

All That She Had

When the Lord Jesus had finished preaching the crowd of listeners began to disperse. The scribes and Pharisees also withdrew and Jesus, with perhaps His first moment of leisure in the whole day, sat down near the entrance to the temple treasury to rest. There were several chests set out to receive the gifts and offerings of the people and as He sat the Saviour observed the worshippers bringing their gifts.

The what and the why

The people were not miserly and Mark and Luke tell us ‘many that were rich cast in much’. Whether there was a display of showiness about this giving is not explicitly said and there need not have been. The Lord knew the hearts and motives of those He saw and the circumstances of their giving. Let us never forget, nothing is hid from the Lord.

Teaching the disciples

The attention of the Lord was drawn to a ‘certain poor widow’ who came to make an offering. The Lord noted her offering was small in comparison to the amounts contributed by the wealthy men who went before her. She put in two mites, a farthing, or a quarter, a small fraction of the amount given by others. This supplied the Lord with a teaching opportunity for His disciples. Soon these men would be looked to for guidance in the formation and organisation of gatherings of the Lord’s people. Here was a lesson about giving.

Practical provision

Finance plays a major part in the management of many churches for obvious reasons. A church’s income not only services the immediate needs of the ministry and organisation, it enables outreach and supports initiatives. The early church cared for the poor, fed the hungry and supported widows. It gathered funds and sent gifts to ministers and churches in need. The apostle Paul gives good New Testament guidance for believers with respect to giving, and none of us should be blind to our responsibilities.

A deeper lesson

But we would be wrong to limit the Lord’s teaching here to mere money. When the Saviour called His disciples to attend to the event unfolding before them it was with the view to reminding them, and us, that everything we have is from the Lord, supplied by God’s goodness, and bestowed for God’s glory.

A practical example

Whenever the Lord begins what He has to say with the word ‘verily’ it is because it is important and requires careful attention. As always, the Lord was distinguishing between spiritual matters and fleshy or worldly matters, between outward religious form and those gospel principles that influence a believer’s heart and inspire our conduct. He was providing a practical example of the spiritual truths He had spent all day teaching.

Generosity surpasses duty

For many people the subject of giving to the Lord and to the Lord’s work is thought about in terms of obligation and duty. However, motivation for those who have discovered God’s grace and know God’s mercy is not framed in terms of duty but flows from dedication and a desire to give back to the Lord from a thankful heart, and a generous spirit.

It costs to give

The rich men gave out of their wealth and their prosperity. It did not hurt them to give. Their giving provided a self-serving purpose. They could make a show and be seen to do as they did. The widow gave out of her need and poverty. She had nothing to boast. She could not give more as to value, indeed, she gave much less. Yet, Jesus declares this widow woman gave more in proportion to what she had than all the rich men in proportion to their wealth.

Highly esteemed

The widow’s offering though small in itself was greater in the estimation of God and Christ, and more highly valued by them, than all the rich men put together. Why? Because what she gave, she gave in faith, and from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God. Her gift was not obligation but dedication, not duty performed but thanksgiving.

‘Even all her living’

Once again the Saviour is speaking about heart-desire and gospel grace. The rich men gave from their abundance, that is, they gave from what they had left after they had served their own needs and satisfied their own desires. The woman gave to the Lord first, ‘all that she had, even all her living’.

Trusting God

Brothers and sisters, the Lord does not need our money, nor will He be constrained without it. This woman, a poor widow with no obvious or immediate source of supply, trusted God and gave God all she had in the world. What was to have bought her food for that day she gave to the Lord. She left herself nothing, she gave away all and trusted to God’s providence for what would become of her.

Faith first

Let this not be a lesson about money but a lesson about faith. A lesson about trust and confidence in the Lord. When we first experienced God’s grace in our conversion we gave our lives to the Lord, placed our substance at His disposal, committed all to His care, and pledged to trust Him for all things because we understood what He had done for us in Christ, at the cross, in mercy. What a blessed state to be in. This poor widow made an offering to the Lord of all she had. Jesus saw it and commended it. We, too, have two mites; soul and body: and these are both the Lord’s. Let us in faith lay all at His feet in gratitude and praise for His mercy and grace.

Amen

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