

Nameless: Stories of Grace for the Brokenhearted  
The Woman who Gave Her All  
Jeff Kennedy / June 9 2019

The context of this story is a series of confrontations in Jerusalem near the temple.

Jesus has been questioned regarding paying imperial taxes. His answer silences his critics who are trying to trap him.

“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, but give to God what is God’s”. Pay your taxes and love your neighbor as you love yourself.

Then, the Sadducees questioned Jesus, posing him an unsolvable riddle about the resurrection (The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection from the dead). “Moses wrote that if a man dies and leaves his wife and children fatherless, the brother of that man must take her as a wife. Now, there were seven brothers, and each of them died after having married the woman. At the resurrection, who’s wife will she be?

Jesus answered them simply—she won’t be any of their wives, because at the resurrection humanity will be like the angels—neither marrying, nor betrothing, nor reproducing. And God is the God Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he’s the God of the living not of the dead.

He was then questioned about the Greatest Command in Torah? And he answered with a conventional answer but also a surprising one. The conventional answer is Deut. 6:4...Hear, O’ Israel, The Lord your God is One—and you shall Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. But the second is like it—you shall love your neighbor as yourself. This Teacher of the Law who questioned Jesus agreed with him and was genuinely impressed by his answers—Jesus told him you are not far from the Kingdom.

No other religious groups dared challenge him publicly for fear that they would be publicly shamed by his answers.

Jesus then turned the questions on them “Why do the Teachers of the Law say that the Messiah is the Son of David. David himself under the inspiration of the Spirit said “The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.” David himself calls him Lord yet how can the Messiah be his Son?

Jesus then warns the crowds about teachers of the law—“watch out for them—they love the accoutrements of their high position. All the trappings of respectable religion as they walk around in their flowing robes, being greeted with high honors in the markets and the synagogues—taking the most important and prominent places in worship.

These are the kinds of men who will repossess a poor widow’s home, sell it and put the money in their coffers—and for show make lengthy, ornamented prayers to demonstrate their devotion—but God’s judgment is upon them.

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This statement transitions us into a story about a widow who had little and gave much. Let's read it.

**Mark 12:41-44**

<sup>41</sup> Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. <sup>42</sup> But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

<sup>43</sup> Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup> They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Let's make some observations today about giving and God's heart toward the poor

**"The place where the offerings were put"**

This place is a large room called the treasure room in the temple. It is an open, public place and was located in the court of women where visitors—Jewish out-of-towners, would come and put their offerings to support the temple and its upkeep. The room was always under the watchful eye of Temple Guards—appointed by Herod and supervised by the Sanhedrin.

The receptacles where the offerings were put were 13 large brass, horn-shaped shofar—the currency was not paper—they had no paper currency back then—and they were all coins. Large bags or sums of money would be poured out of a money satchel and clanging of change hitting the brassy horned metal would resound—could be a very noisy place—not a place you want to sit for very long and have, say, your devotional time.

But Jesus does sit there and endures the jangling of coins and copper.

**"Many people threw in large amounts"**

Since this is during a busy feast you'd have many affluent Jews visiting Jerusalem—some from as close as the city of Antioch just north where many wealthy Jews resided—and some as far away as Rome—where many Hebrews have made an excellent living running trade shops.

As an act or ordinance of devotion—the wealthy Jew is there to display God's favor upon them. God obviously thinks highly of these people (or so they thought). His favor is evident in the fact that he has prospered them financially so that they could bless the Temple and the priestly guilds who serve the temple.

Unfortunately in this world, they suffered under a false prosperity Gospel which taught that if you please God, then He will financially bless you—and if you displease God he will financially curse you.

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So the poor were considered second-class religious citizens. And that was especially true of Widows and Orphans who had no means of making a living and had to turn to begging, and had no homes because the Scribes and Pharisees repossessed them to pay off family debts—turning these poor people out on the streets. Now, Jesus doesn't just endure the clanging noise of the money thrown into the brass horn—he has endure the spectacle of public giving where everyone knew—the left hand could see all that the right hand was giving.

**“But a poor widow came and put in only two copper coins—worth a few pennies.”** Now, A Denarius was a day's wages for a common laborer—like Jesus. A carpenter. A copper coin was about a tenth of that, and two would be two-tenths. So, it's not much. To tell the truth this woman probably got the coins from begging at the temple treasury entrance. This allowed, mercifully by the Sanhedrin.

So, the scene is likely that while the self-congratulating Grecian-Jews, and the regal and primed scribes and teachers of the law drop in large sums—displaying their stratospheric piety and favor—this little woman takes the two pennies that they so graciously throw her way—the crumbs, the scraps, the worthless copper coins—and she gets up and gets in line I imagine right between two hob-knobbing Jerusalem socialites.

**Jesus sees her put in 100% of all she has.** He turns the disciples and teaches them an important lesson about God and faithfulness.

**Let's take a few minutes and unpack these lessons of faithfulness.**

### **1. God is repulsed by the status-conscious religious Pharisee (v. 38-39; 44).**

“The teachers of the Law...they like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with honor in the synagogues and banquets.”

- **These men loved their titles.** While they did not have higher degrees as the scholastic system would not be invented for another 1500 years, they did have their equivalents—their honorific titles: “Rabbi” which means “Master Teacher”; or “Teacher”; arche-synagoge meaning “ruler of the synagoge” was another title of honor. And they loved to be thought of as the Bible-answer-men of their day. They also had some other interesting titles not found in the Bible, but that we know were part of the Jewish system. “Tanna” which means “master repeater.” These men were employed by the Pharisees as walking, living, encyclopedias of the Torah. The Tannaim were a brand of scribes who were exceedingly knowledgeable about the Bible. The honored title of Zugoth—which represents the highest office.
- **They loved the position that came with these titles.** They relished the opportunity to be acknowledged but also the perks that came with the job.

- **They loved the money. Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms that these men were full of greed.** They couldn't love money and love God—they could only worship one master—their wealth or their God.
- **They loved their spiritual superiority. They were** the spiritually rich people of their day, and the spiritually impoverished people who could not read and had to rely on them to teach them the law of Moses—Jesus said “blessed are the spiritually poor—theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.”

Time and again we see that the attitude and religious atmosphere that they foster is repulsive to God.

And that spirit of spiritual superiority is nowhere more in view, or made manifest than the treasure room of the temple.

## **2. What we give in secret never goes unnoticed by God (v.41).**

“Jesus...watched the crowd give...do you see this woman? She has given more than all the others because she gave out of her need not her abundance.”

Now, she is for sure in a public place—but absolutely no one is paying attention to what she gives. Obviously, numerically speaking, her gift is worthless. But her heart of worship is of great value to God.

Matthew 6:18 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

<sup>2</sup>“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. <sup>3</sup>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup>so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

The trumpets were these brass, inverted trumpets where these large sums were given—the jangling noise of it drawing attention to the giver.

Jesus said that people who give to have the attention drawn to themselves have already received everything back from God that they really wanted. Notoriety—a reputation as a devout and upstanding member of the religious community.

But those who give quietly, unassumingly, who wish not to be known—those gifts are tallied by God, recorded in his heavenly ledger, and remembered for the day of judgment. And that person who gives from the heart, not to be seen by men, will receive a great reward in heaven.

**God never forgets the gift given from the heart.**

### **3. We are called to live and give sacrificially.**

If the story teaches anything it's that God values sacrificially living and sacrificial giving.

#### **We live sacrificially when we offer our bodies to God in worship.**

Rom. 1:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

- In light of God’s great mercy, compassion and grace to us—we offer our bodies:
  - As holy and not vessels of impurity. Either in the mind or in our actions.
  - As pleasing to God, living sacrificially in service to others.
  - This, Paul says is an urgent matter. This Paul says, is true and proper worship.

#### **We live sacrificially when we offer our minds to God in worship.**

<sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

- What enables to live sacrificially is a mind that has been offered to the Lord.
  - Thinking that has been conditioned and formed in His Word.
  - Resulting in a pattern of living that brings glory and honor and praise to God.

#### **We live sacrificially when we offer our spiritual gifts to the body of Christ without reservation.**

Giving monetarily is only one way we can invest our lives for the Kingdom of God. Paul makes it clear in this very Passage in Romans 8 that we begin by giving our very selves in a selfless, others-oriented manner. And then, we

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup>For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup>We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; <sup>7</sup>if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup>if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

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Haul of fame—the heroes of Christ Community Church.