

Contributing to the Kingdom - August 4th - Pastor Ezra

MARK 12:41-42 (NLT)

The Widow's Offering

"And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. 43 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."

ACTS 20: 24, 32-35 (AMPLIFIED)

24 But I do not consider my life as something of value or dear to me, so that I may [with joy] finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify faithfully of the good news of God's [precious, undeserved] grace [which makes us free of the guilt of sin and grants us eternal life].

32 And now I commend you to God [placing you in His protective, loving care] and [I commend you] to the word of His grace [the counsel and promises of His unmerited favour]. His grace is able to build you up and to give you the [rightful] inheritance among all those who are sanctified [that is, among those who are set apart for God's purpose—all believers]. 33 I had no desire for anyone's silver or gold or [expensive] clothes. 34 You know personally that these hands ministered to my own needs [working in manual labour] and to [those of] the people who were with me. 35 In everything I showed you [by example] that by working hard in this way you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed [and brings greater joy] to give than to receive.'"

1. A life of service

There is no passage particularly to a church in a moment that was specifically consumers rather than contributors.

In ancient times, there was an unspoken understanding that WHEN you choose to follow Jesus you SIGNED UP FOR A LIFE OF SERVICE.

Mark 10:45

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the difference between being a contributor and a consumer in Jesus' church?

2. What is the example that Jesus gave us?

3. What is Jesus calling us to do?

"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

- Jesus lived his life as though nothing was below him
- He was baptized by John, though John thought he was not worthy
- He fed multitudes
- He healed the sick and associated with the untouchable
- He washed his disciple's feet, the work of the lowest servant
- He took on the weight of all humankind's sins and ultimately died for those whom he did not have to.

It is our call to follow that example, we are called to BE with him. And BECOME like him. And DO as he did.

Christ has called us to contribute to the kingdom through living a life of service.

Our hearts need to let go of the long list of our wants/needs. And allow the holy spirit to move through us to contribute to the kingdom of God.

We do not want to operate from a position of self-serving. But a position of Christ's LOVE.

Walking in a life of service comes out of the overflow of becoming like Christ and doing as he did. We serve as an act of obedience to our King.

2. A life of stewardship

Jesus drew the disciple's attention to this woman as she displayed faith in complete contrast to those other givers.

The others seemed to give out of pride and shallowness, yet this poor widow, a double disadvantage, she gives ALL her resources to God.

She put faith in God completely, trusting Him to provide her needs ... she gave everything, and God saw her heart. We are called to live a life of stewardship.

And we can learn what stewardship looks like from this woman,

OUESTIONS:

- 4. How do we do what Jesus is calling us to do?

- 5.What example can we
- learn from the widow when it comes to stewardship?

- 6. What are we call to steward? Is it only money?

someone who was a social outcast, overlooked, she understood what stewardship meant

Rather than us typically only giving to God from our abundance, we should give from our sacrifice.

We are called to steward our time.

- Our gifts.
- Our talents
- Our dreams

1 Peter 4:10-11

"God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. 11 Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen."

3. The body is called to action

CHURCH is not an organization... but an organism. Alive. You, me, us.

When the body is moving, it is healthy. Rather, when the body is stagnant - deterioration starts to take place.

Ephesians 4:15-16

"Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.."

AS EACH PART does its own special work - which was GOD GIVEN. It helps the other parts grow so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

7. How can we be good stewards?
8. Why is being an active part of the church so important?
9. How does Paul explain the interaction among the church?
10. What are we called to do instead of simply attending church?
11. How do we accomplish this?

Without you serving in the place God is calling you to, the whole body feels the effect of it.

We are called to BE the church. Not simply ATTEND church.

Putting it all together (Application)

- 1. We are called to serve. Consumerism is a dangerous trend among the church of Christ. The mindset of being served and not having to serve gives us a false feeling of self need. It centers our relationship with God on us and not on him. There are plenty teachings in the bible to contradict this mindset. But one alone can debunk it really fast, Jesus the son of the living God and part of the Holy Trinity came to serve and not to be served. If Jesus, knowing who he is, centers his relationship with his father on serving his father; what makes us think that we should centered our relationship with God on having him serve us? Are we better than Jesus? No, we are not. But we are his followers, and as such we are called to follow his example. We should serve and not be served.
- 2. Making the hard decisions is part of our calling. Managing time, money, resources is not an easy task. It requires priority management, discipline, and self awareness among other things. Having the understanding of that are managing something that has been giving to us and therefore not ours completely helps us make more responsible decisions.. Making these types of decisions are part of the calling.

The widow in the synagogue gives us a lesson on how to manage money as a resource. Money for her was the resource to subsist and she didn't have much of it. But she did not give out of her abundance, she did out of her obedience. Knowing that what she had (as little as i may be) was not hers but God's. And had to make the hard decision of putting God first and in that way honor him and show him her love and obedience.

3. He who loves, shows it. We are called to action our faith. To be an active part of Jesus' body (the church) and contribute with our gifts talents and resources. We are called to action, not to expect only to be served but to serve as Jesus served us. Because who ever loves shows his love by acting on it.

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