

**Sermon for Pentecost 25 (Series B) / Our Offerings**  
**Text: Mark 12:41-44                      Preached on 10-07-2007**

**Introduction:**

I'm sure that most, if not all of you remember the Bible Story of the widow and her offering from your Sunday School days. If it's been awhile, you may have learned this lesson from the King James Version of the Bible. In that version it wasn't the story of the widow's offering, but of the widow's mite! What in the world is a mite? That's the question I asked myself the first time attending a LWML meeting. As it turned out, the mites collected at LWML meetings are coins that go to support both home and world missions. Now you may ask, "How far can a few coins go in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ?" Obviously a few coins, by themselves, can't accomplish too much. When these few coins are collected together with the coins of every other LWML organization Synod-wide, however, they add up to a lot. That money accomplishes a great deal! That's why it is said that *Mites are Mighty!*

Today we will analyze why Jesus pointed out this widow's small, seemingly insignificant mite (or offering) to His disciples. What did He want to teach them, and us, by doing so? Because people have so many wrong ideas about the offerings they give, it is only fitting that we take a closer look at...

**Theme: The Truth about Our Offerings!**  
**Part I: Jesus observes the size of the gift**  
**Part II: Jesus commends the source of the gift**

**Part I: Jesus observes the size of the gift**

This account begins with Jesus sitting in the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem, watching as people put their offerings into the temple treasury. As Jesus watched, He undoubtedly heard the clink, clink, clink of the single coins, as well as the thump of whole bags of coins. The rich and poor alike came and offered their gifts to the Lord. As they did so, Jesus, "**Watched**" (v. 41). The word for *watched* here brings out the idea that Jesus watched intently. He was a very interested observer. He was paying close attention to who the people were and what they were giving.

Now you may be saying to yourself, "Are you kidding me? Why would Jesus care so much about people's offerings?" We get an answer to that question when we consider the timeframe in which this event took place.

It was the Tuesday of Holy Week. In just three days Jesus would be hanging from a crude, wooden cross. So in the middle of the most historic week in Jesus' life, what was He doing? He was in the temple, watching the offerings that people were giving! Why? As the owner and giver of all that money, Jesus knew exactly what He wanted it to go towards: The saving of souls. So He watched, carefully observing the size of each person's gift.

**Application:**

Does the FACT that Jesus watches as we come and give our offerings surprise you? Does it make you nervous? It does me! I know the offerings I've made. I know how inconsistent they have been. I know how out-of-whack they sometimes are in proportion to my income. I know how I've outright neglected to give an offering at times. So when I read how Jesus carefully observes (or watches) the offerings we make, it freaks me out. It embarrasses me. How about you? Can you relate to the fear, shame, and embarrassment I feel over the offerings I have given? When compared to the offering given by the widow in our text, how can we not be at least a little uneasy?

Since the treasures of this world rot or rust or decay or depreciate, Jesus reminds us that we're better off investing in treasures with much more stability: Heavenly treasures like the forgiveness of sins, faith, eternal life, prayer, and actively reading and studying Scripture. Just imagine where we would be as a church if we spent as much time and effort pursuing these heavenly treasures as we do a paycheck or building up our investment portfolios. The attraction of money's power to give us control, freedom, status, and security is strong indeed. So strong that it can seduce our very heart and soul into believing that if we have enough of it we will be okay. BUT in the grand scheme of things, there is only one thing that will make a person okay: Knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Concern for souls, then, is to be our number one priority as a church. Our offerings and what those offerings go to are to reflect that.

**Transition:**

Yes, some people can give larger gifts. Other people can only give very little. Still other people can give an offering somewhere in between. No matter the size (or proportion) of our offerings, Jesus carefully observes them all. He sees what we are giving. That is *The Truth about Our Offerings!* In addition to observing the size of the gifts we place on His Altar, Jesus also...

## **Part II: Jesus commends the source of the gift**

Jesus compared the widow's gift to the gifts of all the wealthy people coming and dropping their bags of money into the temple treasury. Mark tells us, **"Many rich people threw in large amounts (of money). But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny...They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on"** (vv. 41-42, 44). Actually, the original Greek says even more. It literally reads, "The rich gave what they didn't need; she gave what she did need." In other words, the rich people gave what they could afford to give. The widow, however, gave what she could not afford to give. Think about that for a moment. When was the last time we gave to the church what we could not afford to give? Giving what we can afford is easy. We do that every week. That this poor widow gave what she could not afford, all she had to live on, amazes me.

How could she do it? The answer to that question is found not so much in the offering itself, but rather in what prompted that offering in the first place. It was the source of her gift that moved Jesus to halt the line and point out this widow's unique and special gift. What impressed Jesus wasn't that she gave, **"All she had to live on"** (v. 44), but the great faith that compelled her to make such a sacrifice. If you or I would go out, sell our home, cars, and everything we own, and give the money to the church, people would say, "That's crazy!" God, however, would say, "Stop! Hold everything! Look at how much this person trusts in Me! Now that's faith." That's what Jesus saw in this widow and that's what He commended her for.

### **Application:**

My friends, have you ever wondered how large an offering you would need to give in order for it to be the same statement of faith that this widow's offering was? Maybe you're already at that point. Maybe you are already giving 10% or 15% or 20% of your income and saying, "Lord, this is really more than I can afford to give, but I'm trusting that You will continue providing for me and my family." Or maybe you have some room to grow in that direction. Maybe you're thinking about ways in which you can cut back on some of your wants and needs in order to give a greater percentage of your income to the all-important work of saving souls.

A few weeks ago Deacon Metter talked about how members like us can set up a Charitable Trust in which the church would be treated as one of

our children after we die, receiving an equal share of our estate over a predetermined period of time. Most estate planners would consider that pure foolishness. They would try to talk us out of it, saying, “Why would you want to do that? Why don’t you take a vacation with that money or spend it on your family. Why give it to the church?” Because our money doesn’t belong to us: It’s God’s! More than that: We too belong to God. We all were once lost and condemned creatures, destined for and going to Hell. BUT then God stepped in. He, **“Bought us at a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20)**. As a result, we are no longer our own. Jesus set us free from the shame, guilt, and embarrassment that our poor (sometimes non-existent) offerings bring. In doing so, Jesus has given us the desire to serve and honor Him with everything we have, including our offerings. Saving faith can respond in no other way! Our faith in Christ’s sacrifice for us is the source of the sacrifices we make for Him in giving regular, proportionate, and cheerful offerings.

**Conclusion:**

A millionaire businessman with many waiting heirs to his wealth died. His children and grandchildren gathered at the hospital and after a quick and easy grief session asked each other, “How much did he leave us?” The family Pastor, on his way in the door, heard their great concern and said, “I’m pretty sure that he left everything.”

Jesus too lived and died. How much has He left us? Everything! His resurrection proves that we have a living Savior who gives us everything He did, everything He earned, and everything He is preparing. In other words, Jesus has given us everything that Heaven has to offer. May our offerings be a clear expression of our faith, believing that our sins ARE forgiven and that Heaven IS ours! May we give our offerings with the understanding that (1) Jesus observes the size of the gift and that (2) Jesus commends the source of the gift! That is *The Truth about Our Offerings!* Amen!