

The Widow's Mite

by J.C. Ryle

The Lord Jesus observes everything, no matter how small or insignificant, and measures liberality by the proportion of gifts to property and the degree of self-denial.

Scripture: Luke 21:1

Topics: "Generosity", "Stewardship"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the significance of the widow's offering in Luke 21:1-4, illustrating how Jesus observes all acts of giving, regardless of their size. He highlights that true generosity is measured not by the amount given but by the proportion of one's wealth and the self-denial involved in the gift. Ryle encourages believers to recognize that their contributions, no matter how small, are valued by God and that the act of giving is a reflection of their faith. He warns against stinginess and urges Christians to regularly support God's work, reminding them that they will be held accountable for their financial stewardship. Ultimately, Ryle calls for a spirit of generosity among Christians, who should be eager to give in response to the abundant gifts they have received from God.

Transcript

"And he looked up and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in there two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you that this poor widow has 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, has cast in all the living that she had." (Luke 21:1-4)

We learn, for one thing, from these verses, how keenly our Lord Jesus Christ observes the things that are done upon earth. We read that "He looked up and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites." We might well suppose that our Lord's mind at this season would have been wholly occupied with the things immediately before him. His betrayal, unjust judgment, cross, passion, death, were all close at hand; and he knew it. The approaching destruction of the temple, the scattering of the Jews, the long period of time before his second advent, were all things which were spread before his mind like a picture. It was but a few moments and he spoke of them. And yet at a time like this we find him taking note of all that is going on around him! He thinks it not beneath him to observe the conduct of a "certain poor widow."

Let us remember that the Lord Jesus never changes. The thing that we read of in the passage before us is the thing that is going on all over the world. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place." Nothing is too little

to escape his observation. No act is too trifling to be noted down in the book of his remembrance. The same hand that formed the sun, moon, and stars was the hand that formed the tongue of the gnat and the wing of the fly with perfect wisdom. The same eye that sees the council chambers of kings and emperors is the eye that notices all that goes on in the laborer's cottage. "All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." He measures littleness and greatness by a very different measure from the measure of man. Events in our own daily life to which we attach no importance are often very grave and serious matters in Christ's sight. Actions and deeds in the weekly history of a poor man, which the great of this world think trivial and contemptible, are often registered as weighty and important in Christ's book. He lives who marked the gift of one "poor widow" as attentively as the gifts of many "rich men."

Let the believer of low degree take comfort in this mighty truth. Let him remember daily that his Master in heaven takes account of everything that is done on earth, and that the lives of cottagers are noticed by him as much as the lives of kings. The acts of a poor believer have as much dignity about them as the acts of a prince. The little contributions to religious objects which the laborer makes out of his scanty earnings are as much valued in God's sight as a ten-thousand pound note from a peer. To know this thoroughly is one great secret of contentment. To feel that Christ looks at what a man is and not at what a man has will help to preserve us from envious and murmuring thoughts. Happy is he who has learned to say with David, "I am poor and needy; but the Lord thinks upon me."

We learn, for another thing, who they are whom Christ reckons most liberal in giving money to religious purposes. We read that he said of her who cast in two mites into the treasury, "She has cast in more than they all. All these of their abundance have cast in unto the offerings of God; but she of her penury has cast in all the living that she had." These words teach us that Christ looks at something more than the mere amount of men's gifts in measuring their liberality. He looks at the proportion which their gifts bear to their property. He looks at the degree of self-denial which their giving entails upon them. He would have us know that some persons appear to give much to religious purposes who in God's sight give very little, and that some appear to give very little who in God's sight give very much.

The subject before us is peculiarly heart-searching. On no point perhaps do professing Christians come short so much as in the matter of giving money to God's cause. Thousands, it may be feared, know nothing whatever of "giving" as a Christian duty. The little giving that there is, is confined entirely to a select few in the churches. Even among those who give, it may be boldly asserted that the poor generally give far more in proportion to their means than the rich. These are plain facts which cannot be denied. The experience of all who collect for religious societies and Christian charities will testify that they are correct and true.

Let us judge ourselves in this matter of giving that we may not be judged and condemned at the great day. Let it be a settled principle with us to watch against stinginess, and whatever else we do with our money, to give regularly and habitually to the cause of God. Let us remember, that although Christ's work does not depend on our money, yet Christ is pleased to test the reality of our grace by allowing us to help him. If we cannot find it in our hearts to give anything to Christ's cause, we may well doubt the reality of our faith and charity. Let us recollect that our use of the money God has given us will have to be accounted for at the last day. The "Judge of all" will be he who noticed the widow's mite. Our incomes and expenditures will be brought to light before an assembled world. If we prove in that day to have been rich toward ourselves but poor toward God, it would be good if we had never been born. Not least, let us look around the world and ask, Where are the men that were ever ruined by liberal giving to godly purposes, and who ever found

himself really poorer by lending to the Lord? We shall find that the words of Solomon are strictly true: "There is that scatters and yet increases; and there is that withholds more than is meet and it tends to poverty."

Finally, let us pray for rich men who as yet know nothing of the luxury of "giving" that their riches may not be their ruin. Hundreds of charitable and religious movements are standing still continually for lack of funds. Great and effectual doors are open to the church of Christ for doing good all over the world, but for lack of money few can be sent to enter in by them. Let us pray for the Holy Ghost to come down on all our congregations and teach all our worshipers what to do with their money. Of all people on earth, none ought to be such liberal givers as Christians. All that they have they owe to the free gift of God. Christ, the Holy Ghost, the Gospel, the Bible, the means of grace, the hope of glory, all are undeserved incomparable gifts which millions of heathen never heard of. The possessors of such gifts ought surely to be "ready to distribute" and "willing to communicate." Freely we have received; freely we ought to give.

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