determine how much we give (2 Corinthians 9:7)?

Prayer:

- Pray that your faith would grow and abound in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7; 10:15-16).
- Pray that you would have a “*ready mind*” to give to God’s work (2 Corinthians 8:19).
- Pray that you would look for opportunities to give (2 Corinthians 8:11).
- Pray that your faith would influence your giving, allowing you to experience the joy of being a grace giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).