

The Lord Is Watching

"And He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And He called His disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on," (Mark 12:41-44 ESV).

This wonderful story demonstrates the Lord's interest in a person's self-denial and trust in God's provision. God takes care of everything anyway, so why not give sacrificially? This must have been the driving force in why the woman gave as she did. One can not identify any characteristic of selfishness in her.

However there is something even more telling in this passage than what the woman did in her offering. It was the fact that the Lord was watching the people put money into the offering box. Imagine being a rich person! Actually, you are a rich person according to the world's standards. So, imagine you are a rich person giving your money as the collection tray passes on each Sunday morning, and there sitting just across from you is Jesus – watching you! Are you going to give, and if you are, what are you giving that would cause Jesus to think that you are giving sacrificially?

Why are people so stingy when it comes to giving to the Lord? The story is told of an old miser who asked his preacher why people always criticized him for being a miser, as he often had informed everyone that he had made provision to leave everything he possessed to charity when he died. The preacher responded, "Well, let me tell you about the pig and the cow. The pig was lamenting to the cow one day about how unpopular he was. 'People are always talking about your gentleness and your kindness,' said the pig. 'You give milk and cream, but I give even more. I give bacon and ham – I give bristles and they even pickle my feet! Still no one likes me. I'm just a pig. Why is this?' The cow thought a minute, and then said, 'Well, maybe it is because I give while I'm still living.'"

Some people are waiting to leave a fat check to the Lord when they die, but do not remember to put God first until they get to that point. No matter the intentions, if we refuse to give in such a manner that it represents how God has blessed us, then why give at all? And, sadly, some people just do not give. Some choose what to give out of what they find in their wallet or purse during the assembly. Others decide what to give after all the bills are paid. These represent those who give out of their plenty! They give a token. Those who do so do not realize the blessings that go with liberal giving. Liberal givers think out and plan their giving, recognizing that God is going to provide if they give sacrificially.

Remember the connection between giving and receiving. The Lord said, "Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you," (Luke 6:38). Not only will you receive back, but

the Lord said that what you will receive back will be multiplied. It is the old law of sowing and reaping. In fact, the apostle Paul used that law in his discussion on giving money to the Lord. He said, "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully," (2 Corinthians 9:6). It is like the friend who told me recently that he put out fifty-eight tomato plants this summer. He went on to say that on one day he got six five-gallon buckets of tomatoes. That was just one day. If God can do that with 58 tomato plants, what can He do for you when you have given sacrificially to His cause?

Some people say, "Hey, worship is between me and God!" True! What you give is your business. But do not forget . . . Jesus IS watching!

– Scott