

The Power of Giving_Tony Jones

Welcome:

Specific to you...

Introduction:

Today, we're pressing pause on our *Hard Questions, Honest Answers* series — and we're doing so for a few important reasons.

First, we want to give you space to process, pray, and reflect on the weighty cultural issues we've been walking through together. These aren't just theological topics — they hit close to home.

Second, it gives Pastor a much-needed breather. These sermons haven't just been heavy to hear — they've been heavy to prepare and preach.

And third, it gives time to prepare for what's next. Next Sunday, we'll continue the series with a message on *Sexual Purity* — a topic that is both timely and deeply needed.

So today, we're shifting gears. But we're not stepping away from something important — we're stepping into something just as essential.

This morning, I want to speak to you about "The Power of Giving."

Because while we often think of ministry in spiritual terms — worship, prayer, preaching — there's also a very real, very practical side. Ministry takes resources. And the truth is, without faithful, consistent, and joyful giving, the mission of the church is made more difficult.

As one of your elders, I want to help us see giving not as a burden, but as a powerful act of worship — one that reflects our heart, fuels the mission, and honors God.

And if you're a first-time guest today — let me put your heart at ease. This isn't our typical message. Most Sundays, we walk through books of the Bible, verse by verse. But today's message is just as biblical and just as necessary. As you continue worshiping with us, you'll see that our goal is always the same: to preach the truth and build up the body of Christ.

Having taken the time to explain all of that...

Join me now in the Gospel of Luke as we talk about "The Power of Giving."

We're going to be in Luke 21:1–4. So grab your Bible, open your notes, and let's dive in.

Here's the truth we're going to see today:

God cares more about how we give than what we give.

And we're going to learn that from one of the most unlikely role models in all of Scripture — a poor widow. That's how Jesus refers to her. She had very little, yet she gave in a way that caught the attention of heaven.

So go ahead and turn to Luke 21:1–4. If you need a Bible, just raise your hand and we'll bring one to you. If you don't have one at home, keep it — that's our gift to you.

Do you have it? Are you ready? Alright then....

[Luke 21.1-2](#) “1 He [Jesus] looked up and saw the rich dropping their offerings into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow dropping in two tiny coins.

As we work through this text you’re going to see that...

Jesus is moved when our heart is fatter (wealthier) than our pockets (bank account)

As in when our love for Jesus and all that he’s doing, is greater than our desire for money and what it can do for us.

Jesus is in the temple with his disciples during the time of offering. He watched the people as they placed their offering in the collection box. Similar to when you place your offering in the box back of the of the worship center or when you give through the Bridge App. Then like now, Jesus see you when you give.

He sees those who are wealthy, the poor, and everyone in between. He’s sees those who are financially secure. And he sees those who really don’t have it to give, but give anyway.

Jesus sees you when you give, and as you’ll see in moment it’s not about the dollar amount or who you are. It’s not about the position you hold in the church or the market place. It’s not about how long you’ve been a Christian. It’s about the heart behind your offering. It’s about what’s motivating you to give.

Jesus is looking at you. He’s looking to see if, indeed, you truly love him. He’s looking for your motivation for giving. He’s looking to see if the amount you gave is consistent with the level of love you have for Him. Nothing that we do goes unnoticed by Jesus, he sees all, and he’s always looking. He’s not like the night manager that falls asleep b/c they didn’t get enough sleep. Our God never sleeps or slumbers ([Psalm 121:3-4](#)) He never rests.

After observing the givers, Jesus make a proclamation regarding them. He says...

3 “Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all of them.

You would think that Jesus would celebrate the people who gave more, but he doesn’t do that. Instead he takes what he observed regarding the widows heart and he makes a definitive statement regarding her. He says “truly I tell you”.

He’s emphatic about this thing. I’ve been scoping out the scene and this poor lady gave more that everyone else combined. She may have only given two pennies, but she gave more. She gave sacrificially and that spoke volumes to Jesus regarding her love for God.

The others... **put in gifts out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”** (v.4)

When you pockets are fat. When you got money in your saving account. When you’re able to spend how you want to spend b/c you’re financially secure. Giving is no big deal to you, b/c you got it like that. So whether you give a little or a lot its really no big deal, b/c you know that’s there more from where that came from.

But what if you don’t have it like that? What if you’re broke. Like your on the verge of having your lights turned off or evicted from your house? When you’re broke a dollar is a lot of money. Especially now days with things costing way more than what they did pre-Covid. Can you imagine the widow with an uncertain financial future. Coming to our church and when its time to receive the offering she stands and drop her last 2 pennies in the box.

Prop DH walk and drop to pennies in a metal plate or box.

She’s in line thinking about the groceries that she needs. And the fact that her shoes have wholes in them. Or how she’s going to pay her light bill. She thinking all those things, but I don’t think she thinking about not

giving. About only giving 1 penny instead of 2. She had made it up in her heart to give a certain amount and that's what she did.

(Being broke) Growing up we weren't poor in the sense of living in poverty, but there were times when we barely got by. I remember going to Burger King and this was before the days of combo meals. And my mom would order a whooper with Cheese cut in half. 1 drink with two curly fries and a large fry. Mom would give my sister Jerica and I each a piece of the whopper. Split the fries 3-ways. And split the drink 3 ways. She did that to make sure my sister and I had something to eat. She could'n't afford for buy each of us our own meals.

But there was one thing that my mom never cut in half. or divided 3 ways and that was her tithe to our home church. Whether there was food in fridge or not. Light bill due or not. She made sure that she gave a portion of what she earned back to the Lord. And you know what, even though we didn't have everything we wanted, we always had enough to get by.

I think that's the Spirit in which the widow gave. I think that's what caused Jesus to commend her. That's why Jesus chose to use her as an example of what it means to give sacrificially.

This world has gotten things twisted. We think that the wealthy. People who are famous. Those who command our attention. Those who can do seemingly impossible things like "Dude Perfect". That they deserve our attention. That they deserve our. That we should desire to be like them.

Do you know what happens to a society that is bent of "Keeping up with the Kardashians" figuratively speaking?

When we give position and importance to a few select people, and disregard everyone that doesn't meet our ever changing standard for importance. We elevate superficial, silly things that ultimately fail glorify God or edify our fellow man.

Like in the days of Christ all of us could stand to learn a thing or two from the widow in the text. Jesus didn't commend the amount she gave, he commended her b/c in order to give she had to sacrifice. She had to sacrifice other things that she needed and follow what Holy Spirit prompted her heart to do.

Like I told you before, everything flows from the heart. And the only thing that motivates you too give should be your love for Jesus and your desire show Him that He's number 1 in your life. Giving is just one of the many ways that we get show our love for Jesus.

Nonetheless, through her gift the widow was proclaiming her love for God. She said take this and do as you please, I just want to contribute to the work of ministry. You can do more with it than I can. I want to show you that although I don't have much, I trust you more than what I do have.

v.4 literally says that "she gave all she had to live on". Quick side note I'm not advocating that you do that... Some uneducated Bible twisters have used this passage of scripture to manipulate people into believing that when you have a need all you have to do is sow a seed. I.E. You need money to pay a bill - give sacrificially to the church. You need a new car b/c your is on its last leg - sow a seed to the church. You need a mate - sow a seed. You want financial increase - give sacrificially to the church. The belief is that the bigger the seed and more faith you have - the quicker and bigger your blessing will be. So you either need to give until your on the verge of bankruptcy. Or until God comes through for way you want him too.

The formal name for this false teaching is called "prosperity gospel and or "Word of Faith". Often the language of "seed faith offerings" is used to describe what it takes to get what you need from God. They'll say things like: Sow a seed (which means give to the church) \$10 and trust God to give you \$1,000. And should you not see a return on your seed it's b/c you either didn't give until it hurt like "the widow" did or you don't have enough faith in God.

In the end the only person that benefits are the prosperity preachers, the seed sowers never get the return they've been promised. Yes God loves those who give sacrificially and there are times with when God blesses us with financial increase, but it has nothing to do with how much we give to the church or some talking head on Youtube.

Jesus was moved by the widow b/c of the heart in which she gave with. That's why we ask people to give according to the amount God presses upon their heart to give. We don't set a minimum. And we certainly don't teach that giving guarantees a blessing. The offering we receive is not a personal scratch and win ticket. It's one of the many ways that you get to express the love and trust for God. So by all means give, but don't view it as a means to get what you want from God.

BTT the widow gave "all that she had away," there was no safety net. No Jewelry to pawn. Or bonds to cash in. She gave her very last trusting that the Lord would provide for her.

(Sky diving) **The trust she had was similar to a person that sky dives. It's all about trust for them, they trust that their chute will deploy and that it will deliver them safely to the ground. They trust that the chute is able to carry their weight in mid air as they glide back to the earth. If they didn't believe in their equipment, they wouldn't jump. No one in their right mind jumps out of a perfectly good air plane with out the certainty of being able to get down safely.**

So it is when you give, as you give you're trusting that God can and will do more with what you gave, regardless of the amount. You believe in the mission of the church more than the value printed on the money in your pocket. And so you give faithfully from what God has allotted you to have.

To further illustrate that He's moved by fat hearted givers vs people with deep pockets. Jesus compares the surplus givers to the widow. Check out what he says....

4 For all these people have put in gifts out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

Once again, it's easier to give when you got it, than when you don't. There's a difference between those who give out of their abundance (i.e., year-end bonus) and those who give but really can't afford to.

But, and I do mean but. One financial status is not more appealing to Christ than the other. Some of Jesus' disciples were dirt poor, and others like Matthew were men of means. It's not about your financial status, and Jesus heart isn't moved just b/c your poor. What moves Jesus. What touches his heart is your for him and the ministry that He's given you to serve him through.

Unfortunately, some have incorrectly interpreted v.4 to mean that we should strive to be poor and that poor people mean more God. I know this sounds foreign to us in this community. Especially giving the fact that most people in this area are college educated and make at-least 120-thousand year according to our demographic survey results.

But let's say you live in Southeast Raleigh, where the annual income is much lower. Or you were raised in poverty. This idea of God showing special favor to the poor, although completely un-biblical would sound good to you. And you might be spurred on to practice it.

The teaching that Jesus shows more favor to poor Christians than those who are financially stable is called "The Poverty gospel". It's the exact opposite of the prosperity gospel, but both of them are false doctrines intended to deceive you.

The poverty gospel teaches that God wants you to be poor and sick. And that if you're healthy or wealthy, its because you do not have enough faith.

This false doctrine is used to validate and pacify poor people. They say things like God wants you be sick so that he can demonstrate his power through healing you. They bend bend text like [Matthew 6:19](#) that says....

“19 “Don’t store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.”

To mean that its wrong for Christian to have any earthly possessions beyond their basic needs. And if you have more, you need to get rid of it b/c it gets in the way of your ability to worship God.

But too that I say... What about the examples we see in scripture like [Acts 2:45](#) where wealthy Christians helped to fund the work of ministry? Were they wrong? Were they any less godly than the saints who had less? Absolutely not.

Poverty preachers villianize Christians who are financially secure, to make poor people feel good about themselves. To suppress any want or desire to elevate themselves.

So, what is a Biblical theology (a proper teaching) for giving to the church?

1. **Make sure that you’re giving for the right reasons.** ([Luke 21:1-4](#)) Before your offering hits the plate Jesus has throughly observed your heart and he knows your motives for giving. Therefore, Make sure its b/c you want to show your love for Christ and help further his gospel ministry.

2. **Give according to the Holy Spirits’ direction.** ([2Corinthians 9:7](#))

Some ministries teach that you should tithe. A tithe is 10% of your first-fruits, which is your gross income. So, if you make 100-Thousand annually, you should tithe 10% of it to the church which is 10-thousand dollars.

At BFC we teach that each person should given according to what the Holy Spirit directs them to give. The reason being is b/c it’s more consistent with what we see being taught in the NT and it works to ensure that your motives are pure when you give.

Tithing was required under Levitical law, they were to give 10% of their crops and livestock to the temple. Jesus’ death fulfilled the law. The NT doesn’t command Christians to tithe, it does set the expectation for us to be generous as we give to fund the work of the ministry. We examples of this in ([Acts 4:34](#), [1Cor 16:2](#), [2Cor 8:1-5](#))

Each of us is responsible to give according to what God places in our heart to give.

However, if Bridge is your church home - meaning this is place where you’re being feed spiritually. You’ve submitted to the elders and their teaching. You believe in our mission and want to help us fulfill it. And you enjoy fellowshiping with us. Then you should give here.

It just makes sense, plus its the right thing to do. We’re a family and in a family everyone has to do their part. Everyone has to contribute. If you don’t do your part, then others have to do more to cover whats lacking.

In [Acts 2:42](#) we see this beautiful picture of the believer in the Jerusalem church: fellowshiping, sharing meals, praying for one another, and being taught God’s Word. They’re engaging in the work of ministry. In order to make that happen the people gave. They gave b/c they wanted to grow spiritually and they wanted others to experience the same. So they gave according to what God placed on their hearts to give. And you should do the same if you’re not already.

One last thought of tithing. Although tithing isn’t a command, it’s still a good practice. It helps us to have a set amount that we set apart and give to the Lord. Over 17 Years ago, Sheila and I decided to tithe any financial increase that came our way: Salaries, Bonuses, birthday money, love gifts. Whenever we get paid, we set aside a minimum of 10% for the church. And as we feel led we give other places, but we always give to BFC first.

3. **Don’t give unless you’ve got it.**

Giving is an act of worship and when you give knowing that you really don't have it because of poor financial decisions, it influences your worship. Some, like I mentioned early give out of necessity hoping that "the seed they sow in the collection plate" will yield financial increase. They don't need to sow a seed, they need to get their financial house in order.

But you might be wondering about the widow in the text, she was poor. She didn't have it to give but she gave anyway. Yes she did. However, she lived in a time when women were treated like 2nd class citizens, they were oppressed by men and as a result, they were entirely dependent on them. To a widow losing her husband would have been a death sentence, b/c in most cases widow were left with no way provide for themselves. Yes the poor widow was in financial ruin, but its not b/c she mismanaged her survivors benefits. She literal is the victim of her circumstances.

The bottom is this, if you have a steady stream of income and you're living within your means (according to a set budget) you should be able to give freely without the fear of having your car reposed or your lights turned off.

If that's you, I want you to know that we have financial counselors that can help you get your finances in order by creating a budget and holding you accountable to spend according to it. There's noting cute about a person who works everyday, but has nothing to show for it. We can help you.

The amount you give should be a sign of your love for Jesus and his church. But if you have don't have a source of income or if your financial house is in disarray, hold off on giving until you get you get your money strait.

Those are 3 principles regarding giving to the church and handling your finances that you can apply today. Never forget that...

God cares more about how we give than what we give.

Speaking of God caring how we give... Here at BFC we strive to practice what we preach. To be a good example...

Slide with percentages

As you know we have a set budget for the ministry year, last year our budget was \$115,000. By God's grace and your generosity, we meet our budget and surpassed by more than \$30,000

65% of our budget goes towards: Salaries, Monthly expenses, & Facilities

30% goes to Outreach, Mission work, and GCC

5% goes towards compassion helps

As of today, we have \$45,000 in our saving account

We're striving to use our finances wisely, while at the same being financially nimble so that we can take advantage of ministry opportunities when they present themselves. Let's continue to be wise stewards of what God has allowed us use. And never forget that God cares more about how we give, that what we give.

Lets pray...

Closing:

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