

How Much Do I Give?

Luke 21:1-4 – The Widow’s Offering

Greg Bohlken, Jan 26, 2025

As we celebrate generosity, we hear this Gospel lesson fondly retell the story of one who gave everything. How much are you called to give?

The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the 21st Chapter (**Glory to you, O Lord.**)

He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. He said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them, for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”

The Gospel of the Lord (**Praise to you, O Christ.**)

As we celebrate generosity, we inevitably ask, “How *much* should I give?” The answer: as much as God tells you – which is to say, giving is closely connected to our relationship with God and our listening to God’s call. In the Old Testament they gave the first fruits of their crops, a 10% tithe, as an act of trust that God would continue to provide.

Two weeks ago Pastor Bob asked, “Why Do I Give?” and Jamie, the drummer in our Praise Band, said, “to fight against suffering.” That’s a worthwhile and high bar to consider. If I’m giving to fight against suffering, God’s probably going to nudge my

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heart *more* and **more** and more in response to the suffering I see. With God's extravagant generosity to us, and the world's great suffering, sometimes 10% seems limiting.

Sandra and I have learned to give 10%, in trust that God provides. But because it wasn't easy to learn, I often tell teenagers that when they get their first jobs and regular paychecks, they should give 10%, save 20%, and live on 70%. I wish I had learned that habit as a teen, it makes adult finances so much easier.

As Jesus reminds us, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" – our lives get wrapped up in money and possessions because, in fear, we believe the lie that our ability to survive depends on our ability to provide for ourselves. We are unwrapped, made free, by giving first to God then giving again and again.

So should we give 10%? Or something else? A rich man once asked Jesus how much he should give, and Jesus answered, "Sell everything you have and give it to the poor." When the man walked away dumbfounded, Jesus commented that it's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

If you're holding on to your stuff, it's hard to hold on to God. But if you're holding on by a thread, make sure it's the hem of *His garment*.

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Turns out, it seems, God isn't directly after our money but God is after our hearts. As we trust more, our hearts open more. We hold on to God more.

And then...

We hit our real generosity groove when we see that generosity generates more generosity, Generosity generates more generosity.

You're lead, for example, to take time from your busy weekend to help feed hungry people at the mission or you donate to disaster relief on top of your regular giving or you help a friend buy groceries even after you spent all your grocery budget. Isn't that a backwards way from how the world thinks about holding on to money? Generosity generates more generosity. As you give, God opens your heart to be more rich toward God.

Here's (George Herbold / Emily Wright) to share some of his/her life's experiences with celebrating generosity and how much to give.